A 21st CENTURY NATIONAL SERVICE SYSTEM

PLAN OF ACTION

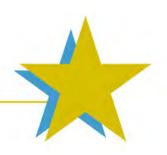
21st CENTURY NATIONAL SERVICE SUMMIT





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A Declaration of Service

We, the undersigned, endorse the Franklin Project's Plan of Action to establish a 21st Century National Service System in America that inspires and engages at least one million young adults annually from all socioeconomic backgrounds in a demanding year of full-time national service as a civic rite of passage to unleash the energy and idealism of each generation to address our nation's challenges.

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Executive Summary

A New American Rite of Passage

America needs universal national service. We need America's youth to serve their country to help solve our nation's most pressing challenges and, in sharing the hardship and fulfillment that only service can offer, bind themselves to one another and to the nation.

Through the Franklin Project, leaders across all sectors have joined together to achieve this goal. Specifically, we aim to make a year or more of full-time national service a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. We have crafted a proposal for a 21st Century National Service System that will offer at least one million full-time civilian national service opportunities for young adults ages 18-28 every year, on par with the more than one million Americans who serve on active duty in our Armed Forces.

Service makes citizens. In every generation, Americans who have undertaken national service—in military and civilian capacities—have emerged more connected to their generation and more invested in their country. Service compels young people out of their comfort zones and cultivates in them a sense of duty and civic responsibility. Making national service a universal expectation—a new American rite of passage—will renew and redefine for this generation the role of citizens in our democracy. Many of those who serve will discover within themselves unsuspected resources of leadership and will emerge with a life-long commitment to their communities and country.

Service shaped the Greatest Generation. The earliest example of large-scale, full-time civilian national service the Civilian Conservation Corps—mobilized three million young, unemployed men to improve our public lands during the Great Depression. More than 12 percent of Americans went on to serve in the Second World War. In the unprecedented prosperity that followed the war, the Greatest Generation served more, joined organizations more, gave more in charitable contributions, attended church, school and community activities more, and were active neighbors helping those in need more than the generations preceding and following them. During those same post-war years in which our civic stocks rose, Americans voted more, entered public service in greater numbers, and enjoyed much lower levels of political polarization than we see now.¹

Since that time, we have minimized both the expectation and opportunities to serve the nation. Even as highly effective and enduring efforts—such as the Peace Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps—have sprouted since the Second World War, our opportunities for national service have dangerously narrowed. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan represented the first time in history that less than one half of one percent of our population served on active duty during wartime.² With limited opportunities for full-time service, the rising Millennial Generation seeks additional outlets for their patriotism, but are perennially stymied: in recent years, there were 582,000 applications for only 80,000 annual AmeriCorps positions and 150,000 requests for applications for the 4,000 annual positions in the Peace Corps.³ This gap represents wasted democratic energy and squandered idealism. But it also indicates that a renewed emphasis on national service could yield dramatic results.

The enormity of our national challenges—and the need to bind rising generations together and to the nation demands we enable all young Americans to serve. Doing so requires dramatically expanding civilian national service opportunities—a tall task, but one that the healthy, growing private and non-profit sectors can and must meet creatively in partnership with government. In an era of austerity, government cannot shoulder this challenge alone. While the fiscal constraints of our government are real, America is too big, and our challenges too expansive, for small ideas.

It is time, once again, for all young Americans to feel it is their duty to serve their country. Through challenging, impactful service, they will develop into full citizens committed to each other and to strengthening our nation.

A 21st Century National Service System

A 21st Century National Service System—wherein universal national service becomes a new American rite of passage and helps confront our nation's pressing problems—will:

- Link military and civilian service as two sides of the same coin;
- Challenge all young adults (ages 18 to 28) to give a year or more of full-time service to their country;
- Establish national service corps, building on those proposed in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, that will unite each generation in common purpose through service;
- Strengthen and expand the existing infrastructure of the Peace Corps, VISTA, AmeriCorps, and other national service efforts;
- Call upon the private sector, industry groups, and professional associations to take the lead in supporting and expanding national service corps within their fields;
- Partner with the growing non-profit infrastructure—in colleges, community organizations and faithbased institutions—and leverage new technologies to embed full-time national service across our society; and
- Ask all federal departments and agencies to use civilian national service members to help accomplish their missions.

The centerpiece of the 21st Century National Service System is the mobilization of young people to serve full-time in national service corps and the linkage of military and civilian service in creative new ways. To accelerate the creation of such a system, we propose:

At 18, every American would receive information on options to serve in one of the five branches of the Armed Forces or in a number of civilian national service corps, helping to improve recruitment for military and civilian national service.

Young adults would serve full-time in national service corps. The civilian national service corps would be in areas where full-time civilian national service has been shown to make a significant difference. Young people may apply to serve in any one of a number of national service corps through national service organizations that bring together people of different backgrounds and zip codes to be trained and work together in solving pressing public problems. The national service corps would include, but not be limited to:

- **Education Corps**: to mobilize youth to serve in our lowest-performing schools, while working to ensure that every young child receives the high-quality education they need to succeed in the 21st century;
- **Conservation Corps**: to help restore the health of America's endangered parks and rivers and engage youth in other conservation and clean energy efforts;
- **Opportunity Corps**: to support programs to empower low-income Americans and to engage youth disconnected from school and work in full-time national service;
- Health and Nutrition Corps: to educate young people on the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, and preventative care, and to enhance the quality of life, address the childhood hunger problem, and lower health care costs;



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- Veterans Corps: to recognize, support, and utilize veterans as civic assets and leaders through civilian national service by and for veterans and to expand opportunites for civilian national service members to support veterans and military families;
- **Professional Corps**: to enable young lawyers, health care professionals, financial experts, technology specialists, and other professionals to unleash their talents to help address public problems and help those in need; and
- **International Service Corps**: to provide opportunities to serve to help strengthen education, health, the environment, information technology, and small business creation around the world.

The system builds on the existing infrastructure as a strong foundation in which the public and private sectors can invest. It challenges the private sector to emerge with new or expanded national service opportunities within various professions, leverages 21st century technology in creative ways, and launches new ideas and efforts so that national service can grow at the local, state, and national levels. In addition to the national service corps, we suggest the following key elements to create more opportunities for full-time national service:

- Developing new corps within federal departments and agencies that mobilize citizens through national service to solve public problems at lower cost to the taxpayer, building on the progress of three new corps — FEMA Corps, School Turnaround AmeriCorps and STEM AmeriCorps — established in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency charged with supporting national service in America.
- Launching a National Service Certification System, a private-public partnership that leverages technology to enable thousands of nonprofits, colleges, public agencies, and social enterprises to create full-time national service positions with support from the private and public sectors, making it easy for those who want to serve full-time to find opportunities. In addition to the national service corps contemplated above, young people may apply to serve full-time in nonprofits, colleges and universities, and social enterprises that become certified as national service organizations by meeting certain criteria. These criteria include creating full-time national service positions, defining the service work they will perform, providing a living allowance, ensuring to the extent practicable they will maximize diversity across geography, race, ethnicity and income; providing training, and articulating clear outcomes for the service of participants.
- **Providing flexibility within the GI Bill** to permit veterans to use a portion of their existing benefits to perform up to a year of civilian national service to help address problems in communities and improve more veterans' transitions back home. This flexibility will enable more veterans to participate in Veterans Corps programs.
- Expanding existing national service programs by:
 - Fully implementing the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which authorizes 250,000 annual AmeriCorps positions by 2017 and establishes various corps aligned with the national service corps described above. The Congress and the Administration should start by increasing AmeriCorps to 100,000 participants next year; and
 - 2) **Fulfilling the promise of international service**, by expanding the Peace Corps, Volunteers for Prosperity, and proposed Global Service Fellowships to provide a total of 100,000 international service positions each year by 2020.



- Enlisting mayors, governors, and local leaders to swear in national service members, recognize those who serve as more than 800 mayors did during the first annual Mayors' Day of Recognition and build connections across programs so that more members have the opportunity to serve alongside individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- **Developing dedicated public and private revenue streams** to support and expand national service corps and national service opportunities.
- **Building multiple pathways to national service**, including a "bridge year" of service before college or career; and a year of service to help reconnect disconnected youth to school and work.
- Building a talent pipeline and incentives through national service by engaging employers and
 institutions of higher education to recognize and reward full-time national service participants; developing
 a Public Service Academy through a consortium of colleges and universities and the National Center for
 Service and Innovative Leadership to help develop leaders at every level; and influencing the service
 habits of generations of young people so that they continue to serve in their "encore years."

National Service to Address National Challenges

Many leaders, both military and civilian, and across the political spectrum, have recognized the virtues of full-time national service as a rite of passage for young Americans and a way to foster leadership, teamwork, and understanding of people from other backgrounds. National service is also a powerful means to solve public problems with our best assets – Americans using their time, talents, and entrepreneurial skills to meet challenges on the ground in local communities. Here are some examples of significant national challenges that national service can help address; there are many others:

 Providing children a high quality education and addressing the high school dropout epidemic. Numerous national service programs, including Teach for America, City Year, Citizen Schools, Jumpstart, and Communities in Schools, are demonstrating the power of national service to educate children of all ages, from preschool to college. The high school dropout epidemic is a fixable problem: nearly half of America's dropouts come from more than 2,000 of America's lowest-performing high schools.⁴

While research shows that certain early warning indicators — attendance, behavior and course performance in reading and math — are highly predictive of eventual dropout, they can be improved by national service efforts to help keep students on track. With 120,000 national service members working across our lowest-performing schools as teachers, mentors, tutors, and near-peer role models, national service can help keep far more students on track to graduate high school and enter and complete college.

 Addressing endangered public and tribal lands and waterways. Our nation's public and tribal lands, waterways and open spaces — from Yellowstone National Park to the Congress Heights Playground in Anacostia, D.C. — and the many individual, community, and societal benefits they provide, are increasingly becoming inaccessible and unavailable to millions of Americans. Through President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, three million young, unemployed men were mobilized over a decade to plant three billion trees, build 800 parks, and provide agricultural drainage and prevent soil erosion on 84 million acres of public lands.

Efforts are underway with public water and land management agencies, The Corps Network, and other service and conservation programs to create a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps that would engage 100,000 members each year to address the backlog of requested projects on our public lands and waterways.

