

City Service Corps Blueprint 2020

Bill de Blasio, NYC Mayor
Anusha Venkataraman, NYC Chief Service Officer



AmeriCorps





THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

October 2020

Dear Friends:

My administration has made a bold commitment to building a fairer and more equitable city. Achieving this ambitious goal is only possible when we use every tool at our disposal, which means harnessing the power of New Yorkers through service opportunities like the City Service Corps. For the past five years, this program has placed young people in positions of public service, empowering them to amplify the voices of their neighbors and inform sustainable government programs.

Since its launch in 2015, City Service Corps has engaged residents at a municipal level, making our city's initiatives more effective and efficient. I am tremendously proud of the important impact the Corps' members have made on our city and recognize the tremendous value of this program model. In this spirit, I am pleased to offer this City Service Corps Blueprint as a resource for cities across the nation that are equally invested in forging a fairer future for their communities.

There has never been a more critical time to take up the challenge of improving engagement with residents and creating more equitable communities. For months, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened our health, our economy, and has shone a spotlight on the disparities that exist in our neighborhoods. Engaging residents as AmeriCorps members is an innovative way for local governments to engage community experts and work towards an equitable recovery.

It is my hope that with this blueprint, cities across our country and beyond can build on our success, generate meaningful change in their neighborhoods, and establish a legacy of public service and experience that is strong enough to transcend any crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill de Blasio".

Bill de Blasio
Mayor

Message from the NYC Chief Service Officer:

The City Service Corps Blueprint was written before the pandemic hit New York City and our nation, testing the strength of our communities and our democracy. The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare longstanding inequities, requiring systemic solutions to intractable problems. The pandemic has also demonstrated the need for creative and efficient utilization of government resources. For these reasons, we could find no better time to publish the City Service Corps Blueprint.

It is our hope that the City Service Corps Blueprint can serve as a foundation for cities and municipalities who want to build a culture of service within their ranks. Integrating AmeriCorps members into City government not only brings on new talent, expertise, and perspectives rooted in community, but also ensures that civic engagement lies at the core of public service. Democracy is modeled and exercised starting within local government.

AmeriCorps has long been a training ground for leaders in public service, igniting a passion and setting those who serve on a lifelong journey of civic engagement. This was my experience as an AmeriCorps VISTA member serving at a small nonprofit, and this has been my journey, but I am far from alone. A service term in city government for many also solidifies a dedication to equity, a call to service never more relevant than now. And the opportunity to serve can be a life-changing opportunity in itself. For many native New Yorkers, City Service Corps has meant access to positions of power to make change from within City government, not to mention opened doors and future job opportunities.

We also witnessed the power of service during the height of the COVID-19 crisis in New York City. Members' perseverance, talents, and skills energized programs that needed to adapt to address changing needs, or transition to socially distant or virtual models of service delivery. Members also displayed unwavering commitment to helping the most vulnerable, including people experiencing homelessness, low-income parents and children, and immigrant communities.

Civic engagement and service make us stronger, as individuals and as communities. I am proud of the continued contributions of City Service Corps members towards building a more equitable city, and hope this Blueprint will provide the tools for other cities to join ours in growing the ranks of our civic leaders.

Yours in Service,



Anusha Venkataraman
NYC Chief Service Officer

Service



Executive Summary

Since its creation 10 years ago, NYC Service, a division of the Office of the Mayor, has had a strong commitment to national service programs as a pillar of its civic engagement strategy. It has emerged nationally as a leader of the national service movement, developing programs and serving as a convening organization for AmeriCorps programs across New York City.

NYC Service launched one of its keystone AmeriCorps programs, City Service Corps, in 2015. City Service Corps is unique both in its form and function: an AmeriCorps State & National program that places members at New York City agencies to fill vital community needs, with a funding model that brings public agencies and private donors together to make an impact on New York City. Those serving in the program build capacity, add value to their host agency and increase effectiveness, efficiency, scale and/or reach of new or existing high priority projects.

Now, with this City Service Corps Blueprint, New York City is providing communities across the nation with the building blocks to create their own City Service Corps programs. This Blueprint gives a comprehensive look into the creation of City Service Corps, the ongoing operation of the program, and the key tools used to build the program.

Part one of the Blueprint details what a municipality should do before it launches a new City Service Corps program: 1. Assess and Establish Needs; 2. Build Buy-In; 3. Make the Case and Secure Supporters. Part two focuses on the program administration, looking at how to 4. Design Your Program; 5. Operate Your Program; and 6. Support Your Members. Finally, part three of the Blueprint looks strategically at how to 7. Evaluate and Demonstrate Impact and 8. Create Sustainability.

The information presented in the Blueprint provides a strong foundation to launch an AmeriCorps program in any community. It is a program that provides meaningful impact for AmeriCorps members, for the city government, and for the greater community.

Benefits to starting a City Service Corps in your municipality:

- **Workforce outcomes:** Members receive training during their service term that is of benefit to the city beyond their term
- 35% of the over 500 members who have served in the first five program years have been hired by the city
- **Education:** \$2.1M in education awards have been awarded between 2015-2020- much of that going back into institutions in the city
- **Contributions to city agency host sites:** Members influence new and growing program areas at their host site
 - Members impacted over 150,000 low income New Yorkers directly through community outreach, training and program delivery
- In the first 5 program years, 90% of host site supervisors have said that members increase effectiveness and efficiency of the projects that they serve on and often bring new, fresh ideas to the project
- Members have been able to expand services in key areas such as:
 - » Allowing composting and recycling education to be delivered to tens of thousands of New York students, businesses and residents
 - » Reaching hundreds of immigrants through Know Your Rights forums
 - » Developing emergency preparedness outreach and trainings for specific targeted communities at high risk
 - » Leading community residents in environmental stewardship trainings and volunteer days
 - » Deepening programming for foster care families

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1.

Assess and Establish Needs

Before you launch a City Service Corps program, you should assess what needs an AmeriCorps program can address in your community.

The concept for City Service Corps was formulated shortly after then-Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin was appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio in April 2014. After holding several meetings with nonprofit and City agency leaders across New York City, Gavin found that a central theme was that these leaders had a desire to expand service and opportunities to address critical community needs. While NYC Service already had an AmeriCorps program called NYC Civic Corps to build capacity around volunteer programming at nonprofit organizations that would go on to engage many more nonprofit partners, there was not a counterpart for City agencies.

NYC Service also connected with the Aspen Institute's Franklin Project, which envisioned that all young people committed a year to military or civilian service between the ages of 18 and 28. In the shorter term, they looked to expand national service opportunities to 1 million across the country by 2023.

The next step was to bring these parties together with New York City agencies to assess how new service opportunities could help government agencies meet their capacity needs and better serve the city's communities.

NYC Service joined with the Franklin Project and United Way of New York City to host a Service Summit in New York City on July 9, 2014. An audience that included community-based organization leaders and potential funders heard panel discussions and participated in breakout sessions to brainstorm about volunteerism and service in New York City. Mayor de Blasio also strongly championed national service in remarks he delivered to the audience that day.

