



AmeriCorps

Strategic Learning and Evidence Building Plan: Fiscal Years 2022-2026

January 2025 (Version 3.0)

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AmeriCorps

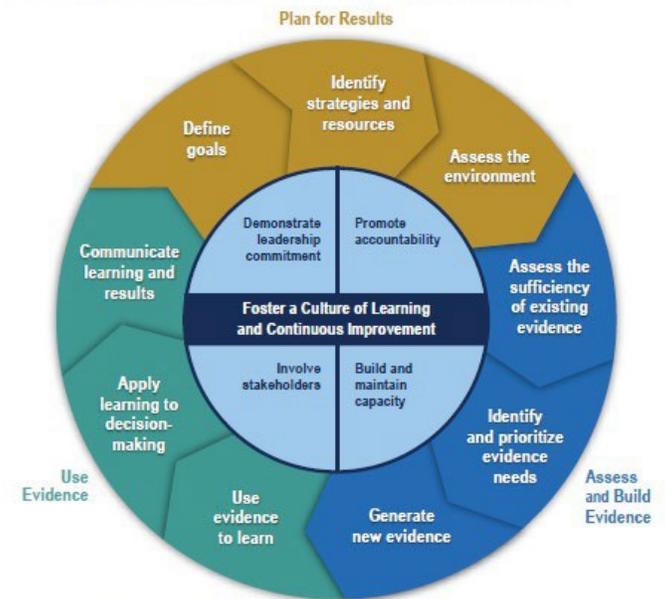
AmeriCorps, a federal agency, is the operating name for the Corporation for National and Community Service, which was created under sec.191 of the National and Community Service Act (42 U.S.C. 12651). The agency’s Board of Directors and its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) set policy and direction for AmeriCorps as authorized under the National Service Laws.

AmeriCorps’ mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. The agency brings people together to tackle the country’s most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. AmeriCorps helps make service to others a cornerstone of our national culture. We focus on these key areas to make an impact: economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, disaster response, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

Federal Evidence-Based Policymaking

strives to meet the standards and best practices of federal evidence-based policymaking. January 2024 marks five years since the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) was enacted. The Evidence Act calls on federal decision-makers to use the best available evidence to determine if policies and programs are working as intended and to identify potential improvements. Since the passage of the Evidence Act, the Office of Management and Budget has issued guidance¹ to federal agencies on how to govern based on evidence, including the types of evidence to consider. OMB encourages federal decision-makers to consider evidence generated from *policy analysis, foundational fact-finding, program evaluation, and performance measurement* as valid and actionable types of evidence. OMB

Practices to Help Effectively Implement Federal Evidence-Building and Performance-Management Activities



¹ See Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, OMB M-19-23, *Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance* (2019), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/M-19-23.pdf>, See Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, OMB M-20-12, *Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices* (2020), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/M-20-12.pdf>. See Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, OMB M-21-27, *Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans* (2021), available at [M-22-12 \(whitehouse.gov\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/).



guidance also encourages using learning agendas as an essential management tool to guide evidence-based policymaking.

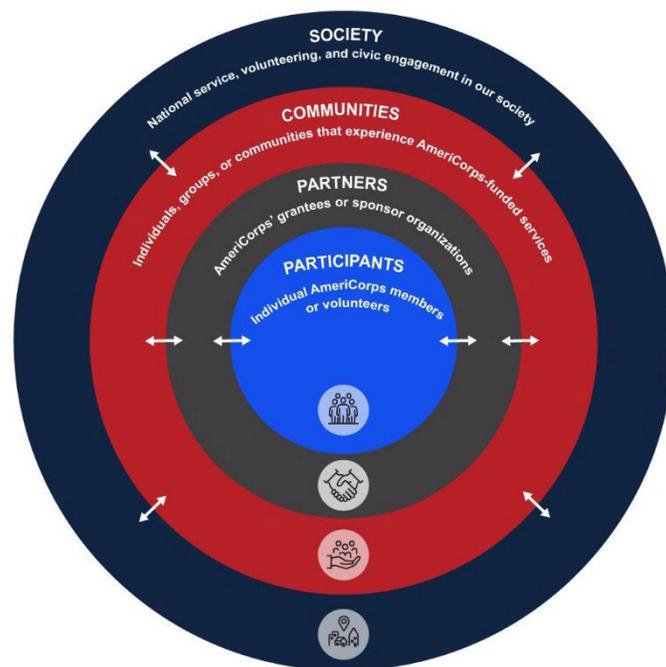
Governing based on evidence is complex. The United States Government Accountability Office released a report² in 2023 that describes mixed progress across government in collecting, analyzing, and using evidence effectively to make decisions. GAO recommends federal decision-makers adopt four critical interrelated practices and their 13 associated actions to improve the capacity to build and use evidence for governance. The four critical practices include: (1) plan for results, (2) assess and build evidence, (3) use evidence, and (4) foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Agency Progress Toward Evidence-Based Policymaking