 Re-integrating veterans into civilian life. Over the next five years, one million veterans will return home to join the two million veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their rates of unemployment, homelessness, health issues, substance abuse, relationship problems, and suicide often exceed rates in the adult population. Research shows that those veterans who perform civilian service have better transitions home than those who do not.⁵

National service can engage both veterans and civilians in helping to re-integrate veterans, as demonstrated by programs such as VetCorps in Washington State, The Mission Continues, and Team Rubicon. Efforts are underway to engage at least 50,000 returning veterans in national service and another 50,000 civilians could be engaged in national service to help veterans and military families.

Helping to end childhood hunger. More than 16 million American children live in households that are food insecure, meaning that they struggle to put food on the table or provide adequate nutrition to maintain healthy lives.⁶

National service, through programs like Food Corps, can help the nation's schools end childhood hunger by providing the necessary business planning, service planning, and marketing around the School Lunch Program and other child nutrition programs. It can include partnerships with organizations like Share Our Strength and community and faith-based institutions to address the summer hunger problem when schools are not in session. We estimate that every school could be engaged in such an effort with approximately 25,000 full-time national service members.

 Helping Opportunity Youth and addressing poverty. More than 6.7 million young people, ages 16-24, are out of school and out of work, costing taxpayers more than \$93 billion per year.⁷ While these youth face significant life challenges, most start out with big dreams and remain confident or hopeful that they can achieve their goals, most are ready to accept responsibility for their futures, and most are looking to reconnect to school, work and service.

Building on the success of models like YouthBuild, Public Allies and service and conservation corps across the country, national service opportunities should be provided for tens of thousands of these disconnected youth — called Opportunity Youth because of the potential they represent — to serve their communities, while reconnecting to school and building skills for work and active duty citizenship. Other successful national service models such as LIFT are mobilizing young people to empower low-income Americans to move out of poverty. Various professional corps should also be created or expanded, providing legal, financial, medical and other services to the poor, vulnerable, and needy.

 Improving the health of Americans. Chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, and their underlying causes such as obesity and tobacco use, affect more than 130 million Americans – nearly half the population – and account for 75 percent of U.S. health care spending, or \$1.5 trillion annually.⁸

National service programs such as Community Health Corps can help medically underserved children and families gain access to health care, manage chronic illnesses, and improve overall health. Coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is essential to ensure national service participants are aligned with agency-wide initiatives and delivering on system-wide impacts that are already being tracked and measured. Benchmarks for deploying national service participants to help underserved children and families meet their health care needs will be established.

Building the Case for Large-Scale National Service

Some have criticized investments in service as "paying volunteers" or performing functions best left to individual initiative without support from government. At the same time, leaders from all sectors and political parties have expressed strong interest in large-scale national service, and in some cases, favoring even mandatory national service.

To understand the attitudes and beliefs of American voters, a nationally representative survey of 1,002 registered voters was conducted in March 2013 to test certain ideas relating to national service, the public's understanding of it, and various policies and ideas that the Franklin Project is developing. Overall, **the results demonstrate that voters strongly support national service**.⁹ The findings include:

- Four in five voters support voluntary national service in which people of all ages would be given opportunities to serve America in a military or in a civilian capacity for one year and receive a living allowance and education award. Support is high across all subgroups: 88 percent of Democrats, 76 percent of Independents, and 74 percent of Republicans support voluntary national service.
- While solid support exists for voluntary national service, with 80 percent in support, 71 percent of voters oppose (and 52 percent strongly oppose) a system of mandatory national service.
- Voters strongly believe national service would benefit the country by:
 - Assisting military families and veterans in adjusting back into civilian life (93 percent)
 - Mentoring/tutoring students in low-performing schools to keep them on track (91 percent)
 - Helping communities prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters (91 percent)
 - Cleaning up rivers, parks, and blighted public areas (91 percent)
 - Providing job training & career advice to low-income Americans (90 percent)
- When told that more than 600,000 Americans apply to programs such as AmeriCorps and Peace Corps, but more than half a million people are turned away because of a lack of positions, 76 percent of voters say increasing public funding to enable more Americans to serve would be worth it.
- Strong majorities of voters support the policy proposals highlighted in this plan:
 - Seventy-nine percent support creating a system modeled on the Civilian Conservation Corps by setting up programs focusing on specific needs, such as an Education Corps to help students, a Health Corps to expand access to health services, a Green Corps to clean up rivers, parks, and blighted areas, and a Rapid-Response Reserve Corps to respond to local and national disasters;
 - Seventy-eight percent support amending the current Selective Service System so that every American -- both men and women -- age 18 or older registers and receives information about opportunities to serve in the military or in a civilian national service capacity;
 - Seventy-five percent support encouraging nonprofit organizations, colleges, universities, and faith-based institutions to join a national service system by offering positions for Americans to serve for a year through their respective organizations;

- Seventy-four percent support creating a bridge year for service, in which young adults would complete a full year of national service between high school and college or between college and work;
- Seventy-one percent support amending the GI Bill to permit veterans to use a portion of their GI benefits to support their performing a full year of civilian national service; and
- **Fifty-nine percent support creating a public service academy** modeled after military academies to encourage more civic leaders by educating and training people for public service.

Full-Time National Service is a Good Return on Investment

A recent study by Columbia University¹⁰ commissioned by the Franklin Project and Voices for National Service shows that national service programs generate a high return on investment that improves communities and develops the next generation of leaders:

- The economic benefits of national service for youth are nearly four times greater than the costs of providing these programs. Programs for seniors also yield high returns that significantly exceed their costs.
- National service is an investment building human and social capital that lasts into the future. National service programs are vital in giving young people productive competencies, human capital, and social skills that will persist into adulthood.
- National service yields a high return both for the participant and for society. Using national data, the study calculates the total costs -- including public and private funds of providing national service programs for youth and for seniors -- and the full economic benefits of these programs, including both the value of the services provided and the longer-term value to the participants, to taxpayers, and to society.
- The study calculates that, as national service programs increase in scale, their average cost *falls* but their average benefit *rises*. The result is that programs are likely to have even higher returns if they enroll more participants. With one million national service members, the benefits are 4.5 times greater than the costs.

Next Steps

At the 21st Century National Service Summit in Aspen, Colorado in June 2013, the Leadership Council of the Franklin Project will release this Plan of Action and work to secure commitments to implement it. As we move toward the September 11th National Day of Service and Rememberance, the Franklin Project, working with ServiceNation, Voices for National Service, the Milliennial Working Group, and others will build grassroots support for the plan, including among veterans as we approach Veterans Day. Some components of the plan are moving forward thanks to the work of many partners and allies. Other parts of the plan are being developed and built.

The Franklin Project envisions an America where all young people are challenged and provided the opportunity to serve and will be drawing on leaders and citizens from every sector to realize the promise of a new American rite of passage.

A Plan of Action: A 21st Century National Service System

The following pages include a detailed proposal for a 21st Century National Service System, an overview of the case for a large-scale national service system, and a description of how such a system can help address critical national challenges.

America needs universal national service — a rite of passage for all young Americans to help solve our nation's most pressing challenges and bind themselves to one another and the nation.¹¹ We propose building a comprehensive 21st Century National Service System that challenges all young adults to serve the country in the military or in civilian national service.

Our proposal will provide at least one million full-time civilian national service opportunities for young adults ages 18-28 every year, on par with the more than one million Americans who serve on active duty in our Armed Forces. We will do this by increasing the scale of proven and high performing national service models, developing new corps, and supporting creative initiatives by bringing many nonprofit organizations into the new system.

Core Elements of a 21st Century National Service System

Young Adults in National Service

At 18, every American would receive information on options to serve in one of the five branches of the Armed Forces or in a number of civilian national service corps, helping to improve recruitment for military and civilian national service. The civilian national service corps would focus on national challenges where such service can make a significant difference. Young people may apply to serve in any one of a number of national service corps through national service organizations that bring together people of different backgrounds and communities to be trained and work together in solving pressing public problems and develop leaders from within communities. The national service corps can include but are not limited to:

- Education Corps mobilizing young adults to serve in our lowest performing schools to teach, mentor, tutor, and serve as near-peer role models to keep students in school and on track to graduate from high school and go to college, addressing America's high school dropout epidemic and working to ensure that every young child receives the high quality education they need to succeed in the 21st century;
- Conservation Corps restoring the health of America's endangered parks and rivers as we move toward the Centennial of the National Park Service in August 2016, and engaging youth in energy retrofitting and other conservation and clean energy efforts;
- Opportunity Corps supporting programs to empower low-income Americans, and also engaging youth disconnected from school and work in national service while they reconnect to school, get on a path to earn a degree, and build their skills for productive employment; various professional corps, including Legal Services, Financial Services and Digital Services will be an important piece of this corps;
- Health and Nutrition Corps educating young people on the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, and preventative care to enhance the quality of life and lower health care costs;
- Veterans Corps recognizing and utilizing veterans as civic assets and leaders also utilize civilian

national service members to help meet the needs of veterans and military families. National service by and for veterans will improve their transitions home and can also support veterans who are having challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness, PTSD, and other issues re-integrating into community life; and

• International Service Corps providing opportunities to serve to help strengthen education, health, the environment, information technology, small business creation, and more in countries around the world.

Professional Corps

We propose expanding and creating new professional national service corps that engage young professionals in a defined period of national service and use their unique skills and training to help address a specific challenge. These professional corps can engage young people early in their careers to address critical needs in the community, build a strong talent pipeline, and strengthen the public purposes of the professions themselves.

Building off of and learning from existing models, we propose working with the private sector and professional associations to create additional professional corps, such as:

- Justice Corps: Complementing Equal Justice Works, Justice Corps could work to address the "justice gap" – the 50 percent of those who seek legal services and are turned away – by enabling paralegals and lawyers to provide law-related help to people in need;
- Financial Services Corps: Financial Service Corps could provide assistance with banking, personal finance, and financial literacy to lowincome Americans; and,
- **Digital Services Corps**: Digital Services Corps could provide training and help with computers, telecommunications, and digital literacy.

In all of these corps, there is an opportunity for expansion to engage more recent college and graduate school graduates and young professionals in full-time national service. This will require identification of the areas where professional corps can have the greatest impact and where there is strong support from employers, professional associations, or trade associations, and of higher education institutions.