That summit would prove to be the spark that eventually would result in City Service Corps.

NYC Service worked closely with a number of organizations in a Planning Committee and by February 2015, the idea for City Service Corps had solidified. The program would place members in city government agencies to address critical community needs. NYC Service applied to become an AmeriCorps program in the spring of 2015 under a now defunct CNCS grant program, Partnerships Challenge. NYC Service was awarded AmeriCorps slots in August 2015.

During the next several months, City Service Corps would evolve from an idea, to a plan, and finally, a reality. On November 9, 2015 – less than a year-and-a-half after the Service Summit – City Service Corps launched, with a diverse corps of 53 members serving at 11 NYC agencies. Fifty-five percent of members were between 22 and 28 years old, and 57% were female.

Since its inception, City Service Corps has operated with an idea that there would be three overarching program outcomes:

1. Develop a workforce of highly skilled young people.
2. Improve the communities in which they serve.
3. Create a new generation of leaders who prioritize civic engagement.

These benefits, also known as the trifecta of benefits, have been at the core of City Service Corps' program design, professional development, and member assignment.



Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Contact Your State Offices

If you are considering building out an AmeriCorps program, you should be in touch early on with your State Service Commission, who are the state partners of Corporation for National and Community Service who administer AmeriCorps grants and funding at the state and local level. Program officers there can help you figure out whether an AmeriCorps program is right for you.

Questions to Ask Before Launching a City Service Corps Program:



1. What is the mission of this program?
2. What community needs would be addressed or fulfilled by this program?
3. Is this program bringing unique roles and added capacity to the agencies?
4. How long will the program last (e.g., 10 months, 12 months)?
5. How many hours will the members serve?
6. What will the budget be for this program?
7. Whom will you recruit for the program? How will you conduct outreach to potential host sites? To participants?
8. How will you structure the program - who will administer, how will you fund and who will supervise members?
9. Because AmeriCorps members are not allowed to engage in political activities (among other AmeriCorps prohibited activities), do you have structures in place to ensure that they have meaningful, non-political service?
10. How does a program like this build into your overall human capital strategy or workforce development plan?

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Understand and embrace the trifecta of benefits of a municipal service year program – workforce development, community outreach, and civic leadership. Define the impact and theory of change for the roles/program areas at the front end so that outcomes drive the design of the service year roles.

– Paula Gavin, NYC Chief Service Officer, 2014-2018, and architect of City Service Corps



2.

Build Buy-In

Because you may be working closely with agencies outside your own, you should build strong relationships with agency leaders. Leaning into both the capacity building aspects as well as the workforce development aspects will allow for broad appeal and interest in your program.

City government agencies were recruited for City Service Corps host site participation based on their interest and the types of projects that they would provide for their members. The fact that agencies weren't required to participate was an important key to successful host site experiences, as can be seen later in the Blueprint. As the program chose to focus on the capacity building element of the members' service as opposed to focusing on one specific issue/area, in recruitment of host sites and partners we were able to cast a wide net across all agencies to request member projects.

Over the course of the first few years of operating City Service Corps, it became clear that a similar resource was also highly needed by our City agency's nonprofit partners. In the first three years, City agencies would sometimes support the placement of members at nonprofits working on issues that were critical to City programs, such as members at nonprofit compost collection sites that built into the Department of Sanitation's organics program. In year four, only City agencies were delegated as City Service Corps host sites, which allowed for better operational and member training alignment. Many of the community-based organization partners have moved to one of NYC Service's other AmeriCorps programs that is solely for nonprofits, NYC Civic Corps.

**Community-based partners were eliminated in year 4 of the City Service Corps program.*

| Agency | Corps Name (number of members) | Community-Based Organization Partner* |
|--|---|---|
| Administration for Children's Services | Community Service Ambassador Corps (5) | No |
| Department of Sanitation | Organics Corps (7) New York City Housing Authority Recycling Corps (3) | Yes - Organics Corps members were placed at community-based organizations |
| Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs | Immigrant Services (2) | No |
| Young Men's Initiative | Mentor Corps (3) Read More Corps (9) | Yes- Mentor Corps members were placed at Mentoring Partnership of NY Read More Corps members were placed at high needs elementary schools through Reading Rescue |
| Human Resources Administration | Neighborhood Corps (3) | No |
| Department of Consumer Affairs/Office of Financial Empowerment | Financial Empowerment Corps (1) | No |
| Department of Health and Mental Hygiene | Public Health Corps (5) | No |
| Department of Education | School Technology Corps (4) | No |
| Department for the Aging | Senior Services Corps (1) | No |
| Department of Probation | Young Adult Success Corps (8) | No |

How to: Develop a Host Site Application Process



Before a program year begins, NYC Service ensures that each City Service Corps project has the tools it needs for a successful term. This involves getting agencies with appropriate and exciting projects on board as host sites. Having host sites secured is also a critical piece to creating a successful initial application for AmeriCorps members.

1. An annual application. City agencies must apply each year to host City Service Corps members. This ensures that the agency has specific projects and plans designed for incoming City Service Corps members. This also helps NYC Service remain up to date with agency personnel changes and project changes and to ensure that members are not the long-term answer to staffing projects. An annual application also allows new agencies to apply for the program.

NYC Service requires City Service Corps host sites to focus their project plans for members on at least one of three areas:

- 1) Community engagement/outreach
- 2) Project management
- 3) Research and data evaluation

Narrowing member roles to these three categories allows the host sites to focus on impact and helps NYC Service staff develop training modules that can support member development directly in applicable member service areas. NYC Service also requires agencies to align their AmeriCorps member projects with the agency mission and/or the City's strategic plan, OneNYC. All the positions must also spend at least 10 percent of time doing direct service so that City Service Corps members can interact with the community and understand the full impact of their projects.

2. Specific requirements across for host sites to address. In its application, NYC Service asks potential host sites about the following:

- The community need that would be addressed by City Service Corps members
- Written position descriptions for each member
- A list of all supervisors, titles, and experience coaching and mentoring
- The way in which host sites will support recruitment of their City Service Corps members
- The application also has specific questions for new and returning host sites to help them think through how best to place their members, who serve for a 10-month period and need to hit the ground running.

3. Rubric for standardizing the review process. NYC Service has a rubric for reviewing applications. Two staff members review each application according to the rubric, average their two scores, and discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement for the potential host site. During this stage, staff members also check to ensure the projects do not violate any AmeriCorps rules. If the NYC Service team extends an offer to the host site, and the host site accepts the placement and funding commitment, they would then be included in the interview and recruitment process.

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The initial outreach to City agency leadership was a ‘cold call’ email or phone call. The reaction was overwhelmingly positive because leadership saw the power and energy that service year members could bring to their agency mission.

- Paula Gavin, NYC Service Chief Service Officer, 2014-2018, and Architect of City Service Corps

4. Timeline established well in advance of the application deadlines. City Service Corps' host site application timeline is as follows:

November: Information sessions/calls completed for interested new host sites.

December: NYC Service releases the host site application.

End of February: Initial host sites are selected in preparation for member recruitment in March.