AmeriCorps has implemented much of the OMB guidance issued to date, including developing and using a learning agenda (see [AmeriCorps Learning Agenda Final](#), version 1). AmeriCorps strives to meet the standards and best practices of federal evidence-based policymaking even though the agency is not a Chief Financial Officers Act agency. Agency decision-makers and staff have used the learning agenda to *build evidence*, *assess evidence gaps*, and prioritize the agency resources needed to create a robust evidence base for its mission and programs. Agency leadership is committed to using the same standards and best practices required of CFO Act agencies to ensure effective public service.

² See <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105460>.

In 2023, the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation released a report³ synthesizing key findings and themes from studies produced by or for AmeriCorps from 2017 to 2022 to describe the state of the evidence where the agency seeks to make an impact. ⁴AmeriCorps strives to make a lasting and sustainable impact on its **participants** (individual AmeriCorps members, volunteers, and alumni), **partners** (AmeriCorps grantees or sponsor organizations), **communities** served (individuals, groups, or communities that experience AmeriCorps-funded services), and **society** (national service, volunteering, and civic engagement in our society) and foster the powerful connections between these domains. The 2023 State of the Evidence Report also identified gaps in the agency’s evidence base that will inform future learning priorities.



In 2023, AmeriCorps finalized its Data Modernization Roadmap and AmeriCorps Information Model. Under the leadership of the Chief Data Officer, the agency made significant progress in strengthening the enterprise’s evidence-building capacity. Maturing the agency’s data management and data access functions facilitates a more integrated and direct connection to data and evidence needs. Open data access, governance, and management are essential building blocks for reliable performance data and management, statistical and policy analysis of agency data, and program evaluation that relies on agency data.

In addition to *building a body of evidence* for its programs, AmeriCorps has also made progress in *planning for results* as it monitors progress toward its strategic goals and objectives (see [Strategic Plan | AmeriCorps](#)). Since releasing its Strategic Plan in March 2022, the agency has refined its strategic priorities and the key performance metrics used to assess progress toward achieving its strategic goals, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the data used to evaluate agency performance.

These efforts to improve strategic planning and the data quality central to deriving insights on agency policies and programs reflect the agency’s maturing data management practices. Led by the agency’s Chief of Staff, Chief Data Officer, Chief Program Officer, and Chief Operations Officer, AmeriCorps has strengthened the integration of its strategic planning and enterprise data management functions. Today, the evidence supporting the agency’s strategic plan and informing its budget formulation processes now includes program evaluation, foundational research, and program-specific data – three of the four types of evidence defined by OMB as essential for evidence-based policymaking.

³<http://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/2023-state-evidence-report>

⁴ This report is a complementary state of the evidence for AmeriCorps to the previous assessment from 2013 to 2017. <https://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/2017-state-evidence-annual-report>

Emerging Learning and Improvement Opportunities for the Agency

AmeriCorps honors the excellence of connecting communities with people power to meet America’s pressing challenges and serve the American people. We do so, in part, by building evidence for agency effectiveness. We use scientific evidence and credible programmatic and operational data to foster an organizational culture of learning. Robust learning organizations depend upon staff with the capacity and confidence to integrate evidence into their daily operations and decisions. Learning organizations also consist of staff who understand and appreciate the value proposition of strategic learning and data-driven decision-making.

AmeriCorps has the opportunity to better support all staff in using evidence for decision-making by establishing a more robust and sustainable learning practice. Creating structured opportunities for sharing what we are learning and making sense of the evidence we are building will be essential if the agency is to maximize the use of evidence for decision-making. Translating evidence into action requires effective knowledge management and dissemination functions. Sense-making is an enterprise-wide endeavor that relies on opportunities to pause and reflect to derive insights from our evidence and make more strategic decisions about our programs and operations.

Using evidence. Whether derived from policy analysis, program evaluation, foundational fact-finding research, or performance measurement, governance remains a nascent function within the agency. Several governance structures support strategic decision-making within the agency. Each governing body strives to use the data and evidence to inform the decisions within their purview. However, opportunities for learning about relevant data and evidence needed for governance remain somewhat siloed and inaccessible within the agency.

Current efforts to better *foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement* include better-coordinating resources and communication across the enterprise to move towards developing an integrated systems approach supporting informed decision-making. For example, informal working groups among staff interested in translating evidence for improved grant award management and community impacts have been meeting to develop resources (e.g., desktop guides).