National Service Across Federal and State Agencies

America has always relied upon its citizens to help meet community needs. Now, in times of fiscal restraint and limited resources, it is more important than ever that federal and state governments embrace costefficient strategies that reduce bureaucratic barriers, encourage cross-agency collaborations, and involve citizens more effectively by utilizing nonprofit, public, and private sector expertise.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a driving force for national service, providing leadership, resources, coordination, focus, and accountability for these efforts. For nearly two decades, it has worked with thousands of local partners to improve lives, expand economic opportunity, and engage Americans in solving problems in their communities.

Other federal agencies — including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Education, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Health and Human Services — and the National Guard are examining how they can further engage citizens, nonprofits, and the private sector to help implement their key programs. They are at different stages in launching partnerships with the Corporation to effectively use national service members to meet their goals.

The FEMA Corps is an innovative partnership between FEMA and the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps National Civilian

Snapshot

PROFESSIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE CORPS IN ACTION

Privately and publicly supported professional corps exist today around the country in a variety of sectors. The models of professional corps that could be expanded with private and public support and made available to more young professionals include:

- Medical Reserve Corps: The Medical Reserve Corps mobilizes medical and public health professionals to respond to natural disasters and emergencies. These service members assist communities nationwide during emergencies and in ongoing efforts in public health;
- NURSE Corps: NURSE Corps helps build healthier communities in urban and rural areas by supporting nurses and nursing students who commit to a 2-year term of service;
- Teach for America: Teach for America, which is also an AmeriCorps program, recruits and places highachieving recent college graduates and professionals in teaching positions for two years in urban and rural communities throughout the United States;
- Code for America: Code for America places talented web developers, designers, and entrepreneurs into a year of public service in forward-thinking cities working to better leverage technology and engage the community;
- **Fuse Corps**: Fuse Corps provides opportunities for entrepreneurial professionals to spend a year helping governors, mayors, and community leaders across America drive social change;
- BizCorps: BizCorps places graduates of top American business schools with entrepreneurs in targeted emerging and frontier markets for a year of service to help those businesses develop and execute business plans;
- Corporate Service Corps: Corporate Service Corps empowers IBM employees as global citizens by sending groups of individuals from different countries with a range of skills to an emerging market for fourweek community-based assignments; and
- Equal Justice Works: Equal Justice Works, which is also an AmeriCorps program, funds hundreds of public interest attorneys each year to close the justice gap on issues such as foreclosure, community economic development, immigration, civil rights, homelessness, access to health care, and domestic violence.

Community Corps, which will engage 1,600 FEMA Corps members annually by 2014 solely devoted to disaster response and recovery. This will enhance the government's disaster capabilities, increasing the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce, promoting an ethic of service, expanding education and economic opportunity for young people, and achieving significant cost savings for the American taxpayer. FEMA expects that when the program is at full scale, and in an average disaster year, it will achieve cost savings of approximately \$60 million per year.¹²

The School Turnaround AmeriCorps Program is a new partnership between the U.S. Department of Education

and the Corporation that will support a cadre of national service members in persistently low-achieving schools. School Turnaround AmeriCorps will address the acute need for additional support to ensure proper implementation of School Improvement Grant reforms. The new STEM AmeriCorps Program, a partnership between the National Science Foundation and the Corporation, as well as private sector partners, is also a new multi-year initiative to place hundreds of AmeriCorps members in nonprofits to mobilize science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professionals to inspire young people to excel in STEM education. The Corporation for National and Community Service and Voices for National Service have been leading efforts to expand department and agency corps over the last several years.

A Presidential Executive Order for Federal Agencies to Engage National Service Members

We propose that the President issue an Executive Order calling on all federal departments and agencies to examine how they can develop additional innovative partnerships that engage national service members in achieving their missions. Governors, mayors, and other local leaders should also explore opportunities to expand national service through state and local government agencies.

There are many potential partnerships that can be forged that use the Corporation's expertise to run a rigorous grant competition and provide grant oversight to help meet state and local priorities.¹³ Below are several examples of corps that could emerge as a result of the Executive Order and increased interagency cooperation:

- Early Childhood Education: In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education and/or U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, national service members and community-based organizations can work in public schools, Head Start centers, community and faith-based centers, and other settings that mobilize and train community members — from college students to older adults — to support early education opportunities for America's youth.
- 21st Century Conservation: In partnership with public and land and water management agencies, national service members, including youth and veterans, can help protect, restore, and enhance America's public and tribal lands and waterways. The U.S. Department of the Interior is leading this initiative with the participation of seven federal agencies.

- **Student Veterans**: Building on the success of the State of Washington's VetCorps program, a partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Corporation for National and Community Service, national service Veteran "Navigators" can provide peer-to-peer support in colleges across the U.S. where veterans are enrolled and using the G.I. Bill.
- YouthBuild: The U.S. Department of Labor is the primary supporter of YouthBuild in which national service members, many of whom are AmeriCorps members and most of whom are opportunity youth, gain valuable work skills while building and rehabilitating homes for low-income Americans. This successful program should be expanded to meet the growing demand for youth who want to serve and communities that want YouthBuild programs.
- **Opportunity**: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can use its waiver authority under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program to encourage states to support national service as a strategy to help families achieve financial stability.
- Health: There are many programs and initiatives within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services where an interagency partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service could help in the delivery of programs, improving the health and well-being of all Americans at a time of historic health care reform.
- School Food: In partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National School Lunch Program, and building on the work of Share Our Strength and the success of FoodCorps, national service participants can be placed in highpoverty schools to help end childhood hunger by increasing the capacity of schools to take advantage of existing mandatory federal nutrition programs.

A 21st Century National Service Certification System

While we support the full-scale implementation of the programs authorized in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and the growth of the Peace Corps, we know we cannot create a large-scale national service system for the 21st Century without additional private and public sector investment and innovation. Through new partnerships with higher education, corporations, philanthropy, and additional federal, state, and local agencies, we can build on the existing infrastructure and enable national service to grow well beyond what was authorized in the Serve America Act. In a sense, we need to democratize national service and ignite more non-profit institutions across America to create full-time opportunities for more Americans to serve.

We propose a private-public partnership to develop a new 21st Century National Service Certification System that builds on the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, VISTA, and other federal national service programs, but importantly, includes a larger set of organizations that would apply for and be recognized for offering national service positions.

This system would be technology-enabled and funded through private and public means. In addition to the various national service corps contemplated above, young people may apply to serve full-time in nonprofits, colleges and universities, and social enterprises that become certified as national service organizations by meeting certain criteria. All of the national service corps, department and agency corps, and professional corps can be connected to the broader national service system through the national service certification system. Special designations can be made showing which national service programs across the system are part of the "Education Corps," "Conservation Corps," or other national service corps.

While there are thousands of nonprofit organizations that have engaged and are engaging AmeriCorps

members, a technology-enabled system that is open to any public agency, tax-exempt nonprofit organization that files with the IRS, or recognized social enterprise could lead to more national service organizations and hundreds of thousands more service opportunities. Partners at the state and local levels, including the governor-appointed state service commissions, Cities of Service Mayors, local United Ways, and other institutions could play critical roles in identifying organizations within states and communities that could apply to be certified as national service organizations.

This broader system will enable more individuals to serve, more organizations to offer positions, rewards for those who serve, a diversified funding base, and more information for those searching for positions. It will connect the growing number of full-time service positions offered by social entrepreneurs, innovative nonprofits, and higher education institutions with federally-funded national service opportunities. Importantly, such a platform will make it possible to build a stronger society and a renewed ethic of service through common experiences.

This technology platform would incorporate:

- Hundreds of thousands of searchable national service opportunities on a system similar to Monster.com;
- A streamlined system to approve positions incorporating self-assessment, spot checks, and peer review, comparable to Kiva's system to approve micro-investment organizations;
- Diverse funding, including crowd-sourced Kickstarter-style funding and sponsored positions similar to private scholarships;
- A quality-control system with user ratings similar to eBay, Yelp, and Amazon, from corps members, beneficiaries, community members, and sponsors;
- Incentives and benefits generated from public and private sources similar to credit card reward programs and AARP benefits; and

 Robust marketing to young people, students, and "Opportunity Youth" candidates through social media.

This platform would be available to existing AmeriCorps programs and the Peace Corps, along with a new category of certified organizations and positions — programs that meet quality standards established by the Corporation for National and Community Service, but are funded through other means. This new category would, in most cases, be managed and led by organizations independent of the federal government.

Other programs that could register through the site might include:

- Professional corps sponsored by businesses, foundations, and philanthropic individuals;
- Youth corps supported by state and local sources;
- Programs with goals similar to AmeriCorps that do not meet all of its requirements;
- Programs that place individuals outside of the United States;
- Higher education-sponsored fellowships for social entrepreneurs or other national or public service;
- Programs sponsored by recognized social enterprises; and
- Bridge year programs for youth between high school and college or college and career.

This system would be open only to nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations, public agencies, or recognized social enterprises (such as certified B Corps or incorporated L3Cs or benefit corporations) offering full-time positions that address unmet needs in the community. These positions should address identified challenges, engage corps members in direct service or service that will build the capacity of direct service organizations, have a positive impact on the server, and strengthen civic ties by connecting corps members to other national service participants, including those from other backgrounds. They should also adopt and accept the AmeriCorps rules on prohibited activities, including advocacy, political activity, or proselytization while serving, and prevent the displacement of paid employees.

To distinguish a national service position from a regular job, the sponsoring organization should be asked to: 1) specify a full-time or full-time equivalent term of service for the national service position that engages participants in direct service or capacity building; 2) identify how it will arrange for national service participants to be sworn in and graduate as a class belonging to the Civilian National Service Network across the United States; 3) provide a minimum living allowance, which could be waived by the participant; 4) ensure, to the extent practicable, that they will maximize diversity across geography, race, ethnicity and income or build leadership from within diverse communities; 5) provide orientation, training, supervision, and mentoring to national service participants; 6) address the safety and security of national service participants and those they serve; 7) articulate clearly defined outcomes for the service of participants; 8) provide support to participants as they transition out of the program and into school or work; and 9) enable national service participants to be recognized for their service.