End of April: If there are additional slots available after the February deadline, applications are accepted on a rolling deadline (meaning that acceptances are granted as NYC Service approves the agency/organization) until the end of April.

Early August: Host site supervisors receive a mandatory in person orientation from NYC Service.

Early September: City Service Corps members start their service at the agency/organization.

Develop Champions for Your AmeriCorps Program

Having city officials who fully support your AmeriCorps program's mission and vision is critical to the program's success. City Service Corps has cultivated champions at the head of the agencies and in direct supervisory roles. We have done so by ensuring that commissioners and other leaders know about the AmeriCorps members placed at their agencies and the contributions they are making to the agency.

City Service Corps started with agencies that NYC Service felt would be a good fit for the program and asked them to opt in if they were interested. That allowed City Service Corps to constantly have new and fresh projects and supervisors in addition to ongoing projects on which members are very much needed over the course of the year. Develop champions in agencies early – even if they are not managing members. We had several deputy commissioners and other senior staff at agencies who were – and are – champions of our work and allowed us to more easily enter into new areas of that agency because of their support.

Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

This timeline was created to align with New York City government's fiscal year, which runs July-June. As it is important for agencies to think about their member needs along with the fiscal commitment, NYC Service is in close contact with the City's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to make sure the application aligns with fiscal deadlines expected from agencies.



3.

Make the Case and Secure Supporters

Now that you have champions and agencies interested in participating in your program, you need to ensure that you have funding and support for the program.

Agencies that established the greatest need for national service members also had limited funds to sponsor those members. So, from its inception, City Service Corps developed a unique public-private partnership model that has allowed members to successfully serve at these city government agencies.

In the original plan to fund City Service Corps, NYC Service formalized a model that required a financial commitment from three sources: 1/3 from private funding, 1/3 from the government agency sponsoring the position, and 1/3 from the host site (either city agency or community-based organization). Often, the members would be serving at the government agency. In those cases, the agency would fund 2/3 of the position.

Because the City Service Corps program model has evolved to only place members at city government agencies, the funding model has evolved as well.

In 2019-2020, agency host sites agreed to pay for the members' \$18,500 stipend and the related payroll taxes (\$1,415.25). Private funding is used for professional development, monthly Metro Cards (which are free for members), health insurance, evaluation, and other costs. Once the stipend, education award, health insurance, training, and other costs are included, the total is about \$30,000 per City Service Corps member.

While City Service Corps is part of the AmeriCorps family, this formula is unique. NYC Service makes no funding requests from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) or the New York State Commission on National and Community Service (State Commission) for City Service Corps to enable program flexibility, but does request the Segal Education Award for members who successfully complete the program. For the 2019-2020 term, members who successfully complete 1,700 hours are

eligible to receive a \$6,195 Segal Education Award, which can be used to pay off student loans or to pay for current and future eligible educational expenses.

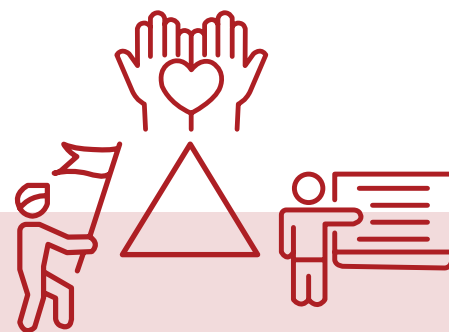
In 2015, the program received a federal three-year Partnerships Challenge Education Award Only Grant from CNCS. This support enabled City Service Corps members to be part of AmeriCorps without any grant dollars from CNCS. Because of the AmeriCorps designation, members would be able to defer payment of eligible student loans and they would be eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of City Service Corps. While the Partnerships Challenge program was phased out at the federal level, NYC Service has received grant approvals or renewals from the New York State Commission and CNCS each year. The City Service Corps program is contingent on these annual approvals.

While the funding from agencies went hand-in-hand with their interest in hosting members, NYC Service still had to make a strong case for City Service Corps support to private foundations. And it has successfully done so, through its development of and commitment to the trifecta of benefits (community impact, professional and workforce development, and civic leadership). This impact has been at the heart of making the case for external support for the AmeriCorps program.

At the launch of the inaugural program year, City Service Corps had received a total of \$550,000 from seven private sources: American Express, Citi Foundation, CSX, New York Community Trust, Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, Lizzie and Jonathan M. Tisch Family Foundation, UJA-Federation of New York, and The Walt Disney Company. Trinity Wall Street also served as a funder in years two and three of the program. NYC Service worked with its nonprofit partner, The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, to secure these funds and ensure that they would be accessible for the program year. Citi Foundation the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund have funded each year of the program and continue to fund City Service Corps into the 2020-2021 of the program.

NYC Agencies Hosting City Service Corps Members in 2019-2020:

- Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
- Civic Engagement Commission (CEC)
- Department of Education (DOE)
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
- Department of Probation (DOP)
- Department of Sanitation (DSNY)
- Department of Social Services (DSS): Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS)
- Mayor's Office of Data Analytics (MODA)
- Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA)
- New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks)
- New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM)
- New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)



Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Establish Your Trifecta of Benefits

It's quite important to have your core mission, vision, and values established from the beginning of the program. It makes your case for support stronger, and it drives the design and operation of your program. City Service Corps' Trifecta of Benefits are guiding principles of the City Service Corps AmeriCorps program:

- 1. Community Impact:** Members get the opportunity to serve on projects that have meaning and impact across the entire city. Agencies also get a burst of new blood that bring new ideas and connections to the communities that the agency may not have had before.
- 2. Professional and Workforce Development:** Because of our strong emphasis on training, we are building up the next generation of public and nonprofit leaders, which benefits the entire City. We see this as a workforce development strategy for the City, as a consistent 30-40% of members have been hired by the City each year. Especially in light of the fact that Baby Boomers will be retiring in large numbers over the coming years, our city benefits from having people know and understand the work. We also encourage all our members to take the Civil Service tests so they are ready.
- 3. Civic Leadership:** While training them for work, we are also giving our members a platform to find their voice and passion to prepare for lifelong civic engagement. We give members the opportunity to practice their leadership skills through developing and managing committees that plan after-hours trainings, service days, member newsletters, and member events. And these experiences make a lasting impact: An evaluation of City Service Corps found that 56.1 percent of members responding to a CNCS exit survey said their experience made them more likely to vote, 67.5 percent were more likely to donate money or goods to a cause/issue they cared about, and 45.6 percent were more likely to volunteer.



City Service Corps encapsulates the Citi Foundation's dedication to addressing the complex social, economic and environmental challenges facing communities across New York City – Citi's hometown since its founding in 1812 – and its mission as a Foundation to help young people pursue their career and economic ambitions.

In addition to providing workplace experiences, City Service Corps empowers members to develop the leadership skills critical to success and inculcates a civic engagement mindset that often stays with members post-service. Workforce and leadership development are key components of Pathways to Progress, the Citi Foundation's \$100 million commitment to connect young people globally, including across New York City, to on-ramps to opportunity.