As another example, the agency invests in ways to improve the dissemination of and access to evidence resources to the public, grantees, and staff using technology-based solutions (e.g., online curriculum, Scaler tool, Evidence Exchange) and different types of learning opportunities (e.g., evidence webinar series, grantee convenings). As a final example, the agency created the Office of Research and Evaluation Learning Officer position to help translate research and evaluation evidence for all agency staff and the public.

AmeriCorps has used its Strategic Learning and Evidence Building Plan (“learning agenda”) to support its aspirations for evidence-based policymaking. Since publishing Version 1 of its learning agenda in March 2022, the agency has identified opportunities for maturing the full range of evidence available to its decision-makers and strengthening its organizational learning culture. Notably, as the agency identifies a more refined set of core program-specific

data and strengthens its quality, the data's viability for performance management and policy analysis will improve.

Critical policy analyses about factors associated with access to or barriers to AmeriCorps resources for members, volunteers, and community-based organizations will only be possible when this evidence fully matures. For example, a policy analysis examining the relationships among living allowance, benefits, recruitment, enrollment, and retention will only be feasible with complete, high-quality data for all variables.

Version 2 of the agency's learning agenda includes minor updates to the original narrative below and one new appendix that lists active studies and initiatives (**Appendix B**).

AmeriCorps intends to continue using its learning agenda and strategic plan to improve its policies and programs, centering evidence in its governance activities.

Agency Foundation

AmeriCorps' mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. The agency's purpose is to bring out the best in America. Every day in communities across the country, AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers work directly with national, regional, or local not-for-profit entities to meet critical community needs.

As outlined in AmeriCorps' Strategic Plan, AmeriCorps focuses on four pillars: unite, strengthen, impact, and lead.

- **Unite.** The agency bridges divides by bringing people together and connecting individuals and organizations to help communities tackle their toughest challenges.
- **Strengthen.** The agency provides resources and people power to organizations dedicated to improving communities.
- **Impact.** The agency enriches the lives of those served and those who serve.
- **Lead.** AmeriCorps is the only federal agency for community service and volunteerism. The agency empowers an entire ecosystem committed to improving communities across America.

AmeriCorps Strategic Priorities and Goals

AmeriCorps aligns its planning and programming with a core set of priorities where national service can have the most significant impact and ensure agency resources focus on addressing Administration priorities and the evolving needs of communities. These strategic priorities are detailed in the AmeriCorps 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The following strategic goals will guide how AmeriCorps focuses its resources and prioritizes its learning and evidence-building opportunities.

- Goal 1: Partner with communities to meet community needs and to bring out the best of America.
- Goal 2: Enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers.
- Goal 3: Unite Americans by bringing them together in service.
- Goal 4: Effectively steward federal resources.

- Goal 5: Make AmeriCorps one of the best places to work in the federal government.

The agency has also prioritized objectives that will inform the strategies and tactics necessary for attaining agency goals. For example, objectives like “Prioritize Investments in Communities with high rates of poverty,” “Recruit a Geographically Diverse Corps of Members & Volunteers,” and “Expand Education & Economic Opportunity” will guide the implementation of the agency’s strategic plan and inform its strategic learning and evidence-building priorities.

AmeriCorps’ Strategic Learning and Evidence Priorities

AmeriCorps responds to community needs with evidence-based national service interventions and systematically assesses new initiatives. The agency’s strategic plan informs the learning opportunities and helps to establish evidence priorities through the centralized governance structure of the Research and Evaluation Council ([Policy 900; Research & Evaluation Charter](#)). The agency’s strategic plan informs the Learning Agenda and vice versa. The agency has historically built its body of evidence using scientific research and program evaluation. As the agency matures its program data and begins to analyze its programmatic policies (e.g., living allowance and stipend amounts, match requirements, education award amounts, and uses), it will be well-positioned to rely more on policy analysis and performance measurement as equally credible sources of data and evidence for organizational learning and improvement.

Table 1. Strategic Goals, Evidence, Anticipated Use

Strategic Goals	Primary Data/Evidence Source	Anticipated Use/Action
Goal 1: Partner with communities to meet community needs and to bring out the best of America.	Performance Measurement (Grantmaking Administrative Data, Agency Administrative Data) Program Evaluation Foundational Fact Finding (Basic Research)	Decisions Learning Improvement Standardization Benchmarking
Goal 2: Enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors’ volunteers	Agency Performance Measurement (Grantmaking Administrative Data, Trust Administrative Data, School and Employers of National Service Data) Program Evaluation Foundational Fact Finding (Basic Research)	Policy Resource Allocation Defining Limitations. Storytelling. Communicating Results
Goal 3: Unite Americans by bringing them together in service	Program Evaluation Foundational Fact Finding (Basic Research) Member Exit Data CEV Data Agency Performance Measurement (Marketing Data (Meltwater); VCLA data; CRM Data)	