In addition, all participants in this overall civilian national service system would be considered part of the same "class" depending upon the year in which they finished their service — thus we would have the civilian national service class of 2014, 2015, 2016, etc. As members of the same class, service participants would have access to common trainings on-line, would meet other national service participants in their community, and be part of a larger civilian national service class across the United States, decreasing program costs through economies of scale. In addition, universities and graduate institutions should be encouraged to provide recognition and rewards for anyone who has performed at least a year of full-time national service and employers should be encouraged to give hiring preferences to these dedicated citizens as well.

Ideally, every person who engages in a "service year" would have the chance to serve alongside individuals from different backgrounds. These shared experiences will help build a stronger American community. These connections can be built within programs that are internally diverse, or across programs that are more targeted. Mayors, governors, and local leaders can play the role of convening members across programs for swearing-in ceremonies, joint service projects, trainings, and recognition. Special service days (such as MLK Day, September 11th, and Make a Difference Day) are ideal for engaging individuals across programs for special projects.

State and local leaders can also play a critical role in identifying non-profits, college and universities, and other institutions within their states and communities that could become certified national service organizations.

We believe the availability of such a system would inspire many creative new programs and efforts for full-time national service by leveraging the entrepreneurial nature of the Millennial Generation, the potential for new technology, and the growing and increasingly dynamic non-profit sector. The launch of this new platform would be accompanied by public outreach with a view toward attracting organizations and individuals, as well as funding for positions and scholarships. It should result in new resources for national service, building on the strong public-private partnership already found in AmeriCorps, and extending to a broader array of programs poised to engage hundreds of thousands of Americans willing to serve.

It could also provide the platform for a range of other new ideas envisioned by the Franklin Project, including the GI Bill Civilian Service Option, referral point for the dissemination of information on national service opportunities to all 18 to 28 year olds, and expanded "bridge year" opportunities, which are discussed later in this plan. The platform could be created without legislation, with private grants, and ultimately become self-sustaining through modest registration fees and sponsorships.

National service in the 21st century ought to be a major tool to solve problems and provide opportunities for Americans to come together while improving their own lives. A national system to certify "service year" positions can enable America to realize that potential.

G.I. Bill Civilian Service Option

Research shows that civilian service is a tested strategy for successful reintegration of veterans, and veterans have a strong desire to serve at home.¹⁴ Following the lead of the Mission Continues, America Forward, and ServiceNation, we propose that civilian service be recognized as an option under the GI Bill benefits to provide veterans with opportunities to continue their service on the home front and additional transition time and pathways to education and jobs. Specifically, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, in cooperation with the Corporation for National and Community Service, should work to create a civilian service option under the GI Bill to enable veterans across America to serve with nonprofit organizations in their communities.

More than two million Americans have served in the military since 9/11 and more than one million will leave military service in the next five years, with large numbers of them struggling to re-integrate into civilian life.¹⁵ Mental and physical health challenges are common, and veterans are far more likely than the general population to divorce, commit suicide, or become homeless.^{16 17} Unemployment continues to be a struggle for many veterans, who often face higher rates of unemployment than their peers who did not serve.¹⁸

While most veterans have access to benefits designed to aid in veterans' transitions, including higher education, on-the-job-training, and apprenticeships (on-the-job training opportunities provided by employers or unions), many of these benefits are underutilized by eligible service members. Alternative pathways, such as a GI Bill Civilian Service option, would help veterans use their skills and experience to find their way to successful civilian careers and make a commitment to continued education.

Civilian service is a proven pathway for people of many different backgrounds to find direction, skills, and connections that lead to higher education and fulfilling careers. An independent study of The Mission Continues, which provides stipends for post-9/11 veterans to serve at home through local nonprofit organizations, found that 71 percent of Fellows have furthered their education, 86 percent of Fellows have transferred their military skills to civilian employment, 86 percent of Fellows believed the program helped them to become a leader within their community, and 91 percent of Fellows have taught others the value of service and were able to sustain a role of service within their community.¹⁹

While the Corporation for National and Community Service and governor-appointed state commissions have placed a high priority on increasing service opportunities for veterans and military families, there are still too few opportunities for veterans to serve through programs like The Mission Continues, Team Rubicon, and VetCorps. Without the financial support to serve full time, the vast majority of military service members who want to continue their service while they transition to civilian life are unable to do so.

Recognizing civilian service as an option under the GI Bill will ensure that any veteran who desires this alternative transition experience could participate at a minimal cost to the federal government. The one million veterans returning to civilian life over the next five years represent an extraordinary opportunity for our country. Defining a civilian service benefit under the GI Bill will address pressing social issues while helping veterans make the transition to full-time employment or continued education.

Local organizations, their communities, and the nation would benefit from the time and talents of dedicated men and women who have served their nation in the military and desire to continue this service at home. And most importantly, the tens of thousands of citizens who have served their country so steadfastly in times of war and want to engage in civilian national service would have a new option for reintegration into civilian life that would resonate with their commitment to service, their community, and their country.

Expand Existing Service Programs

Fulfill the Promise of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act – 250,000 Positions

Led by Senators Orrin Hatch and Edward Kennedy and passed with 79 votes in the U.S. Senate and broad bipartisan support in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act was signed into law by President Obama in April 2009. The law authorized an increase of AmeriCorps positions from 75,000 in 2009 to 250,000 by 2017. If funding had kept pace with the levels authorized in the law, there would currently be 170,000 AmeriCorps members serving in communities around the country. The law also authorized the creation of a series of new civilian national service corps that would focus the power of national service on solving pressing public problems. The corps that were envisioned -Education, Clean Energy, Veterans, Opportunity, and Health - mirror the national service corps that are outlined in this plan of action.

Notwithstanding bipartisan support, and the half a million applications to national service programs through AmeriCorps every year, funding for AmeriCorps has not kept pace with this demand. Today there are fewer than 80,000 positions available, about half of which are full-time. In order for the country to meet the goal of providing one million national service positions every year, the federal government must fulfill the promise of the Serve America Act with support for 250,000 AmeriCorps positions, including the issue-based corps that were authorized. The Congress and Obama Administration should start meeting this commitment by growing AmeriCorps to 100,000 participants a year in 2014.

Mobilize 100,000 Volunteers to Serve Abroad

After the successful first year of the Peace Corps, President Kennedy said that the Peace Corps would be truly serious when 100,000 Americans were serving abroad every year – with one million over a decade. The result would be a more informed foreign policy, while helping nations in need and showing the world the service ethic of the American people. America has yet to realize this vision and can do more to enable more Americans to serve abroad by expanding the Peace Corps, Volunteers for Prosperity, and the Civilian Response Corps, and by creating Global Service Fellowships.

The Peace Corps: The Peace Corps should nearly double its ranks from 8,000 in 2013 to 15,000 volunteers by 2017 and continue to forge partnerships with other volunteer-sending and international development organizations to maximize their contribution to the host country and leverage additional funding.

Volunteers for Prosperity: Volunteers for Prosperity should expand from its present 43,000 highly-skilled professionals to 75,000 Americans each year recruited and deployed for flexible-term assignments through a network of U.S. nonprofits that work in the developing world on urgent problems, such as HIV/ AIDS, malaria, education, clean water, and helping entrepreneurs start local businesses, in each case by serving through the Volunteers for Prosperity's Serve Program.

Civilian Response Corps: Civilian national service by youth can equip a generation with the experience

to support efforts that can make our world more peaceful and stable. The Civilian Response Corps brings together specially trained civilian federal employees and state and local volunteers who are equipped to rapidly deploy to fragile countries in order to prevent conflict or assist in stabilization efforts. The U.S. Department of State and partnering agencies should continue to increase the capacity of the corps to respond based on international demands.

Global Service Fellowships: Building on progress in funding new Global Service Fellowships with private sector support, publicly supported Global Service Fellowships should be created to mobilize 10,000 volunteer fellows each year for up to one-year assignments to help build the capacity of nongovernment organizations and faith-based institutions working in the developing world to help solve global problems. In addition, programs like Global Citizen Year should be expanded.

Dedicated Public and Private Support for National Service

Funding for large-scale national service will require robust support from all sectors — federal, state, and local governments, corporations and private philanthropy, and individuals. AmeriCorps, which leverages approximately \$400 million annually in non-CNCS matching funds for local and national programs, demonstrates the potential of these publicprivate partnerships. While no single funding stream will be able to create and support one million positions per year, a combination of the following proposals can add to the existing support for civilian national service.

Federal, State, and Local Governments

Despite, and even because of, today's tight fiscal climate, Congress should increase appropriations for national service opportunities through the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Peace Corps, and other federal national service programs, given the high return on investment. This funding has enabled more than 800,000 Americans to serve in AmeriCorps and more than 210,000 to serve in the Peace Corps throughout their histories. Congress and the President should continue to provide the necessary funding to these agencies to create the 250,000 positions called for in the Serve America Act and reach the goal of 15,000 Peace Corps volunteers, 75,000 Volunteers for Prosperity, and 10,000 Global Service Fellowships, annually.

In addition to the traditional appropriations process, there are other ways governments and the private sector can support growth in national service:

- Lottery Funds: Forty-three states and the District of Columbia operate state lotteries and some states participate in multi-state lottery partnerships. A portion of most of these lotteries goes to support state programs, including education, environmental protection, and crime control, to name a few. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, states raise more than \$18 billion that are used at their discretion.²⁰ State policymakers should explore opportunities to dedicate a portion of these lottery funds to support national service positions to help address their state and local challenges.
- Voluntary Tax Contributions for National **Service**: Forty-one states currently give residents the ability to donate additional funds when they pay their taxes to support specific programs. In California alone, more than 290,000 residents voluntarily contributed nearly \$100 million in 2011 to support programs ranging from breast cancer research to youth civic engagement.²¹ States should create a voluntary tax contribution option to provide additional support for national service programs. In addition, the federal government should create a voluntary tax contribution option for federal taxpayers to contribute funds to expand national service programs and remind all Americans of their opportunity and duty to serve their nation.

 National Service Challenge Fund: Federal investments in national service are currently leveraged by the private sector through matching funds, which has been critical to the success of national service programs around the country. To build on this support, the private sector can also lead. The President and Congress should issue a public challenge to America's private sector community to increase its support for national service with the knowledge that such additional support will leverage increased federal funding. One example of this challenge fund was the proposed Centennial Challenge Initiative at the National Park Service, in which the private sector generated more than \$100 million in support for over 300 parks projects and the operating budget for the National Park Service had one of its largest increases in recent history.