City Service Corps is a great example of harnessing the resources that exist today, but deploying them in new ways to drive better outcomes for tomorrow.

- Citi Foundation

4.

Design Your Program

Once you have demonstrated the need for your program, as well as developed champions and made the case, the work of designing the program details begins.

Since 2015, NYC Service has built a solid infrastructure for the City Service Corps program. It has a clear mission, vision, and theory of change, it has developed clear performance measures that comply with the regulations established by CNCS, and it has clearly laid out the roles and responsibilities of multiple stakeholders.

Establishing the core of the program

Before you can launch your AmeriCorps program, you must establish a mission, vision, and theory of change that will drive the design and operations of the program.

City Service Corps' Mission: Partner with City agencies to address priorities through direct engagement with residents, developing new programming and managing aspects of resident-facing programming.

1. City Service Corps' Vision: City agencies will more effectively and efficiently carry out their mission to make our city a more equitable place for all New Yorkers.
2. City Service Corps' Theory of Change: City Service Corps will engage participants in meaningful community-based opportunities. The program will develop a workforce of highly skilled individuals, improve the communities in which they work, and create a new generation of civic leaders who prioritize community & civic engagement.
3. Through its innovative public-private funding model, City Service Corps will serve as a model for other cities to create their own municipal corps programs.

Specifying Stakeholder Roles & Expectations

NYC Service has delineated specific roles and expectations for each of its stakeholders: AmeriCorps members, host sites, CNCS, the State Commission, as well as NYC Service itself. In addition, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City has a specific role to play as nonprofit partner managing private funds to the program. The Mayor's Fund is a nonprofit that works with City agencies, foundations, and community-based organizations in New York City to advance initiatives that improve the lives of New Yorkers from all walks of life and across all five boroughs.

Role & Expectations of City Service Corps AmeriCorps Member

- Serve a minimum number of AmeriCorps required hours.
- Fulfill position description requirements and host site expectations
- Attend and participate in mandatory monthly professional development trainings
- Complete weekly timesheets, accurate monthly reports, evaluations, surveys and other program requirements
- Be an ambassador for AmeriCorps, NYC Service, City Service Corps, and host site

| AmeriCorps State and National Designation | Hour Requirements |
|---|-------------------|
| Full-Time | 1,700 |
| Three Quarters Time | 1,200 |
| Half-Time | 900 |
| Reduced Half-Time | 675 |
| Quarter-Time | 450 |
| Minimal-Time and Summer Associate | 300 |
| AmeriCorps Affiliate | 100 |

Source: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/amount-eligibility-and>

Role & Expectations of Host Site

- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and cover member living stipend – members cannot start at the host site until MOU, which includes budget transfer codes, has been received by NYC Service
- Create position descriptions and corresponding performance measures
- Assign a City Service Corps supervisor who is responsible for the daily supervision of Corps Member(s) including approving timesheets, approving monthly reports, and maintaining open and continuous communication with NYC Service
- Ensure City Service Corps member is provided with the materials that allow for successful service (organizational ID, email address, outreach documents, dedicated desk space, etc.)

Role & Expectations of NYC Service

- Develop the operational plan for City Service Corps and oversee the implementation and management of the program
- Ensure that the City Service Corps program follows all rules and meets all regulations set by CNCS and the State Commission
- Select and agree upon any agency, contractor, or partner involved with City Service Corps
- Oversee the outreach, recruitment, selection and onboarding process for Corps Members
- Lead City Service Corps supervisor orientation, send regular supervisor updates, hold site visits with supervisors, and conduct quarterly trainings with supervisors
- Manage all reporting to CNCS, including host site performance measures, the State Commission and any other funders
- Plan and provide monthly member professional development trainings
- Maintain all member files including all AmeriCorps compliance documents
- Validate and verify metrics collected at host sites
- Provide monthly MetroCard to Corps Member(s) & oversee member payroll
- Monitor service of members including conducting check-ins with City Service Corps members and host site supervisors quarterly

Role of Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City

- Nonprofit partner that builds partnerships, procures funding for promising, evidence-based models, evaluates the efficacy of new programs and policies; brings innovative solutions to scale which are responsive to the emerging needs of the city.
- Manages procurement and contracting with all consultants for professional development trainings, evaluations, and projects funded through private funding.

Role of Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS):

- Oversee AmeriCorps (City Service Corps members are AmeriCorps Members)
- Provide oversight and guidance as well as disperses the Segal Education Awards which are administered through the National Service Trust

Role of NYS Commission on National and Community Service (State Commission)

- The State Commission administers programs funded by CNCS, including AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps Education Awards programs
- Monitor compliance with AmeriCorps rules
- Provide training, and technical assistance, and support for NYC Service

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City Service Corps has allowed for our agency to expand its outreach efforts in educating New Yorkers about how to be prepared for emergencies. Our members have worked on various outreach strategies that have allowed for us to reach out to populations such as Spanish-speaking seniors, landlords, and nonprofit community members. The members each brought their own passion to the communities they were serving, and have created lasting partnerships. To this day, our agency remains in contact with the partners that our members have worked with.

- Katelyn James, New York City Emergency Management

How to: Develop and Report on Performance Measures



AmeriCorps programs, including City Service Corps, are required to meet and report on specific AmeriCorps performance measures (outputs and outcomes) in mid- and end-of year reports to CNCS.

In the initial Partnerships Challenge grant with the Corporation for National and Community Service, NYC Service selected specific performance measures that covered several, but not all, host sites. These included measures around environmental sustainability awareness, student tutoring progress and workforce development training.

The performance measures have evolved. In recent cycles, the performance measures have broadened so they capture all the service members are doing. This also has the benefit of better aligning with the AmeriCorps national performance measures.

1. Develop outputs and related outcomes.

- The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has a specific list of national outputs and outcomes that programs can use when applying for an AmeriCorps grant. However, programs can also apply to use custom outputs and outcomes, upon approval from CNCS.
- City Service Corps uses a mix of custom and national performance measures for its program. For instance, for the custom output number of low-income New Yorkers made aware of services, the related outcomes are: number of low-income New Yorkers who were more likely to use services (custom) and number of agencies who exhibited expansion of effectiveness, efficiency, scale or reach because of a member's service (national performance measure).
- As part of the City Service Corps program, host sites also create specific performance measures for each member so NYC Service can collectively tell the story of impact at the member/host site level.

2. Create a standard system of reporting.

- As a centralized administrator of the AmeriCorps program, NYC Service needs to ensure that agencies and members are reporting the same type of information. City Service Corps participants submit reports via an online service called America Learns to NYC Service on a monthly basis. Each host site supervisor is then required to verify and validate the member report each month. These monthly reports ask members to provide qualitative accounts of the successes and challenges they have faced throughout the past month of service, along with quantitative progress made on performance measurements.

3. Train host site supervisors and members on how to report.

- NYC Service conducts an in-depth three-unit training series for members around data collection, verification and validation and how to utilize data to tell the story of impact of their specific agency placement. NYC Service also trains supervisors in measurement techniques and best practices in reporting at supervisor orientation each summer before the member term begins.
- To ensure that the sites and members understand the measures and report them accurately, NYC Service explains and reviews the measures at orientations, member trainings, and supervisor meetings.

