



RESEARCH BRIEF – ROI PROJECT

AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program Detroit

[AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov)

Program Description

Founded on a unique crime reduction model, the AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program (AMUS) aims to improve public health and safety in Detroit and Wayne County, Michigan. AmeriCorps members work to increase public safety by: 1) partnering with the local police to facilitate a crime mapping and analysis (CompStat) program to identify crime “hot spots”; 2) organizing neighborhood community patrols; 3) providing support to survivors of intimate partner violence; 4) implementing safe routes to neighborhood schools for youth; 5) securing vacant and open structures; and, 6) providing resources to help reduce property crime, such as home safety assessments and anti-theft auto devices. Recently, AMUS members have expanded their efforts to include public health activities, such as installing water filtration resources and sharing information with residents to increase the use of filtered water to reduce lead exposure, and distributing air purifiers filters to help residents improve home indoor air quality.

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).



Return on Investment Analysis

To better understand the impact of the program in relation to costs, AmeriCorps commissioned a return on investment (ROI) analysis by ICF, an independent research firm. ROI analyses of national service programs estimate the monetary value of benefits that a program generates per dollar invested. The ROI analysis of total benefits per funder dollar estimated the AMUS Programs's ROI to be between \$1.63 and \$3.07, depending on how long AmeriCorps members experience increased earnings as a result of the program. Total benefits per federal dollar are higher, between \$3.86 and \$7.28. These results are driven by societal gains, AmeriCorps members' benefits, and federal and state government expected cost reductions.

Overview of Benefits and Costs

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

- **Reduced costs and increased economic benefits to society from reduced criminal activity in neighborhoods served by AMUS.** Because of reduced criminal activity in the neighborhoods served by AMUS and by youth members, society avoids related costs. For example, potential victims of crime avoid property loss and medical costs. In addition, society benefits from increased employment as a result of reduced incarceration.
- **Reduced lifetime spending on the criminal justice system due to AMUS's summer employment program.** AmeriCorps youth members are less likely to commit violent or property crime than their peers due to their participation in the summer employment program. This results in less government expenditures on policing, legal services, and corrections.
- **Additional societal benefits from increased employment by participants in AMUS's summer employment program.** AmeriCorps youth members benefit from increased employment as a result of reduced incarceration. This benefit is post-program, based on research that establishes that similar summer programs reduce criminal activity by participants after the program has ended.
- **Additional lifetime earnings resulting from decreased lead exposure.** Because of the program, households with children under six that received water filters will have reduced lead exposure, which leads to higher IQ, and as a result those children will have higher lifetime earnings.
- **Additional earnings by AmeriCorps members.** Serving in AmeriCorps leads to increased wages and reduced unemployment post-national service through skill acquisition, as well as increased educational attainment post-service.
- **Living allowances, stipends, and education awards.** AmeriCorps members receive living allowances and stipends during their national service and receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award after successful completion.
- **Additional lifetime earnings for youth members.** AmeriCorps youth members are more likely to enroll in bachelor's programs than their peers due to their participation in the summer employment program, and as a result will have higher lifetime earnings.
- **Increased tax revenue for government.** Federal, state, and local governments receive more income tax revenue from increased AmeriCorps member earnings post-service and from water filter recipients once they enter the workforce. State and local governments also realize additional sales tax revenue related to those earnings. Federal and state governments also realize tax revenue from the taxable living allowances, stipends, and education awards provided to AmeriCorps members.



- **Reduced lifetime spending on corrections, public assistance, and social insurance.** Because of the increase in postsecondary educational attainment for AmeriCorps members, federal and state governments spend less on these items.

The estimated annual cost for the AMUS program for the 2021-2022 program year is \$3,699,768, of which \$1,559,497 is estimated to be funded by the federal government, or roughly 42 percent.

ROI Results

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

ROI Calculation	ROI Scenario		
	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Total benefits per federal dollar	\$3.86	\$6.00	\$7.28
Total benefits per funder dollar	\$1.63	\$2.53	\$3.07
Federal government benefits per federal dollar	\$0.41	\$0.89	\$1.16

The program produces strong returns in the short-, medium-, and long-term for *total benefits per federal dollar* and *total benefits per funder dollar*. The *federal government benefits per federal dollar* calculations estimate losses for the short- and medium-term scenarios and modest returns in the long-term scenario. Most criminal justice expenditures are at the state and local level, so these results are consistent with the design of AMUS.

The magnitude of the positive ROI estimates in the long-term scenarios are driven by the following factors:

- **Increased economic benefits and reduced costs due to reduced criminal activity.** AMUS’s work to reduce criminal activity leads to less property damage, additional community member earnings from reduced incarceration, and less spending on the criminal justice system.
- **Additional earnings by AmeriCorps members.** Serving in AmeriCorps leads to increased wages and reduced unemployment post-national service through skill acquisition, as well as increased educational attainment post-service.
- **Reduced lifetime spending on corrections, public assistance, and social insurance.** Because of the increase in postsecondary educational attainment for AmeriCorps members, federal and state governments spend less on these items.

About the Office of Research and Evaluation

The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America.

For more information, please contact evaluation@cns.gov.



About this Brief

The report summarized in this research brief was commissioned by AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation under Contract # GS00Q14OADU209 and Order # 95332A20F0068. Information in this report is in the public domain. Please, direct communications related to this report to Lily Zandniapour at lzandniapour@cns.gov and Emily McDonald at emcdonald@cns.gov. Cite the report as follows: Clark, D., Borgida, J., Miller, B., Modicamore, D., Pershing, J., Thompson, P., & Voigt, G. (2023). *Return on Investment Study: AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program Detroit*. ICF.

Produced and published at US taxpayer expense.