Corporate and Private Philanthropy

Corporate, philanthropic, and other non-federal organizations have been strong supporters of national service programs in communities around the country. It should be noted that the Corporation for National and Community Service has the authority to solicit and accept donations of money, property, and services, providing a significant opportunity to increase collaboration and partnership with corporate and philanthropic organizations.

• Community Reinvestment Act: Depository institutions such as banks are encouraged by the Community Reinvestment Act to help meet the credit needs of the communities in which they operate, including low-and moderate-income neighborhoods. Investments in community national service programs can be included in their periodic evaluations. The Corporation for National and Community Service and the federal agencies that oversee depository institutions (the Federal Reserve, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, and the Office of Thrift Supervision) should encourage partnerships between national service organizations and financial institutions. Additionally, the existing authority should be broadened to include certified national service organizations.

 Community Foundations and Local
 Corporations: Given the contribution that national service organizations can make to the local community, partnerships should be developed among local governments, community foundations, local businesses, and philanthropists to enable an increase in national service efforts to help meet local needs. Local funding collaboratives should be established to support expanding more opportunities for local national service organizations and participants.

Citizen Support for Service

Americans are generous – both with their time and money – and national service organizations have been and continue to be recipients of that support. Despite the recent recession, in 2011, charitable giving in the United States reached \$298 billion, supporting causes ranging from education to public benefit organizations²². We should explore the following methods for individuals to become further engaged:

 Crowd-funding and National Competitions: Over the last few years, technology advances and growth of social media platforms have enabled new opportunities for individuals to directly fund programs and causes about which they care.
 "Crowd-funding" has become a significant funder of arts, civic engagement projects, businesses, and other projects around the world. In 2012, individuals pledged \$2.7 billion to more than one million crowd-funding campaigns, an 80 percent increase over 2011.²³

Models like Kickstarter and Donors Choose could be engaged to support the national service certification system, providing nonprofit and public organizations the ability to diversify their funding pool and spread awareness about their programs. Using this tool, individuals could also help raise support to fund their own national service positions.

- Philanthropic challenge grants can serve as additional leverage to encourage crowd-funding support from individual donors. Recently, The Skoll Foundation, in partnership with The Huffington Post, issued a JobRaising Challenge to help put Americans back to work. The JobRaising Challenge offered a prize of \$150,000 to the nonprofit that crowd-funded the largest amount of money during the challenge period. That support from Skoll leveraged more than \$1.2 million in private donations to organizations around the country.²⁴
- Paying it Forward for Service: Some of the greatest advocates for national service are the individual program alumni who collectively number more than one million. Like alumni of colleges and universities, they can also become strong financial supporters of national service programs. Given their unique authority to receive gifts, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Peace Corps, and certified national service program alumni, beneficiaries, and supporters to donate to support national service opportunities for future generations.

Pathways to Engage More Americans in National Service

Every year, the country is turning away hundreds of thousands of Americans who are asking for opportunities to serve their communities and country. With a broader service infrastructure in place, we must also reach out to a more diverse population. This will require building more pathways to service, engaging



youth and young adults of all backgrounds, through the proposals included here and many other pathways to service.

Bridge Year of National Service

We propose asking colleges and universities to recognize a "bridge year" of service as a highly valued and prestigious pathway for students as they finish high school, before they enter higher education, or as they transition to their careers.

The path into college is an untapped opportunity to establish new norms that will benefit many young people who need a break from classroom learning and are looking for the hands-on experiences national service offers. The greater maturity of incoming students who have performed a year of service will improve the academic experience for participating students, their professors, and their peers. Through admissions processes, financial aid, credit conferral, and graduation requirements, colleges and universities possess instruments to shape behavior and expectations. Of the roughly 3.1 million American high school graduates each year, 2.1 million go directly to college (only 1.3 million go directly to a 4-year college). Colleges and universities can be significant venues to enlist one million young adults in service every year.

Opportunity for host community and receiving organizations: The bridge year of service would increase the availability of valuable human capital

 the time and talents of young national service participants – to fill gaps in service delivery at a modest cost and help increase the capacity of organizations to meet their core missions. They can apply their talents and youthful perspective to youth mobilization/motivation efforts as well as to a range of entry-level responsibilities, whether in the U.S. or in overseas assignments addressing needs in education, environmental conservation, natural disaster mitigation/recovery efforts, and many other areas. The exchange associated with a bridge year of service advances social mobility and

civic engagement as it draws participants from across social divides and exposes participants and host communities to different ideas and attitudes.

 Colleges' receptivity: Colleges and universities are already under pressure to retool their model by including better connections between experiential and academic learning to produce graduates prepared for careers and lives of active citizenship. They are seeking creative opportunities to do so including service learning. Colleges and universities are also increasingly supportive of the "bridge year" concept, recognizing that it helps to address the higher education challenges of: 1) college readiness; and 2) the post-secondary school burnout experienced by many college entrants academically exhausted by the race to get into college. Bridge year experiences and programs yield more mature students with broader perspectives and enhanced capacity to appreciate and take full advantage of the opportunities available to them on college campuses.

There are several ways that colleges and universities can support this proposal, depending on their organizational and student needs, including providing credit to students for their year of service, offering tuition incentives or enrollment preference for national service participants, or creating service opportunities for incoming students who defer for a year in order to participate in a "bridge year". Global Citizen Year is an example of a bridge year organization forging a new educational pathway for emerging leaders by partnering with colleges and universities.

Building a year of service into a young person's transition from high school to higher education and career can change expectations and establish civilian national service as a rite of passage, tap the idealism and energy of young Americans to help solve our most pressing challenges. It can also improve the intellectual focus, maturity, and dedication of incoming college students, while augmenting their employability during and after college.

Reconnecting Opportunity Youth Through National Service

Opportunity Youth – young people age 16-24 who are not connected to education or employment – often benefit from participating in national service. Evaluations of programs such as Public Allies, YouthBuild, and service and conservation corps, point to the powerful effect full-time national service can have on a population that often has limited access to pathways of opportunity. Scaling up national service in the United States requires us to ensure that as it grows, those who have the chance to serve include individuals who have not yet successfully transitioned through school and into a career.

Too often, Opportunity Youth do not experience a successful rite of passage into adulthood. Full-time national service, which provides opportunities to meet pressing community challenges, has proven invaluable for developing tenacity and grit, and creating pathways to self-confidence, self-sufficiency, education, and employment for thousands of motivated young people. For the nearly one million young people who exit high school without a degree every year, national service can provide pathways to re-connect to education, the workforce, and society, while achieving a broader community impact.

These young people should not be viewed only as clients of service, but as producers of service and assets to their communities. AmeriCorps has provided tens of thousands of Opportunity Youth with the chance to make an impact through their service, get on an educational and career pathway, and perhaps most importantly become active citizens and role models in communities that need their service and leadership.

We propose that the Corporation for National and Community Service, the governor-appointed state commissions, and national service organizations continue to expand opportunities for Opportunity Youth to participate in national service and highlight strategies to scale up programs that have a demonstrated record of recruiting, training, and retaining Opportunity Youth in service. Providers of service opportunities should themselves be diverse with representation from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and degrees of educational attainment.

National service by Opportunity Youth represent an inflection point to fortify diverse pathways from exclusion to opportunity. Additional ideas include:

- Leverage Federal Work Study and other resources to support service-based efforts that build capacity and skills to encourage persistence in postsecondary education, particularly for lowincome young adults who enroll in, but never complete, community college. Many in higher education do not feel a connection to their community and campus, or need additional resources. Encouraging colleges and universities to explore more work-study options for Opportunity Youth to do service, as the successful Jumpstart program does, is important and valuable.
- Scale up successful, comprehensive education and workforce development programs, like the YouthBuild program administered by the U.S.
 Department of Labor and National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program that utilizes service as a key component of dropout prevention and recovery.
 Through these types of service programs, participants acquire the education, training, life skills, and self-discipline necessary to succeed as productive citizens.
- Identify and pursue legislative opportunities and federal initiatives that could be utilized to better engage Opportunity Youth through serviceopportunity providers such as the Workforce Investment Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Higher Education Act, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, STEM, and initiatives within federal departments.
- Reform the Job Corps so that it reflects the civic pathways evident in YouthBuild and Youth Corps



programs.

- Support an increased investment in service learning and work experience programs through the Workforce Investment Act's Youth Formula and Youth Innovation Funds.
- Support national service programs at community colleges that help young people move from remedial to degree-track work and help these young people advance toward degrees, community leadership, and greater job-readiness.

A Talent Pipeline through National Service

National service has been a transformative experience for the more than one million participants during their terms of service. These service members have invested their own time and talent to address pressing community challenges. As alums, they often continue to support the communities in which they serve and grow as leaders in their field. Likewise, as they continue to contribute after their service year, the nation can support their growth as leaders. By doing so, we are presented with the dual opportunity of supporting alums as leaders while building leadership of the sector that is representative of a 21st century America.

As we build more pathways for Americans to engage in service, expanding the "after service" pipeline realizes the long-term and lifelong benefits of national service and increases incentives for others to follow. Expansion of service opportunities – and a continued investment in the pipeline of national service alums – provides a critical means to meet national challenges, as well as showcase national service's role in building stronger students, better employees, and more civically engaged citizens.

Employers of Service

National service alums can help meet an important need facing our economy. The national service

experience fosters and develops skills that are critical to employers, including hard skills (e.g. project management or corps-specific competencies like land management or youth development) and soft skills (e.g., leadership, empathy, teamwork, and persistence). Broad societal recognition of the value of service – both to the country and individual – is key to the effort to bring national service to large scale.

We propose working with employers – including private and nonprofit sector and government – to help them tap a dedicated, well-trained pool of civically engaged talent.

- Improve the Path to Careers in Civil Service: The Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA members who have satisfactorily completed their service earn non-competitive eligibility for federal jobs for one year after their service. This special eligibility can help federal employers streamline their hiring process, tap into highly gualified Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and VISTAs, and fill vacancies faster and more efficiently. Through an Executive Order, the President can extend non-competitive eligibility to individuals who have served the nation through full-time service in AmeriCorps, FEMA Corps, the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and other eligible national service experiences. Additionally, state and local governments should consider offering similar preferences for national service participants who served in their states or communities.
- Hiring National Service Alumni: We support AmeriCorps Alums' efforts to spearhead a campaign that will celebrate public, private, and nonprofit employers who actively support the recruitment, hiring, and professional development of national service alums. Employers would benefit by participating in "Employers of Service" both by recruiting and hiring from a highly qualified and diverse pool of employees, and by joining a group of employers who recognize and reward the value

of national service and the leadership development of traditionally under-represented populations to companies, communities, and our nation.