4. Review submitted performance reports.

- Monthly, NYC Service staff reviews the data at the member, host site and program levels to spot trends, celebrate successes and address challenges seen in the report. NYC Service staff also checks data collection at the site visits, with a random set of members selected for each set of site visits to review data and data collection based on the reviews of the monthly reports. AmeriCorps programs can be audited up to 7 years after a program year has finished, so it is important to verify host sites are submitting valid data and have a way to store source data for this extended period of time.



Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Navigate the unique challenges of managing AmeriCorps programs

AmeriCorps has specific rules and regulations that programs are required to follow, whether they receive funding from the federal program or not. It is crucial that program staff have a deep understanding of these rules, what aspects of their program put them at risk of potentially violating these rules, and what safeguards they are putting in place to ensure rules are not being violated. This should be clearly explained to and reviewed with host site supervisors and members of the program at several points throughout the program year.

Those regulations are extensive and include ensuring members do not work on programs that influence legislation. In practice, city government agencies often work to set and influence policy. Additionally, AmeriCorps members cannot exactly duplicate any work the agency is already engaging in and cannot displace the work of any staff, volunteers, or interns the agency was planning to hire. To ensure that members are properly assigned at their agencies, City Service Corps carefully vets position descriptions during the host site application process to confirm that they do not violate AmeriCorps regulations. Additionally, program staff ask open ended questions about the member's service and major projects they are working on during host site visits to check that members are actually working on approved projects.



5.

Implement Your Program

How you operate your AmeriCorps program depends on your design. You may be supervising members directly at your organization/agency, or – as in NYC Service’s case – you may be administering a program with members assigned to external supervisors and host sites.

Since NYC Service holds the AmeriCorps contract for City Service Corps, the office serves as the central program administrator. NYC Service oversees finance, compliance and human resources functions for the program. However, members do not report to NYC Service on a day-to-day basis; they report to agency host sites.

Systems

NYC Service has implemented several systems to ensure the successful operation of the City Service Corps model.

NYC Service tracks City Service Corps members’ hours on a weekly basis, through the online tracking tool America Learns. Each City Service Corps member has their own login and records the hours they served during the week. Host site supervisors and NYC Service staff must approve the timesheets. Creating an easy-to-use timekeeping system is a critical part of running an AmeriCorps supported program, as program staff must be able to demonstrate members have completed a minimum number of hours to receive their Education Award.

NYC Service, as a division of the Mayor’s Office, does not have the ability to pay AmeriCorps members serving at other City agencies. In addition, City Service Corps members are federally prohibited from being considered City employees and cannot be placed on New York City’s payroll. Therefore, NYC Service sets up and administers payroll for each member through the payroll vendor Community Software Solutions (CSS) . At the beginning of each service term, NYC Service staff enters the information of each member into the system. Then, every other week, staff must input City Service Corps member service days, so those members can be paid by direct deposit or

payroll card. Using a payroll vendor allows NYC Service to centralize the payment of members and remove that administrative burden from host sites.

Members who need health insurance coverage receive it at no additional cost to them, as part of the City Service Corps program. They currently receive coverage through Cigna health insurance via The Corps Network, a national program that provides this option for many AmeriCorps programs across the country. Members can opt in and out of coverage at any point during the program. NYC Service is responsible for enrolling interested members, and ensuring the monthly payment of the health insurance premiums for all enrolled. AmeriCorps supported programs working with full-time members (those serving 1200 or 1700 hours) are required to offer Minimum Essential coverage to members who are in need of health care coverage.

Compliance

NYC Service is responsible for ensuring that City Service Corps members and supervisors know, understand, and follow specific rules and regulations governing an AmeriCorps supported program. These rules and regulations, known as “Allowable, Prohibited and Unallowable Member Activities,” cover a range of activities, from lobbying on behalf of legislation to conducting voter registration; from engaging in religious instruction to benefitting for-profit businesses. NYC Service reviews these rules and regulations numerous times throughout the year – at members’ orientation and monthly trainings, and at supervisors’ orientation and quarterly meetings .

NYC Service must complete a National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) for each City Service Corps Member before they can gain service hours, as this is a requirement based on federal law that oversees AmeriCorps programming. If it is not properly conducted, programs could face fines and are at risk of being shut down. AmeriCorps supported programs are required to certify these background checks have been completed

before the member's start date on the AmeriCorps website in order for a member to gain any service hours or be officially enrolled in the program. Some host sites require additional background check documents or checks before a member can begin. NYC Service works with the accepted member and the host site to ensure that these are complete before the member begins their service.

NYC Service staff also conduct three site visits with each member and supervisor during the program year to ensure compliance with all AmeriCorps and NYC Service rules, verify the accuracy of the reported performance data, as well as coach members and supervisors on any challenges they may be facing during the program year.

Documentation

As an AmeriCorps supported program, CNCS requires NYC Service maintain documentation on each of its members. This includes the member's program application, identification documents, background check authorization and results, evaluations, and exit documentation.

NYC Service has worked with the City government's technology and cybersecurity professionals to create an encrypted, secure server to store all member information. Additionally, NYC Service started contracting with Box.com to securely collect member documentation that includes personal identifying information. Members must present their documentation for staff to review and certify at a member pre-orientation.



Day-to-Day Supervision

While NYC Service is responsible for program administration, the host sites are responsible for the day-to-day supervision of City Service Corps members. This requires close partnership and regular communication with host sites to ensure that everyone understands the roles of City Service Corps members and the responsibilities of supervisors to follow NYC Service policies as well as AmeriCorps federal rules and regulations.

City Service Corps members, while not employees of the host sites, must follow the rules of their host sites, which are reviewed at an on-site orientation that is required for all host sites to provide for their member. This also requires regular communication and contact between host site supervisors and NYC Service.

City Service Corps members must have access to and be trained on the relevant systems and programs at their host sites and host site supervisors are required to have weekly check-ins with members. These expectations are clearly laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the host site, in the host site supervisor handbook, and during supervisor orientation before members begin their service.

“
I have had the pleasure of completing two years of service with NYC Service. Both terms I served with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at the Brownsville Health Action Center. I had an amazing supervisor who supported me the whole way through and even now. Over these two years I have been given plenty of space to be creative.

- Keira Sutton, City Service Corps Member 2017-2018

How to: Operate an AmeriCorps Program Efficiently



NYC Service administers four AmeriCorps supported programs: City Service Corps, NYC Civic Corps, NYC VISTA, and Peer Corps. The NYC Service staff operating these programs includes one managing director, two managers, and five coordinators, who are responsible for managing professional development, administrative functions, host site visits, member concerns, funder reports, and more.

Whether you are operating multiple AmeriCorps programs within your office or plan events with other AmeriCorps programs in your city, finding efficiencies and sharing resources can be helpful.