Goal 4: Effectively steward federal resources	Agency Performance Measurement: (Financial Management Administrative Data, Grantmaking Administrative Data (eGrants), Risk Assessment Administrative Data, AmeriCorps FOR Remediation Actions Plan, AmeriCorps Financial Statement Audit, Office of Procurement Administrative Data, IPERA Annual Assessment, Monitoring Office – Fiscal and Operational Fitness Data Tables, Monitoring Office – NSCHC Compliance Tables, Modernization Performance Schedules Data)	
Goal 5: Make AmeriCorps one of the best places to work in the federal government	FEVS (tied to the Global Satisfaction Index and Employee Engagement Index) Training Assessments Personnel Retention Data	

AmeriCorps’ Learning and Evidence-Building Principles

The agency emphasizes evidence to support, not inhibit, innovation, improvement, and learning. Consistent with OMB M-21-27, the intent is to integrate the use of evidence and opportunities for further learning into all activities to improve agency processes. Where an evidence base is lacking, systematic analysis will develop evidence. Where evidence exists, the agency will use it to encourage replication and expansion of effective solutions. As a learning organization, AmeriCorps uses many types of evidence⁵ and understands that a culture of continual improvement relies on multiple sources of information. AmeriCorps uses the following principles to guide its evidence-building activities⁶:

- *AmeriCorps adheres to rigorous scientific and data standards.*
- *AmeriCorps prioritizes relevant evidence.*
- *AmeriCorps makes findings from its evidence-building activities broadly available and accessible.*

⁵ Evidence can be defined as the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid as defined in the OMB Circular No. A-11 Section 200 page 13. Recent budget guidance (See OMB *Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2020*, page 59) further states “A portfolio (of evidence) can and should include many different types of evidence, including results from program evaluations, policy analyses, performance measurements, and statistical analyses.” See also M-21-27, specifically Figure 1: Using Evidence to Improve Agency Processes and Appendix A: Components of Evidence and Overview of Methodological Approaches

⁶ Please refer to the agency’s Evaluation Policy for a more detailed description of these principles, available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CNCSEvaluationPolicy.pdf>



- *AmeriCorps protects the independence and objectivity of its evidence.*
- *AmeriCorps ethically conducts its evidence-building activities and safeguards the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants in these activities.*

Participatory approaches to research ensure that we engage community members as critical stakeholders in the learning and evidence ecosystem. More specifically, the agency will build on the successes of its participatory action research grant and its participatory program lifecycle evaluation project.⁷ Participatory principles will guide the evidence-building activities designed to assess the prioritized lines of inquiry highlighted in this plan.

AmeriCorps’ Strategic Learning and Evidence-Building Plan

The agency’s learning and evidence-building plan provides a roadmap for generating credible, relevant, and actionable information about organizational effectiveness, operational performance, and the outcomes of national service programs. The AmeriCorps learning agenda provides the agency’s senior leadership and staff with the information needed for strategic learning and decision-making that ensures the agency’s and its programs’ efficiency and effectiveness.

Evidence at the organizational, programmatic, and operational levels will maximize agency performance. Given limited resources, senior leadership must prioritize the agency’s most essential information needs given current strategic goals. Based on the agency’s FYs 2022-2026 strategic goals and objectives, the following questions will guide FYs 2022-2026 evidence-building priorities:

- How can the agency increase access and utilization of AmeriCorps resources in communities serving an array of American populations? (*Strategic Goal 1*)
- How can the agency enhance the experience of AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers? (*Strategic Goal 2*)
- How can the agency unite Americans through service and volunteering? (*Strategic Goal 3*)

⁷ <https://www.americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/research-evaluation/grantee-profiles>

We will create robust evidence-building activities for each line of inquiry. Illustrative questions, theories of change, and empirical strategies are described next for each learning priority.

How can the agency increase access and utilization of AmeriCorps resources in communities serving an array of American populations?

Within this line of inquiry are related empirical questions about organizational and individual access and utilization of AmeriCorps resources in communities with high rates of poverty. Analyses focused on what types of policy and program changes might increase access and utilization are included here. For example, the federal investment has created an opportunity to increase living allowances and stipends. Assessing whether this, as well as other types of benefits, may facilitate participation in national service programs for more Americans will be necessary. Similarly, systematically assessing how the agency redesigns and refines the service experience across AmeriCorps programs will provide evidence to strengthen and sustain a robust pipeline of individuals committed to serving their country and communities through national service.