Higher Education for Service

National service should be seen as a positive factor on the candidate profile sought by colleges and universities - and is treated as such by many colleges and universities today. Institutions of higher education have an opportunity to recognize the value of national service, and the contributions that it makes to a student body and academic achievement, through policy and research that supports the value of national service.

- Higher education institutions can make higher education more affordable by expanding the scope of incentives they offer national service alumni. This recognition is of particular importance for alums who are the first in their family to enroll in postsecondary education. It could include matching the value of the Segal Education Award provided to AmeriCorps participants who complete their term of service or participation in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program (formerly known as Fellows/USA) for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers as many are already doing.
- Universities can also support an expanded research agenda that can assess the impact that national service has on individuals who serve – and their job readiness, educational attainment, and civic engagement.

Public Service Academy

From our Founding Fathers to recent Members of Congress, America's leaders have called for a Public Service Academy to help prepare our next generation for public service leadership. We support building a consortium of colleges and universities to create campus-based public service training programs for students. Arizona State University will pilot the first academy and identify like-minded partner universities to form a consortium.

The Public Service Academy is a new approach to develop future servant leaders who advance interagency and multi-sector solutions to public problems. Inspired by the Reserve Officer Training Corps model of leadership development, the academy will augment the traditional undergraduate experience with courses, experiential programming, and career development designed to prepare collaborative leaders of character. Preference will be given to applicants who have completed a full-time national service program such as City Year, Public Allies, YouthBuild, or the National Guard Youth Challenge.

The academy experience will begin prior to the start of the fall semester with a summer orientation and leadership camp that will introduce students to the values and expectations of the academy and foster cohort cohesion. Students will then embark on an intensive four-year program that includes one academy course each semester, mentorship, retreats, leadership opportunities, service experiences, and career planning. Each year, students who complete the required programming will receive funding for a summer internship in the business, nonprofit or government sectors.

National Center on Service and Innovative Leadership

The growth of the national service field will demand the development of leaders at every level – a need that can be addressed through the new National Center for Service and Innovative Leadership, housed at the Presidio of San Francisco. In 21 historic buildings arranged on a campus of 25 acres, the Center will host education, research, convening, and recognition programs rooted in a distinctive cross-tradition, cross-sector approach. While programs will be data driven, academically rigorous, and tied to measurable outcomes, the Center will focus on creating a dynamic environment where experiential learning and practice will be paramount.



- A new education program will offer multi-day, residential leadership development opportunities for emerging and current social purpose leaders. Course curriculum will focus on equipping these leaders with the tools and approaches necessary to navigate a multi-sector world, adapt to new demands to generate social returns, and facilitate effective collaborations focused on high impact social change.
- A research program will focus on identifying ways to share the history, leadership development tactics, and best practices from all traditions of service, and evaluate promising and emerging models for cross-tradition social impact work.
- A convening program will build the Center into a vibrant community of nationally focused partners in residence from various traditions of service, establishing Fort Scott as an innovative hub of activity for meetings, events, and educational activities offered by mission-aligned partners.
- A recognition program will lift up promising crosstradition leaders, leadership development activities, and community solutions as inspirational examples to follow. The recognition program housed at the center can include a national hall of fame for service to honor corps members and connect them to the long tradition of service in America.

Fort Scott at the Presidio can also provide an ideal site for swearing in and graduating classes of national service corps members across the United States.

Military Recruitment and Civilian National Service

The military relies on a dedicated pool of young Americans to volunteer to serve in the branches of our Armed Forces. Yet, as a result of poor education, poor health, or behavior, nearly 75 percent of the nation's 17-24 year olds are ineligible to serve.²⁵ While these standards are necessary to ensure we have a military at full readiness, we should not fail to recognize these young people's commitment to the country. We propose that the military recruiting system should inform all recruits who are ineligible for service how they can apply to serve through a civilian national service program. In addition, by establishing a year of national service as a common expectation and common opportunity for all young Americans, we expect that more young people will also consider joining the military as a way to serve our country.

A Lifetime of Service

Although the Franklin Project is focused on establishing a year of service as a civic rite of passage for all young Americans ages 18 to 28, we recognize the increasing value and impact of older Americans who choose to perform "encore service." And by encouraging all young people to perform at least a year of full-time national service, those habits of the heart will be developed and will lead to many more ultimately deciding to perform "encore service" in their later years, thus further contributing to our country's ability to solve problems.

Similarly, although our focus in the Franklin Project is full-time national service by young Americans, age 18 to 28, we recognize the importance of service by elementary and secondary school students, through school-based service-learning or through youth initiatives in the community and with non-profit organizations engaged in service to the community. For many, if not most, young people, such youth service and youth leadership in the early years is their introduction to the power of service at all ages. The spread of service-learning in schools across the country and the growth of the Global Youth Service Day in America and around the world, not just for one day of signature joint service but as a day of commitment to year-round service, is a good reason we are optimistic that the rising generation is ready for a year of full-time service as a common rite of passage to active-duty citizenship.

The Case for National Service

The conversation on national service often views military and civilian service as two separate and distinct concepts, rather than as components of a broad spectrum of service, ranging from military, to government or public service, to full-time or part-time national service, to traditional volunteering. Expanding our understanding of national service to include both military and civilian service, a key aim of the Franklin Project, will require a robust public-private partnership. Individuals, the private sector, higher education, the faith community, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations, in addition to the military and other existing government programs, must work together to make a full year of national service a common expectation and opportunity for all Americans.

Over the last 80 years, America has developed a strong federally supported civilian national service system that engages individuals of all ages and backgrounds in tackling critical problems facing the nation. The earliest national service porgrams date back to the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933 and the launch of the Peace Corps in 1961, followed by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and the Senior Corps. The creation of the first White House Office of National Service in 1990 and the Commission on National and Community Service in 1991, greatly expanded through the creation of AmeriCorps in 1993, and strengthened by the establishment of the USA Freedom Corps after September 11, 2001 and the bipartisan Serve America Act in 2009, successive Administrations of both parties have invested in national service as a cost-effective strategy to engage citizens, meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic participation.

On the domestic front, the Corporation for National and Community Service has worked hand-in-hand with thousands of local partners, providing leadership, resources, coordination, focus, and accountability for these efforts. AmeriCorps and Senior Corps participants are serving at more than 70,000 locations across the country, taking on the most pressing challenges facing America from educating students for the jobs of the 21st century and addressing the needs of military families and a new generation of veterans returning from war to helping communities rebuild after natural disasters and promoting health and wellbeing, and preserving the nation's parks and public lands.

AmeriCorps was structured as a public-private partnership that leverages significant non-federal funding from businesses, foundations, and other sources. It typically provides a living allowance and education awards (scholarships or loan repayment) to those who serve. The Corporation for National and Community Service works with governor-appointed state service commissions who select grantees for state and local national service positions, awards and monitors grant funds, place VISTAs, administer the National Civilian Community Corps, provide oversight and accountability, measure performance, and operate a trust fund to administer the education scholarships.

In addition, the Corporation for National and Community Service provides leadership nationally and within the federal government in support of national and volunteer service, working with Congress and the White House, building national identity, leading national days of service, conducting research, building crosssector partnerships, and strengthening America's service and volunteer infrastructure.

Since its inception in 1993, more than 800,000 Americans have served in AmeriCorps, providing more than one billion hours of service and earning more than \$2.4 billion in education scholarships. AmeriCorps members provide vital support to thousands of organizations -- food banks, homeless shelters, community health clinics, youth centers, veterans service facilities, schools, universities, and other community organizations. AmeriCorps members recruited and helped manage more than four million volunteers last year, boosting the impact of the nonprofit and faith-based organizations in which they serve.

In the international arena, for over half a century, the Peace Corps has supported more than 210,000 Americans serving in 139 countries around the world. These volunteers have worked on issues ranging from AIDS and malaria education to information technology and environmental preservation and as teachers in schools. The Peace Corps has three primary goals: helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of people served; and, helping promote a better understanding of other people on the part of Americans.

Together, these two agencies – the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Peace Corps – support thousands of national service participants and volunteers each year. Applications for these service opportunities supported by these agencies far outstrip the available supply. Similarly, demand by organizations that want to offer AmeriCorps positions significantly exceeds the supply of AmeriCorps grant funds, with funding available to approve only one in five AmeriCorps grants requested last year. Increased federal funding and private sector partnerships could significantly expand these programs and enable them to be more effective.

Outside of these federal programs, a burgeoning movement led by social entrepreneurs, higher education institutions, innovative nonprofits, multinational organizations, and forward thinking companies have added greatly to the mix of "service year" opportunities available to Americans. These positions number in the thousands, are growing, and could expand significantly. However, they operate independently and are not connected to a larger national service system.

National Service is a Smart Public Investment

National service is a high return on investment. Naitonal service participants provide for their communities many important services in sectors such as education, health, and civic infrastructure. Many studies have found that the economic value of these services is by itself sufficient to justify their costs.

But national service has even greater value. It is an investment – building human and social capital that lasts into the future. National service programs are vital in giving young adults productive competencies, human capital, and social skills that will persist into adulthood. These effects are particularly strong for disadvantaged youth who may lack educational or labor market opportunities.

A study by Columbia University commissioned by the Franklin Project and Voices for National Service found that when viewed as an investment, national service yields a high return both for the participant and for society. Researchers calculated the total costs including public and leveraged funds – of national service programs for youth, seniors, and the full economic benefits of these programs – including both the value of the services provided and the longer-term value to the participants, to taxpayers, and to society. They found that the benefits of national service programs substantially exceed the costs of supporting national service programs for young adults and seniors. The economic benefits of national service for youth are at least four times greater than the costs of providing these programs. Programs for seniors also yield high returns that significantly exceed their costs.²⁶

Expanding national service programs is an even smarter public investment. Researchers found that, as national service programs increase in scale, their average cost falls but their average benefit rises. The result is that programs are likely to have even higher returns if they enroll more participants.²⁷

Service as a Rite of Passage

National service is not only a benefit to country and community; it has a transformative power on the individuals who serve. Regardless of personal history, or place of service, national service has been a rite of passage for many Americans. Through their service, they gain valuable personal and professional skills and a deeper connection to communities and the country.