- 1. Share resources.** From orientation materials to site visit checklists, many of the resources created for one AmeriCorps program could be useful for another AmeriCorps program. In fact, City Service Corps is making many of its resources available as part of this Blueprint
- 2. Create bigger events for members.** The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) requires certain events to be held each year – orientation and an AmeriCorps kickoff, for example. Combining these events with other programs provides an opportunity to make these events bigger – because of both larger budgets and more people involved – and have a stronger impact on members.
- 3. Communicate across programs.** It is important to have specific staff members as the contacts for a particular program, to provide consistent contact and support for members throughout their program year. However, program staff members can also solve common problems and develop common systems if they are working cross-program with other staff members. NYC Service has staff committees focused on training and compliance to keep the focus on improving these important areas of our AmeriCorps programs.
- 4. Create a stronger network.** Operating four AmeriCorps programs at NYC Service allows for a larger pool of members to share experiences and create lasting connections with each other. NYC Service provides volunteering events for members, and we also provide informal events, such as board game nights, which allow them to get to know each other outside of their official roles.

Snapshot of a City Service Corps September 4, 2019-July 10, 2020

75

Members
as of August 2019



\$18,500

Stipend (disbursed evenly during
the entire 10.5-month term)

Other NYC Service Benefits:

- Monthly professional development training
- Exposure to city government
- Professional experience
- Gear



Health Insurance
\$3,500

Covered by NYC
Service for their
entire term if the
member chooses
to enroll

Impact Areas (aligned with CNCS Focus Areas):

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Education & Youth Development
- Environmental Stewardship
- Public Health



Commuting Expense

Members receive free Unlimited
Monthly MetroCards for their
entire term (a \$1,397 value)

CNCS Benefits:

- Eli Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion (\$6,095)
- Forbearance and deferment for qualified loans
- Interest paid on qualified loans if term completed successfully
- Child care assistance



Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Mind the details

In its first year, NYC Service staff hit several hurdles in setting up workers' compensation and disability insurance, which is required for AmeriCorps members. These hurdles were unique to AmeriCorps programs that operate in the municipal government setting.

The statute governing AmeriCorps specifies that members are not employees. For this reason, New York City government could not consider them employees, and thus could not cover them. NYC Service spent a significant amount of time working to get proper workers' compensation and disability insurance - and eventually did so by purchasing it through a private insurer.

There were also challenges in getting a system set up for payroll. Instead of building our own system, we first asked other agencies that pay individuals who are not employees of the City about their systems. Early on, we were connected with the agency that oversees the City's Summer Youth Employment Program which engages - and pays - thousands of youth each summer. Their contract with the payroll vendor (CSS) was amended to include City Service Corps and a new interface was built for our program needs. That interface includes a program side where NYC Service staff enter payroll details each week as well as a member-facing side where members can download paystubs and tax documents. Because NYC Service doesn't own the contract, we need to work with the contracting agency each year to ensure that we are included. The set up also requires that each agency's funding for the members be routed through the contract-holding agency who send the payroll amount to the vendor each payroll period. We are fortunate that the system has been very user-friendly and provided a very reliable means by which to distribute the member stipend.

While NYC Service is required to do a background check for each member before they can begin service, partner agencies may have additional background checks or other administrative paperwork that needs to be completed before the member can begin. Accepted agencies need to alert NYC Service to their process after being accepted as a host site. The agency is then expected to reach out to the member once they have accepted their offer so any agency processes do not delay the member start date.

Start early, think through all human resources needs and requirements, develop partnerships with key agency staff in the budget and administrative offices, and plan ahead.

6.

Support City Service Corps Members

A big part of your job – whether you are directly supervising or centrally administering a program – is to support the AmeriCorps members so that they can successfully make an impact on their community.

City Service Corps devotes significant time and effort to developing the leadership skills of its members, budgeting about \$1,250 per member. At the core of leadership development are monthly trainings, coaching, and mini grants given to members. At the same time, City Service Corps focuses on the leadership development of member supervisors, ensuring that they provide strong mentorship to members throughout the service year.

Monthly Trainings

City Service Corps requires all members to attend 10 group professional development trainings as well as an eight-day orientation at the beginning of the year. To drive home the importance of attendance, City Service Corps provides a professional development calendar to members and supervisors at the beginning of each service term. As an incentive to attend the monthly trainings, City Service Corps also distributes the members' monthly unlimited MetroCards during the trainings, as well as any other important materials.

City Service Corps develops the overall curriculum and administers the trainings each month, bringing in trainers and guest speakers as needed. The trainings are focused around five units to ensure that each individual training is aligned to the overall purpose of City Service Corps: 1) Civic Engagement and Leadership; 2) Workforce Skills; 3) Community Needs; 4) Career Building Skills; and 5) AmeriCorps Knowledge.

The program also partners with the City University of New York to administer four to five trainings per year, using experiential learning to teach members soft skills, such as public speaking.

Mini Grants

City Service Corps usually offers members the opportunity to use mini professional development grants of \$200/member at any point during the service year. Members submit their requests for the grants, which could be used for events such as a conference or a class such as an advanced Excel workshop, and City Service Corps would approve the request and track the training. Only about 30-50% of the mini grant funds are typically used during the program year. Because of this, NYC Service in 2019-2020 has begun to create a monthly training opportunities newsletter, partially based on past spending by members, to assist members in finding opportunities to use their mini-grant.

Coaching

City Service Corps offers one-on-one career coaching for interested corps members. They will also try to connect members who would like to be coached with someone in their field of interest.

During professional development training, members create three- to five-year career plans, receive resume editing assistance, and review cover letter writing.

Other Opportunities

Throughout the service year, City Service Corps offers hard skills workshops to help build members' confidence and competency with technology, such as Excel or PowerPoint. NYC Service offers cross-AmeriCorps program Learning Circles throughout the year. These are additional training opportunities developed by members, for members. A committee comprised of members from each NYC Service-administered AmeriCorps program creates the Learning Circle plan each year.

Finally, City Service Corps provides members with a couple leadership/skill development books at the beginning of each year, and it administers a professional development library, allowing members to check out books on leadership styles, career development, and GREs/MCATs/LSATs, among other topics of interest.

Supervisor Leadership Development

Just as City Service Corps has clear professional development training path for members, it also is intentional about leadership training for supervisors of those members. Often, a supervisor may have little or no previous leadership and management experience prior to supervising the City Service Corps member.

City Service Corps staff provides robust support to these supervisors, developing trainings for leading effective one on ones, understanding how to lead a member through a project, coaching and mentoring basics, and giving/receiving feedback. Supervisors also have opportunities to share best practices.



How to: Recruit Members



Before a program can develop the leadership skills of its members, it must find members who are interested in the program. One of the desired outcome of the program from the beginning was that the program would look like the residents of the City. In order to ensure that the program is recruiting diverse applicants, program recruitment takes place at career fairs and information sessions throughout the City University of New York system, tabling at community fairs, presentations to public schools and youth and young adult service nonprofits. Additionally, a minimum of 30% of the marketing budget is spent on advertising in community and ethnic media outlets.