Related Questions

- What organizational and community capacities are needed to access and use agency resources?
- What evidence-based strategies can be used to increase capacity and access?
- What strategies are most effective for increasing capacity and access?

As another example, the agency has learned from multiple grantmaking strategies that involve a more collaborative, developmental, organizational capacity-building framework. Lessons learned from VISTA, the Social Innovation Fund⁹, Community Conversations Participatory Action Research Grants, and State and National Planning Grants offer empirical evidence that building a National Service grantmaking pipeline of geographically diverse community-based organizations in communities with high rates of poverty is possible. In addition, federal investment has created opportunities to explore whether or not strategies such as waiving or replacing cash match grant requirements for organizations operating in less-resourced communities increase access and use of agency resources. Furthermore, engaging organizational leaders in geographically diverse communities will require new partnerships, outreach, and development strategies.

Systematic assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of new outreach, partnership, development, and grantmaking strategies designed to increase the agency's footprint in communities with high rates of poverty that remove barriers to agency resources will rely on relevant performance data and research. AmeriCorps will build evidence for whether or not these strategies and current business practices result in customers experiencing excellent,

⁹ <https://americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/SIF-Classic-National-Assessment>

and secure Federal stewardship of resources and services. The agency is designing a **new AmeriCorps Partners survey** to begin collecting regular feedback on the customer experience, including barriers to accessing or managing agency resources (e.g., grant assistance).

How can AmeriCorps ensure that those who serve in national service programs represent all the communities the agency strives to serve and increase the opportunity to volunteer for all interested Americans?

The agency also seeks to increase opportunities for all Americans to serve by reducing the socioeconomic barriers that can prohibit participation in AmeriCorps programs.¹⁰ **Recruiting and retaining representative community participants** to serve in AmeriCorps programs will require reimagining and recalibrating organizational, operational, and programmatic practices. For example, we will need dedicated staffing, external expertise, and new technologies to launch a sustained outreach and recruitment effort tailored to different segments of the country's population.

Understanding what motivates different groups of citizens to apply for and enroll in a national service program and what may prevent them from doing so despite a desire to do so will be essential for increasing the representativeness of Americans who sign up to serve.

How can the agency enhance the experience of AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers?

AmeriCorps has a strong body of evidence and data collection infrastructure to build on for these empirical efforts. Research on member motivations and outcomes indicates that those who serve do so for various reasons but consistently report positive civic, educational, and employment outcomes both in the short term and over time.¹¹ Research also empirically demonstrates that older Americans who volunteer in national service programs report better health and well-being outcomes than similar volunteers who do not.¹²

¹⁰ An analysis of the agency's Request for Information (RFI) on Reducing Barriers to National Service suggests that the major barriers to participating in AmeriCorps programs are compensation (living allowance), the ability to access and utilize benefits, and issues related to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (also known as an Ed Award). The Office of Research and Evaluation will use the RFI responses and findings to inform more systematic data collection efforts for the agency.

¹¹ https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/2139/

<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/study-does-national-service-experience-improve-young-persons-job-prospects>

<https://americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/AmeriCorps-Alumni-Outcomes-Study>

<https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/content/americorps-experience-transformation-through-service>

¹²https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/Longitudinal_Study_of_Foster_Grandparent_and_Senior_Companion_Programs_FINAL_508_1.pdf

Despite these consistent patterns of positive outcomes for members and volunteers who have served in national service programs, the agency must recalibrate its data collection strategy to credibly and accurately assess individuals' journeys from initial interest to alumni status across different population segments. Mapping a more robust data collection strategy for this "applicant to alumni" journey will allow the agency to understand who persists and who does not in this journey and the reasons for these various decision points.

What strategies are most effective for more customized outreach, recruitment, retention, and alumni engagement?

Feasibility research for building this more robust data collection from members and volunteers began in FY2023. For example, the agency expects to collect additional demographic information and modify the types and timing of questions about the service experience and associated outcomes in a redesigned **pre/post Participant survey**. We plan to develop different data collection points mapped more intentionally to individual interest and participation journeys. Data from the agency's outreach and recruitment campaigns may also provide important insights. This will require dedicated staffing resources, new working relationships with partners responsible for segments of individuals' journeys, and new technology solutions.

Similar to how evidence generated by the **AmeriCorps NCCC** studies on leadership development and member retention are expected to have cross-program implications, evidence-building activities for initiatives like **Public Health AmeriCorps** may be informative for deepening agency understanding of how to develop effective workforce pathways for Corps members. We will apply lessons learned about how to meet the training and professional development needs of Corps members, create effective Corps member roles, recruit members with relevant interests and entry-level skills, and provide the needed supervision applied across programs as pertinent.¹³

How can AmeriCorps programs create stronger pathways to education, employment, and civic engagement for those who serve in them?