For most Americans, the concept of service is limited to the less than half of one percent of our population who serve on active duty in our Armed Forces, although we also note that there are tens of thousands of Americans who serve in full-time civilian national service programs every year as well. Yet for many of those in uniform, their service does not end when they return to civilian life. A national survey of veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom found that more than 90 percent of veterans agreed that service to their community was important to them and that service was a basic responsibility of every American.²⁸

Similarly, AmeriCorps Alums and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) both experience significant personal and professional development as a result of their terms of service. More than 90 percent of RPCVs said that Peace Corps service changed their lives. It significantly influenced their professional decisions, with 60 percent reporting that their service influenced their choice of careers.²⁹ For many alums, service in AmeriCorps programs serves as a pipeline to careers in public service. Approximately 80 percent of members reported that their service exposed them to new career options, with 60 percent of alumni reporting they worked with a public service organization.³⁰

Civic engagement and service can be a bridge to employment in hard times, helping individuals and communities weather economic downturns. This is important to young people under 25 years old who are experiencing unemployment rates of 16 percent – more than double the national average. Extended periods of youth unemployment can resut in lower future earnings, increased student loan default rates, and delays in marriage or purchasing a home. A young person unemployed for six months can expect to earn \$22,000 less over the next decade.³¹

Participation in national service programs can also encourage future civic engagement and volunteering. AmeriCorps members reported that their national service experience made it "more likely" or "much more likely" that they would participate in community service in the future. Sixty-three percent of AmeriCorps State and National members and 78 percent of AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps members reported that they volunteered in the last two years, compared to the national average of 26 percent at the time.³² Similarly, more than half (55 percent) of all RPCVs reported that they volunteer in their local communities, more than double the national average.³³

This long-term ethic of service and volunteering can also influence national service members' decisions later in life, preparing them for an encore service experience. For those older service members who volunteer at an encore stage of life, the impact of service is no less meaningful. Research clearly suggests that volunteering positively affects a person's physical and mental health and their life satisfaction. A study of older adults found that the effect on a person's health is due to the sense of accomplishment one gains from a volunteer experience.³⁴

Americans Support National Service

In order to understand the attitudes and beliefs of American voters, a nationally representative survey was conducted in March 2013 to test various ideas relating to national service, the public's understanding of it, and various policies and ideas that the Franklin Project is developing.³⁵ A strong majority (61 percent) of voters react favorably to the term "national service," while only nine percent of voters express unfavorable views of the term. "National service" means a variety of things to voters (nearly all of them positive), including "military/troops who protect our freedom," "providing a service to our country," and "volunteering through giving your time and talents."

Voters also possess positive attitudes toward specific concepts associated with national service, including "volunteering" (90 percent favorable), "community service" (89 percent), "military service" (86 percent), "public service" (74 percent), and "civilian service" (73 percent).

Voters Believe National Service Could Meet Pressing Needs in the Country

The vast majority of voters say our country should be doing more in areas where national service could have a real and lasting impact, which include the following:

- Fostering individual responsibility for improving our communities & country (86 percent);
- Giving young people more ways to earn money to pay for college (83 percent);
- Developing employment pathways that can help prepare individuals for professional jobs where there are currently shortages (83 percent);
- Promoting citizen involvement in solving our country's most pressing problems (81 percent);
- Making sure there are work and learning opportunities for students after high school & college (79 percent); and
- Helping young people out of school & work reconnect to education and work (78 percent).

Voters Strongly Favor Voluntary National Service, But Oppose Mandatory

Four in five voters (80 percent) support voluntary national service in which people of all ages would be given opportunities to serve America in a military or in a civilian capacity for one year and receive a living allowance and education award. Support is high across all subgroups: 88 percent of Democrats, 76 percent of Independents, and 74 percent of Republicans support voluntary national service.

While solid support exists for voluntary national service, 71 percent oppose (and 52 percent strongly oppose) a system of mandatory national service.

Voters Strongly Believe National Service Benefits the Country

Voters believe national service would be beneficial in addressing specific challenges, including:

- Assisting military families and veterans in adjusting back into civilian life (93 percent);
- Providing mentors or tutors for students in lowperforming schools to help keep them on track (91 percent);
- Helping communities prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters (91 percent);
- Helping clean up rivers, parks, and blighted public areas (91 percent); and
- Providing job training & career advice to lowincome Americans (90 percent).

Strong Majorities of Voters Support the Policy Proposals Relevant to The Franklin Project Plan

Voters favor a range of policy ideas to expand national service, including many that are part of this Plan of Action:

 Nearly four out of five (79 percent) support creating a system modeled on President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps; they favor setting up programs that focus on specific needs, such as an Education Corps to help students; a Health Corps to expand access to health services; a Green Corps to clean up rivers, parks, and blighted areas; and a Rapid-Response Reserve Corps to respond to local and national disasters;

- Nearly four out of five (78 percent) support amending the current Selective Service System so that every American -- both men and women -age eighteen or older registers and receives information about opportunities to serve in the military or in a civilian-national service capacity;
- Three-fourths (75 percent) support encouraging nonprofit organizations, colleges, universities, and faith-based institutions to join a national service system by offering positions for Americans to serve for a year through their respective organizations;
- Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) support creating a bridge year for service, in which young adults would complete a full year of national service either between high school and college or between college and entering the work force;
- Seventy-one percent support amending the GI Bill to permit veterans to use a portion of their GI Bill benefits to support their performing a full year of civilian national service;
- Seventy percent support creating a full year of service as an encore year for older Americans with twenty or more years of work experience to help

meet community needs; and

 Nearly six out of ten (59 percent) support creating a national service academy modeled after military academies like West Point to encourage more civic leaders by educating and training people who plan to be involved in public service.

Despite Voters' Concerns with Government Spending, the Vast Majority Support Increased Funding for National Service

- When told that more than 600,000 Americans apply to programs such as AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps, but more than 80 percent (half a million people) are turned away each year because there are not enough positions, 76 percent of voters say increasing public funding to enable more Americans to serve in a civilian national service program would be worth it.
- Seventy-one percent of registered voters would support increased public funding for civilian national service if it were part of a public-private partnership in which increased public funds were matched with contributions from the private sector.

National Service to Address National Challenges

America continues to recover from the recent recession, requiring many government and nonprofit organizations to ask how they can have a greater impact with increasingly limited resources. Whether it is addressing the high school dropout crisis, re-integrating veterans into civilian life, protecting the environment, responding to natural disasters, alleviating childhood hunger, or improving the health of Americans, national service can be a powerful part of the solution. For some of these challenges, we have identified the size of the challenge and the potential opportunity for large-scale national service to help meet those needs.³⁶

National Challenge: The High School Dropout Epidemic & A Quality Education

Providing all of America's children with high quality education is critical to the economic and civic health of our country. Numerous national service programs work in the area of education and are demonstrating the power of national service from helping educate children in preschool to helping young adults succeed in college. While there are many facets to America's education challenge, the high school dropout epidemic in the United States is one targeted and fixable problem that national service can address. Nearly one million young people do not graduate from high school with their class every year with huge consequences to them and to society.³⁷ Dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, have poor health, divorced, and single parents with children who themselves drop out from high school themselves.38

Our communities and nation also suffer due to the loss of productive workers and revenue and the higher costs associated with increased crime, drug abuse, incarceration, health care and social services. If we were to cut the dropout rate in half for just one class of dropouts, it would save the nation \$45 billion.³⁹ Former national security advisors have made the case that the failure to educate so many of our young people also threatens our national security, ignoring potential talent that could keep our country strong.⁴⁰ Nearly half of America's dropouts come from more than 2,000 of America's lowest performing high schools.⁴¹ Research shows that a person's record of attendance, behavior and course performance in reading and math in middle school is highly predictive of whether students will drop out from high school.³³ Teams of national service participants in hundreds of low-performing schools across the nation are working cooperatively with teachers to provide the tutoring, mentoring, and peer supports, in addition to other critical wraparound supports to keep more students in school and on track to graduate. Their services are so highly valued that schools and districts are making these national service programs a priority in their own budgets, in addition to the small investment that the country makes in them.

The larger picture is also encouraging. After decades of stagnating high school graduation rates and the consequences of dropout, reform efforts at the local, state and national levels are starting to pay off and the nation is, for the first time, on pace to meet the national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020.⁴² Some states and school districts have made double-digit gains in graduation rates over the last decade, providing insights on the elements of success.⁴³ Graduation gaps, however, among student populations - including minorities, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities - are so large in some states and communities and the pace of progress is so uneven across the states that these weaknesses threaten our ability meet our national goal.44

The scale of the need is clear – there are millions of students in the nation's low-performing high schools and their feeder elementary and middle schools that are at risk of dropping out of high school over a fouryear period if they do not get the supports they need to stay on track. Teams of national service participants, working in partnership with strong school leadership, reform efforts, and high quality teachers, and prompting the use of early warning data and intervention systems to provide the right supports to the right students at the scale and intensity required, could help ensure that more students graduate and we stay on track to meet our national goal. The Corporation for National and Community Service and its partners are currently deploying about 30,000 AmeriCorps members every year to work on education through programs like the School Turnaround AmeriCorps and organizations including Communities in Schools, Citizen Schools, City Year, Jumpstart, and Teach for America, among others, with nearly onefourth (26 percent) of "persistently lowest achieving" schools having at least one national service participant engaged on campus.⁴⁵ Increasing the number of national service participants to 120,000, would enable a team of at least ten national service participants to be placed in every single dropout factory school and their feeder middle and elementary schools.