The member recruitment process begins several months before the start of the City Service Corps program year. In March, City Service Corps launches its recruitment process. City Service Corps has developed its own application for membership. It also has developed a multistep process for screening and interviewing interested candidates:

Part 1: Screen the Candidate

- A candidate fills out and submits the online application. Candidates list their preferred projects as part of the application.
- A staff member is assigned to review the application.
- If the application passes this initial review, the candidate is contacted to schedule a phone screening.
- Phone screening is conducted and recorded in applicant's application.
- After the screening, the staff member who conducted the screening then recommends whether to move forward with the candidate.

Part 2: Interview the Candidate

- If the candidate moves on to the interview process, the application, notes, resume, and an interview form are sent to the host site supervisor. Host sites also must schedule and conduct the interview during a specified timeline.
- The host site supervisor interviews candidate, either in person or on the phone.
- The host site supervisor then submits interview notes to NYC Service.
- If the host site would like to move forward with the candidate, NYC Service extends an offer to the candidate. Otherwise, NYC Service sends the candidate to their next preferred project.

Part 3: Onboard the New Member

- Once a candidate accepts an offer, NYC Service notifies the host site. (If the candidate rejects the offer, NYC Service also notifies the host site.)
- NYC Service then collects and reviews the AmeriCorps-required information about the member: the National Service Criminal History Check Authorization, identity and citizenship documentation, I9, and other required forms. This documentation is required to be in hand before a member is permitted to begin accruing hours as an AmeriCorps member.

Part 4: Introduce the New Member to the Program

NYC Service hosts an in-depth three-hour pre-orientation. Elements include:

- Teambuilding warm up activities to get the cohort acquainted with each other.
- Review of all member benefits.
- Completion of member pre-survey.
- Enrollment into the MyAmeriCorps system (*AmeriCorps requirement).
- Member contract review and signing.
- Accepted members must also schedule and complete a fingerprint-based background check before they begin service to satisfy AmeriCorps regulations.



Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Set expectations right away

At the beginning of each year, it's important to set realistic expectations for both the host sites and the AmeriCorps members. Our team spends time at the beginning of each year ensuring that host sites understand what it means to bring in AmeriCorps members, many of whom have little or no prior experience in city government. And City Service Corps also spends time ensuring that members understand what they are gaining as part of AmeriCorps, as well as the impact they can expect to have on their agency.



My experience with City Service Corps (CSC) has been remarkable and life changing. CSC was a great learning experience for me. After graduating college and being unable to find employment, I was still unsure what I wanted to do next. Eventually, I found out about City Service Corps. Shortly after applying, I got accepted into the 2017-2018 CSC cohort. At first, I was scared and unsure about what this opportunity meant for me, however, the staff at NYC Service and my fellow members supported and listened to me every day. In the program, I was able to impact over 1,000 New Yorkers, as well as develop a resource guide for parents among other things. Even after my service term ended, I still remain passionate about pursuing a life of public service, which is why I decided to join the NYC Service Alumni Ambassador program.

- Daisy Tan, City Service Corps Member 2017-2018



7.

Evaluate and Demonstrate Impact

After you have had a chance to establish and operate your programs, you will need to determine whether the programs are effectively meeting your outcome goals. An independent evaluation is an important way to find answers to questions about your impact. An evaluation can also help gain supporters and funders, as it can help demonstrate the impact of our program.

In 2017, NYC Service engaged Urban Institute, a leading research organization based in Washington, D.C., to conduct an evaluation of the first two years of the City Service Corps program, looking specifically at whether the agencies/organizations benefit from the members' service, whether members gain skills, and whether they continue to be civically engaged after their service. In other words, Urban Institute evaluated the impact of the trifecta of benefits: improving the communities in which they work; developing a workforce of highly skilled people; and creating a new generation of leaders who prioritize civic engagement.

Overall, the evaluation found that, based on the first two years of the program, City Service Corps is making an impact on New York City and its members' future.

Who are City Service Corps members?

According to the evaluation report (available at <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/city-service-corps-ameri-corps-program-outcome-evaluation>), City Service Corps aligns with general AmeriCorps demographics in many ways; for instance, almost 2/3 of members are female. However, City Service Corps is made up of a more racially and ethnically diverse group than AmeriCorps in general, reflecting New York City's population.

| | City Service Corps | AmeriCorps |
|--------|--------------------|------------|
| Female | 65% | 65.3% |
| Male | 35% | 35.7% |

| | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Non-Hispanic Black or African American | 33.3% | 17.2% |
| Non-Hispanic White | 21.9% | 52.4% |
| Hispanic | 15.8% | 17.1% |
| Asian | 7.9% | 6.7% |
| Other, Multiple Races, or No Answer | 22.8% | 9.1% |

| | | |
|--------------------|----|----|
| Average Age | 27 | 25 |
| Years of Education | 15 | 16 |

Source: Urban Institute (based on the Corporation for National and Community Service member exit survey)

Developing a skilled workforce

Prior to their service, half of City Service Corps members were in the workforce, about one-quarter were in college/graduate school, and 7 percent were serving in another AmeriCorps program.

A year after they completed their service, most alumni were at nonprofits or in government/public sector, according to the evaluation. And 70 percent of alumni said that serving in City Service Corps had an impact on their career pathways.

Impacting the community

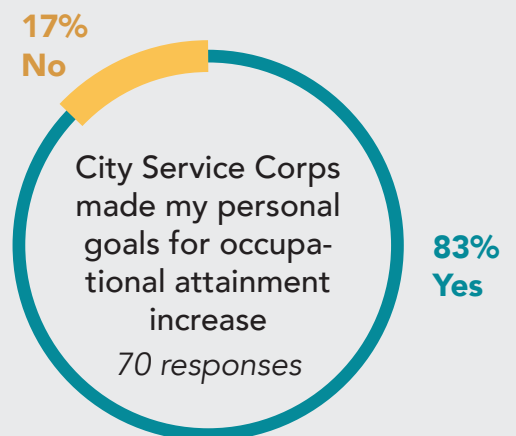
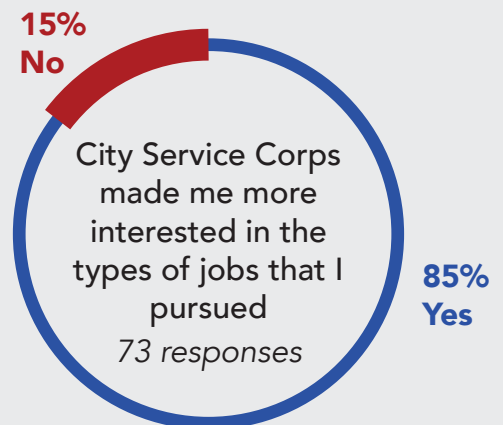
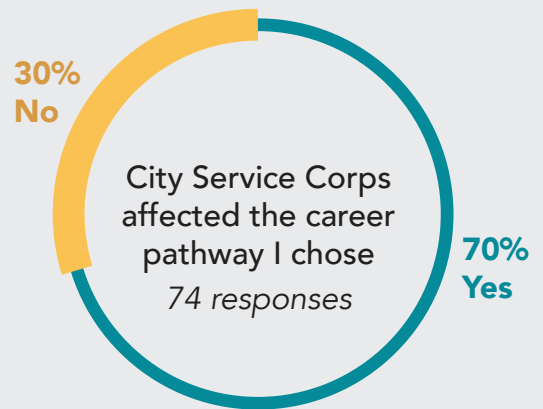
Most City Service Corps alumni – 86% -- believed that their service made a positive difference in their communities. And their host site supervisors agreed that their work had a definite impact. 91% of site supervisors reported that City Service Corps members helped them work more efficiently. 80% of site supervisors reported that their members contributed in some way to helping the agency or organization expand into new program or service areas.