¹³https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/23419_CNCS_ORE_Opioid_Report_v03_RELEASE_508_1.pdf



ACS Research Questions

- How has older adult volunteering changed due to the pandemic?
- What was the experience of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers during COVID-19?
- How did COVID-19 change volunteerism at the volunteer station-level and what are the impacts of that change?

AmeriCorps Seniors (ACS) has a program-specific learning agenda that could generate general information relevant to national service programming and volunteering. We anticipate that new innovative interventions, activities in which volunteers are meaningfully engaged and beneficiaries see meaningful outcomes, will be identified and new modalities for volunteers. The research will broadly identify impactful interventions that we will share to encourage the replication and expansion of practical solutions. In addition, some volunteering pivoted during the pandemic to safe volunteering activities. The research will look to identify how safe volunteering practices during COVID-19 impacted volunteer's health, feelings of depression, isolation,

and volunteer satisfaction levels. AmeriCorps Seniors also seeks to catalog and analyze the impact of the new ways that some grantees were able to pivot in their relationships with their community partners during COVID-19.

How can the agency unite Americans through service and volunteering?

AmeriCorps leads the nation in understanding trends in civic engagement, volunteering, and service. Evidence that establishes the role of volunteering and service in creating the social connections central to employment, education, and health outcomes demonstrates the value proposition of our mission. The agency contributes to this knowledge base by sponsoring the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering supplement, sponsoring the National Service and Civic Engagement Research Grant Program, and systematically assessing the national service participant experience. This scholarship has advanced our understanding of the role that service and volunteering can play in creating the social fabric needed for a thriving democracy.

In 2023, the agency initiated a strategy to more intentionally incorporate and elevate bridge-building and belonging experiences and activities into national service programs. Advancing evidence-building and learning with internal and external partners is central to this bridge-building strategy. One potential pathway to advance research in this area is to add questions to the **new Participant survey** referenced above. Programmatic changes could be informed or tested with these questions. Evaluation findings from the **Volunteer Generation Fund** and other research on volunteer management practices can also inform our practice. Together, we expect the evidence to improve national service programs and enhance their role in uniting Americans who serve.

Evergreen Learning and Evidence-Building Activities

In alignment with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-435) building and using empirical evidence is a central agency priority. Access and utilization of credible, actionable, and timely information about programmatic performance creates opportunities for innovation, improvement, and increased impact. The FY 2022-2026 Strategic Learning and Evidence- Building Plan builds on the agency's core evidence-building activities. We designed these activities to assess whether or not AmeriCorps is achieving its mission. We describe the activities in more detail in Appendix A.¹⁴

AmeriCorps maintains a robust evidence pipeline by using systematic inquiry and credible data to address the following evergreen learning goals:

- Deepen understanding of who, how, and why individuals volunteer and serve.
- Expand opportunities for all Americans to participate in national service programs and volunteer for community service projects by reducing barriers.
- Develop innovative national service strategies and interventions.
- Improve national service strategies and interventions.
- Demonstrate outcomes and impacts of national service strategies and interventions.
- Document the social and economic returns on investment in national service strategies and interventions.

See Appendix A for more detail on evaluation questions and research strategies underway to address them. AmeriCorps commits to sharing what it learns with the public and to using it to better serve America.

¹⁴ See <https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact>



APPENDIX A

Evaluation Questions x impact Domain	Research Strategy/Source of Evidence
Participants (Members/Volunteers/Alumni) and Society	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does AmeriCorps deepen the knowledge base about volunteering/civic participation behaviors and outcomes? • How does AmeriCorps translate this research into practice (e.g., the recruitment, development, and retention of volunteers for national service programs)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor basic research in civic engagement and volunteering to advance the knowledge base for behaviors and associated social, economic, and health outcomes that represent the foundation of national service and the agency’s mission. (e.g., CPS CEV supplement, portfolio of research studies designed to examine these issues)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the common outcomes AmeriCorps wants national service program members/volunteers to achieve? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member exit survey administered to members in AmeriCorps State and National, NCCC, and VISTA– Revise this survey to capture additional outcomes of interest, shared and program-specific. • NCCC Leadership Longitudinal Survey – What is AmeriCorps learning from this survey that could inform a revised exit survey across programs? • AmeriCorps Seniors (Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program) volunteer survey – Planning for another administration of this survey and developing a schedule for a more regular administration cadence. • Alumni Outcomes Survey – Plan for another administration/develop a strategy for keeping alumni engaged for follow-up surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is volunteering for national service programs, and who isn’t? Why or why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member exit survey - Update the motivation questions; Identify a way to survey those who apply but decline to serve more systematically. • Research grantee findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does AmeriCorps prepare and develop those who serve/volunteer to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., meaningful, and lifelong contributions to their communities)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a way to assess the common experiences national service programs provide that would lead us to predict common civic and appropriate life course experiences and outcomes.
Partners and Communities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the agency develop evidence-based, innovative national service strategies and interventions? 	<p><i>Integrating research and evaluation at the early stages of a program’s development ensures that we test theories of change early and make any necessary adjustments or refinements, increasing the likelihood of achieving desired results.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor community research teams that include a research-to-action component (e.g., research grant program/2018 cohort – FY 2022 competition for fourth cohort of grantees) • Develop research strategies with program colleagues that can inform new or untested programmatic goals (e.g., AmeriCorps NCCC’s research plan) • A multi-year contract was awarded in FY 2020 (<i>Program Lifecycle Evaluation</i>) to help evaluate new projects as they are developed and implemented. Two evaluations are underway.

Evaluation Questions x impact Domain	Research Strategy/Source of Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how to use national service programs/grant-making to scale effective evidence-based interventions identified through the Social Innovation Fund initiative.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can AmeriCorps use evidence to improve national service strategies and interventions? 	<p><i>Incorporate evidence into strategic and operational decision-making. Building and using evidence at the organizational, programmatic, and operational levels will maximize agency performance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi-year contract was awarded in FY 2020 (<i>Program Lifecycle Evaluation</i>) to help evaluate how current projects and initiatives can be improved. One builds on the agency's exploratory evaluation of the opioid recovery coach model, and one will focus on evaluating the Volunteer Generation Fund.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can AmeriCorps use evidence to demonstrate the results of national service strategies and interventions? 	<p><i>We created an infrastructure (staffing and contracts) to identify and invest in what works. AmeriCorps has 32 consistently effective evidence-based program models that could be scaled confidently. AmeriCorps has about another 50 models that are promising and could be further tested.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi-year contract was awarded in FY 2020 (<i>Program Lifecycle Evaluation</i>) to help evaluate the effectiveness of programs replicated in different locations and to evaluate promising programs (reducing the burden on grantees to do so). Future evaluations may focus on the replication and adaptation of evidence-based interventions. AmeriCorps NCCC service project database and community impact case studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can AmeriCorps empirically document the social and economic returns on investment in national service strategies and interventions? Conduct targeted return on investment analyses. 	<p><i>The agency has demonstrated positive economic and social returns on investment (ROI) for four national service programs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi-year contract was awarded in FY 2020 to conduct annual targeted ROI analyses for different evidence-based national service interventions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most participatory way to partner with communities to address local needs and create effective national service solutions? 	<p><i>Engage all relevant stakeholders through participatory methods in the identification of issues and the development of solutions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory action research and evaluation. Reliance on field working groups. Commitment to peer collaboration, like learning communities for staff and grantees participating in research and evaluation studies.

APPENDIX B

Project/Study Title	Project/Study Timeframe	Project/Study Stage	Prime Evidence-Building Business Partner	Agency Strategic Plan Goals	Agency Strategic Plan Objectives
AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grants	Sept. 2022-Sept. 2023	Award Management (Grant Specific)	AmeriCorps State & National	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.4, 1.3, 1.1, 3.1, 3.4, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.5
Public Health AmeriCorps National Assessment (Career and Educational Pathway Study)	Aug. 2022-Aug. 2027	Data Collection	Public Health AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps State & National	Goal 2, Goal 3	2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4
Technical Assistance for Building and Using Evaluation Evidence (NORC at the University of Chicago)	Sept. 2021-Sept. 2026	Data Collection	Chief Program Officer	Goal 1	
Civic Engagement and Volunteering Current Population Survey Data	Biennial since 2002	Dissemination/Translation	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1, Goal 3	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.1, 3.4, 3.2
Genome Project	June 2022-May 2024	Dissemination/Translation	Office of Research & Evaluation, AmeriCorps State & National, Chief Program Officer, Chief Data Officer	Goal 1	1.4, 1.3
Agency Workforce Analysis	Jan. 2022 – Dec. 2022	Dissemination/Translation	Chief Operating Officer, Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 5	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Project/Study Title	Project/Study Timeframe	Project/Study Stage	Prime Evidence-Building Business Partner	Agency Strategic Plan Goals	Agency Strategic Plan Objectives
Return on Investment Studies	Sept. 2020-Sept. 2025	Dissemination/Translation	AmeriCorps Seniors, AmeriCorps State & National, VISTA	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.4, 3.1, 4.3.1
AmeriCorps NCCC Service Project Database	2019-2023	Final Analysis & Reporting	NCCC	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.4, 2.1, 3.4, 1.2, 1.3, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1
Office of Research & Evaluation Research Grantee Program 2018	ORE Research Grantee Program	Final Analysis & Reporting	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.3, 3.2, 3.4, 1.2, 3.1
NCCC Impact Study (Longitudinal Leadership Study)	2019-2023	Final Analysis & Reporting	NCCC	Goal 2, Goal 3	3.1, 3.4, 2.1, 2.3
NCCC Summer of Service 2022 Pilot Study	May 2022-Sept. 2022	Final Analysis & Reporting	NCCC	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 2	1.2, 3.4, 3.1, 2.1, 2.3
Life Cycle Evaluation - Volunteer Generation Fund	Sept. 2020-Sept. 2025	Final Analysis & Reporting	Chief Program Officer, Volunteer Generation Fund	Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 1	1.3, 1.1, 2.3, 2.2, 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.3, 3.1
Life Cycle Evaluation - Recovery Coach Programs	Sept. 2020-Sept. 2025	Final Analysis & Reporting	Public Health AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps State & National	Goal 1	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5
NCCC Impact Study (Retention Study)	2019-2023	Final Analysis & Reporting	NCCC	Goal 2, Goal 3	2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4