Creating a new generation of civic leaders

Many City Service Corps alumni are active members of their communities, according to the evaluation. Following their city government-focused term of service, 83% reported that they have a clear understanding of city government. 75% of City Service Corps alumni said they voted in local elections during the previous year. And at least 40% say they are more likely to volunteer, keep informed about public issues, and participate in community organizations than they were before they participated in City Service Corps.

Uncovering challenges

The evaluation also uncovered challenges with City Service Corps members. The evaluation found the challenges seemed to center on soft skills, including members' capabilities, communication, and professionalism. Because of this information from the evaluation, the City Service Corps team has added additional trainings around these topics.



Meaningful Questions for a Successful Evaluation

Selecting the right independent evaluator is a critical component in the effort to measure your program's true impact on your town or city. The following questions will help you formulate a robust request for proposals from potential evaluators.

What kind of evaluation are you looking to conduct?

For instance, NYC Service decided upon an outcome evaluation for City Service Corps.

How much are you budgeting for the evaluation?

City Service Corps budgeted \$125,000 for the evaluation, but costs may differ depending on the type of evaluation conducted.

What is the evaluation plan being proposed?

Specifically, what combination of focus group/survey/interview/data review does the evaluator plan to use? In City Service Corps' case, evaluators used the following: performance measure data collected by City Service Corps; program analysis pre- and post-City Service Corps intervention; surveys of members and alumni; samples of client and host site satisfaction data; analysis of data collected by the program's partner, City University of New York, about trainings.

What specific questions are you looking to have answered with the evaluation?

NYC Service posed the following questions to guide the evaluators:

- What outputs and outcomes might reasonably be attributed to the members' service?
- Do City Service Corps members add value/build capacity at their host sites in ways that could not happen without their presence?
- How does the program affect post-career choices made by members?
- What are the tangible skills that alumni gained from their experience serving with City Service Corps?
- Do alumni continue to be engaged in civic life?

What experience does the evaluator have with AmeriCorps programs?

City Service Corps worked with Urban Institute, which has done extensive work with AmeriCorps programs throughout the country.

Where is the evaluator based, and would they be willing to come to your town or city to conduct focus groups?

Urban Institute is based in Washington, D.C., but representatives did travel to New York City to conduct focus groups.

What is your timeline?

City Service Corps planned for a 16-month turnaround from awarding the contract through completion.

Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

Begin with the what and why: what do you want to evaluate and why are you doing it at this time? We chose to look at the first two years of the program so we could test the theory of the case we had made for the program. We then went about writing detailed research questions so we would be prepared to work with whatever evaluator we selected. After putting out a Request for Proposal (RFP), we selected Urban Institute. One of the benefits was that the evaluator from Urban Institute had a history of evaluating AmeriCorps programs, which meant we did not have to cover the basics of AmeriCorps programs and how they work.



8.

Create Sustainability

As you plan the future of your program, you will want to take a step back to think strategically about how to make the program last for the long term.

City Service Corps continues to review and make adjustments to make the program stronger. These adjustments include:

1. Alignment with city priorities. City Service Corps is continuing to ensure that it aligns with the City's priorities, including OneNYC, the citywide strategic vision and plan.

2. Program size. City Service Corps is still working to find the right size for the program, but 80-120 members are close to the ideal size.

3. Professional development. City Service Corps has overhauled its professional development program, which is now called the "Leadership & Development Series." The new professional development program changes are based on staff feedback from host sites and members from the past few years. As part of the series, City Service Corps will be launching a skills assessment of members to equip members and host site supervisors with more information to set expectations about areas of growth and development.

4. Higher stipends. City Service Corps is a continuous advocate of raising AmeriCorps member stipends so that they provide a more realistic cost of living for higher cost cities such as New York City. NYC Service has thus increased the stipend for our programs to better align with New York City's cost of living, but this means that agencies may have a harder time finding the budget to provide the members with stipends. As such, staff are exploring dedicated funding within the City's budget to offset some of the stipend costs undertaken by agency host sites.

5. Diverse funding streams. While AmeriCorps does generally provide federal funding for its programs, it may not be enough to sustain full program operations. A municipality should think about how to build sustainable revenue streams to cover the cost of operating an AmeriCorps program. City Service Corps does not use any funding from AmeriCorps; it uses a mix of funds from private funders and City agencies.

6 Questions to ask yourself when thinking about your program's future:

1.

What is the mission and vision of your program, and will they still be relevant to the program in three years?

2.

What impact has your evaluation uncovered? Are there any adjustments your program should make as it moves forward?

3.

How committed are your champions in your program? Can they help to expand the program's reach?

4.

Is your current funding stream sustainable as is, or does it need to change as the program continues to operate?

5.

Does your agency need to make any changes (to staff, budgeting, etc.) to allow for an expansion or continuation of your AmeriCorps program?

6.

Does your agency need to make any changes (to staff, budgeting, etc.) to allow for an expansion or continuation of your AmeriCorps program?

Practical Advice from Aaron Miner, Managing Director, Service Year Programs

We continue to work to align City Service Corps with City priorities, including the City's strategic plan, OneNYC. As priorities of the city change, we hope that our colleagues see City Service Corps as a way to build capacity on high priority programs, supporting City agencies through challenging times, such as the COVID-19 crisis, when effective resident engagement is critical.

Conclusion

City Service Corps quickly evolved from an idea coming out of a service summit to a successful AmeriCorps program operating within the constructs of the city government, with public and private contributors funding program operations. From 2015 until today, NYC Service has built a robust administrative and leadership development program within City Service Corps.

While the funding and operational models were unique to City Service Corps, its continued success and impact on New York City illustrate that the program is successful, replicable, sustainable, and impactful.

Service is a powerful element in creating a stronger civic engagement fabric in a city. We hope that you find this guide useful as you make decisions on whether creating a similar program in your municipality is something to pursue and then use our learning and tools as resources.

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NYC Service Staff Leading City Service Corps: Tashawn Morgan, Megan Tenes, Melvin Rosario, Megan Solomon

+

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Collaboration

Common purpose

Collaboration

Strong leadership

Action items / results

Agenda / norms

Keeping community engaged

△

Lack of collaboration

Not good use of time

Planning Process

Scheduling

Lack of follow up meetings → more meetings, no results

Not taking appropriate decisions

Lack of ownership

Focus on multiple things

Updates



Citi Foundation



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