Project/Study Title	Project/Study Timeframe	Project/Study Stage	Prime Evidence-Building Business Partner	Agency Strategic Plan Goals	Agency Strategic Plan Objectives
NCCC Impact Study (Strengthening Communities)	2019-2023	Final Analysis & Reporting	NCCC	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3	1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4
Life Cycle Evaluation - Environmental Stewardship	Sept. 2020-Sept. 2025	Interim Analysis & Reporting	AmeriCorps State & National, NCCC, VISTA	Goal 1	1.2, 1.4, 1.5
Food Security Initiative & Assessment of eLearning/Peer Communities	2023-Jan. 2024	Interim Analysis & Reporting	VISTA	Goal 3, Goal 1, Goal 4, Goal 2	4.3.1, 3.2, 3.1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 3.4, 2.3
Strategic Evidence Use	July 2022 - July 2027	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.2, 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1
Attrition Analysis	Dec. 2023-ongoing	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Chief Program Officer, Chief Data Officer	Goal 2	2.1
Joint Project on Service Demographics	Ongoing	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Chief Program Officer, Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1	1.2
Voices from the Field (Environmental Stewardship)	Dec. 2022-Dec. 2023	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Chief Program Officer	Goal 2	2.1
Voices from the Field (Public Health)	Aug. 2023-Dec. 2023	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Public Health AmeriCorps, Chief Program Officer	Goal 2	2.1
Office of Research & Evaluation Research Grantee Program 2022	Oct. 1, 2022-Sept. 30, 2025	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.3, 3.2, 3.4, 1.2, 3.1

ORE Research Grantee Program 2023	July 25, 2023 – July 24, 2026	Interim Analysis & Reporting	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 2	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.3,
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Project/Study Title	Project/Study Timeframe	Project/Study Stage	Prime Evidence-Building Business Partner	Agency Strategic Plan Goals	Agency Strategic Plan Objectives
					3.2, 3.4, 1.2, 3.1
AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey Dataset	2016-ongoing	Periodic Data Analysis	AmeriCorps State & National, NCCC, VISTA	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3	1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4
Partners Survey	Sept. 2023 - Sept. 2024	Pre-Award & Planning	Office of Research & Evaluation	Goal 4, Goal 3, Goal 1	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.3, 3.4, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4, 4.3.5
Pre-Post Participants Survey	Sept. 2023 - Sept. 2025	Pre-Award & Planning	Office of Research & Evaluation, AmeriCorps Seniors, VISTA, Public Health AmeriCorps, NCCC, AmeriCorps State & National, Chief Data Officer	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1
AmeriCorps Seniors COVID Impact Study	Sept. 2022 - Sept. 2025	Project Design & Development	AmeriCorps Seniors	Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3	1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.4



Project/Study Title	Project/Study Timeframe	Project/Study Stage	Prime Evidence-Building Business Partner	Agency Strategic Plan Goals	Agency Strategic Plan Objectives
Tribal Grant Application Barriers Study		Project Design & Development	Strategic Advisor for Native American Affairs, AmeriCorps State & National, Chief Executive Officer-Strategic Partnerships, Chief Executive Officer-Recruitment, Chief Executive Officer-Public Engagement,	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 4	1.4, 4.1, 4.2, 3.1
Life Cycle Evaluation Bundle - Puerto Rico	Sept. 2020-Sept. 2025	Project Design & Development	Chief Program Officer	Goal 1	