National Challenge: Endangered Places

Our nation's public and tribal lands, waterways and open spaces – from Yellowstone National Park to Congress Heights Playground in Anacostia, D.C. – and the many individual, community, and societal benefits they provide, are increasingly becoming inaccessible and unavailable to millions of Americans, particularly those residing in urban and low-income communities and in neighborhoods of color. These public lands, waterways and open spaces clean our air, purify our water, absorb pollution, prevent floods and erosion, and provide habitat for diverse species of wildlife and for recreation. Our parks also tell America's story. These resources also promote economic development by encouraging tourism and investment, supporting retail, creating jobs, and increasing property values. Outdoor recreation contributes \$646 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supports nearly 6.1 million jobs, and generates nearly \$80 billion in annual federal, state, and local revenues.⁴⁶

Unless we act now to save these places; ensure that all Americans have access to clean, healthy, safe and inviting public and tribal lands, waters, and open spaces; and instill a sense of ownership and stewardship for all our natural resources in the current and upcoming generations, some of these lands - and the multitude of benefits they provide to all Americans - may be lost forever. Multiple federal land management agencies have a combined \$60 billion in backlogged maintenance needs,47 and state and local parks have \$18 billion in unmet needs.⁴⁸ leading to unsafe and even closed trails, campgrounds, parks and playgrounds. More than half of our nation's waterways are in poor condition for aquatic life, having an impact on our drinking water, recreational opportunities and economy.

Many of the parks, particularly state parks, we use today were built by Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. In a ten-year period, 3 million young, unemployed men planted 3 billion trees, provided proper drainage and prevented soil erosion on 84 million acres of land, and built more than 800 parks. Today's service and conservation corps currently enroll between 15,000-20,000 young men and women of all backgrounds every year to complete important projects in parks, forests and local communities. A recent federal advisory committee recommended that service and conservation corps increase to 100.000 corps members per year by 2018 through a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps in a public-private partnership, to meet the demand in communities and by young people to work in national, state, local, and urban parks, and forests and along coastlines and waterways across the country.

As part of the proposed 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, 100,000 national service participants should restore these places to their natural state or intended purpose. These members, particularly those residing in urban and low-income communities and



neighborhoods of color, could restore and create places in their own communities to provide all residents with access to the many benefits of clean, healthy, safe and inviting public and tribal lands, waters and open spaces, while at the same time developing the next – and more diverse – generation of land managers, environmental stewards, committed citizens and healthy Americans. Research shows that corps members outpace their peers in community engagement, leadership, self-responsibility, teamwork, and intention to pursue a career in natural resource management.

National Challenge: Re-Integration of Veterans

Over the next five years, more than one million military service members will return to civilian life, joining nearly 2 million veterans who have transitioned out of the military during the last decade of conflict. After returning home, many veterans still face unique challenges – ranging from significant VA benefit backlogs, unemployment and underemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, relationship problems, PTSD, and even suicide, all at rates that often exceed the general population. These are serious problems not only for the millions of veterans and their families seeking new lives back home, but for a future America seeking to recruit and maintain a military that can ensure our nation's security.

Civilian service on the home front is one answer to successfully re-integrate our nation's veterans. The All-Volunteer Force report indicates that 92 percent of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan agreed that community service is important to them, and that service is a basic responsibility of all Americans.⁴⁹ The study also showed that veterans who engaged in civilian service when they returned to the United States had much better transitions home than those veterans who did not.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the report showed that veterans were motivated to meet community needs across a broad spectrum of issues, from caring for other veterans to responding to disasters to mentoring youth to assisting the elderly. Accordingly, veterans indicated they can find renewed meaning and purpose in the reapplication of their motivations to serve in the

military to meet the needs in their local communities.

Veteran reintegration is not just a challenge for our nation. It is a great opportunity. It is an opportunity to bring all Americans into service - veterans and nonveterans alike. Models of how national service may improve our veterans' success in transitioning home currently exist and are succeeding. At The Mission Continues, where veterans engage in an intensive 6month term of community service, 86 percent of participants report that their continued service was a positive life-changing experience, 82 percent report that their service improved their chances of getting a job, 86 percent successfully translated their military skills to civilian skills, 71 percent furthered their education during their term, and 91 percent claim that they will continue to serve as leaders in their community.51

Just as The Mission Continues is showing the value that veterans can bring to their communities through service, Give An Hour is showing the value that communities can bring to veterans by asking mental health professionals nationwide to donate an hour of their time each week to provide free mental health services to military personnel, veterans and their families. In addition, Team Rubicon - a service organization deploying veterans to work on disaster relief – is demonstrating the power of mobilizing all Americans through veteran-led relief campaigns. As demonstrated in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the response of veteran volunteers to the disaster was immediate, effective, and inspiring and bridged the gap between veterans and civilians to deploy them together to meet pressing community needs. Finally, the Corporation for National and Community Service has launched a new partnership with the National Guard Bureau and Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America called VetCorps. This initiative will place AmeriCorps and VISTA members in communities to help returning veterans and their families access critical service and support - ranging from social, mental, and physical health services to housing and employment assistance.

With proposed flexibility in the GI Bill, as described earlier, to permit veterans to use their existing benefits

to participate in national service, at least 50,000 veterans could be engaged. An additional 50,000 civilians and military family members could also be engaged through other national service programs to meet the needs of the nation and support veterans and military families.

National Challenge: Childhood Hunger

Childhood hunger is a significant problem in the U.S. with more than 16 million children living in households that are food insecure, meaning that they struggle to put food on the table and achieve adequate nutrition.⁵² Hunger impacts many other serious problems faced by children, including academic success and health. Ensuring that children have three healthy meals per day will improve the nation's high school graduation rate and reduce the number of overweight and obese children (currently one in three children is overweight or obese). Obesity and failing to graduate from high school are two of the leading reasons that young people cannot join the military.⁵³

As Share Our Strength has argued, childhood hunger is a solvable problem. Improved access to school meals like breakfast can contribute to improved test scores and attendance rates, which in turn lead to higher graduation rates and improved long-term economic success.⁵⁴ Students who eat school breakfast attend an average of 1.5 more days of school per year and score 17.5 percent higher on math tests, and are 20 percent more likely to finish high school.⁵⁵ In addition, increased consumption of school meals can have positive health effects. For example, children who eat breakfast see fewer chronic illnesses and healthier body mass index. Childhood hunger can be eliminated with three healthy meals a day in the places where they learn, live, and play by maximizing the use of the existing federal entitlement nutrition programs. Expanding the use of these existing resources also creates additional jobs and brings new money into local communities. Using the federal nutrition programs, schools can offer three meals a day during the school year and at least two meals a day during the summer months, and each of these meals is reimbursed by the federal government. Many schools lack the capacity to take advantage of all these opportunities and only offer

lunch and breakfast before the start of the school day.

By focusing on the 95,000 schools participating in the national school lunch program, leveraging the existing national service infrastructure (VISTA, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps), and creating new service opportunities dedicated to this challenge, national service could help end childhood hunger. A national service response fits well with this opportunity to help end childhood hunger by increasing the capacity of schools to take advantage of existing mandatory federal nutrition programs. A well-trained national service member could provide the business planning expertise, best practices on effective service models, and communications expertise to help schools expand their meal offerings.

While models like Food Corps illustrate how national service can be part of the solution to childhood hunger, significant efforts are needed to scale these programs to reach those who could benefit. It is estimated that one full-time national service participant could help build capacity in up to four schools per year, meaning that every eligible school could be included in one year with nearly 25,000 full-time national service participants.

National Challenge: Opportunity Youth and Poverty

Today, about 17% of 16- to 24-year olds are out of school and out of work. They cost taxpayers \$93 billion dollars every year and \$1.4 trillion over their lifetimes in lost productivity and increased social services.⁵⁶ They also represent an opportunity for the nation to tap the talents of millions of potential leaders and productive workers at a time when America's skills gap is significant. While these youth face significant life challenges, most start out with big dreams and remain confident or hopeful that they can achieve their goals; most accept responsibility for their futures; and most are looking to reconnect to school, work and service. Remarkably, nearly 70% report that they want to serve in their communities, but only three percent are doing so, showing the barriers that are in place.

National service presents an opportunity to put these young people into productive service meeting



community needs, while also putting them back on a path to reconnect to school and work. Programs such as YouthBuild, Public Allies, and The Corps Network, provide many opportunity youth with the chance to improve their communities while gaining critical education and workforce skills. Other national service programs provide services to opportunity youth to help them get back on track to success.

National Challenge: Improving the Health of Americans

Healthcare can be defined as the prevention, treatment, and management of illnesses and the preservation of mental and physical well-being through services offered by medical, allied health, and social services professions. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has identified a simpler phrasing: "Health starts where we live, learn, work and play."⁵⁷ Unfortunately, managing one's healthcare for millions of working families continues to be an uphill battle:

- More than 10 million working families in the United States live with incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$44,700 for a family of four in 2011) and nearly a third of working families are struggling to meet basic needs despite their hard work.⁵⁸
- Nearly one-quarter of working-age adults an estimated 43 million – reported that they and/or their spouse had lost their job within the past two years, according to the Commonwealth Fund, and nearly half of those reporting recent unemployment lost their health insurance.⁵⁹
- The uninsured who now number around 50 million – are more likely than those with health coverage to live in a household that is having difficulty paying basic monthly expenses such as rent, food, and utilities.

Chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, and their underlying causes such as obesity and tobacco use, affect more than 130 million Americans – nearly half the population – and account for 75% of U.S. health care spending, or \$1.5 trillion annually.⁶⁰ Additionally, as the Affordable Care Act is

implemented fully by 2014, quality outcomes such as preventable hospitalizations and re-hospitalizations will be monitored and navigation services will be needed to ensure these measures improve and lead to long term health care cost reductions.

Last year, the Center for Strategic Planning, Policy and Data Analysis Group⁶¹ provided insight into the impact avoidable hospitalizations have on the health care system. Research shows that 26% of all hospitalizations for dual eligibles (people who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid) may have been avoidable, either because the condition could have been prevented, or because the condition could have been treated outside of a hospital. Reducing the number of hospitalizations would improve care for beneficiaries and likely lead to a meaningful decrease in Medicare spending. Research also found that just five conditions accounted for over 80% of potentially avoidable hospitalizations: congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease/asthma, pneumonia, dehydration, and urinary tract infections. These illnesses were the leading conditions for dual eligibles of individuals not within a nursing facility, or within the community.

The opportunity to build on successful national service models like the Community HealthCorps or the National Health Corps (an original AmeriCorps grantee that grew out of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) can offer an immediate springboard for growing Healthy Futures programs as outlined in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The longevity of programs like these have allowed millions of medically underserved children and families gain access to health care, manage chronic illnesses, and improve overall health. Coordination with HHS is essential to ensure national service participants are aligned with agency-wide collaboratives and delivering on system-wide impacts that are already being tracked and measured (i.e., reducing the number of uninsured, improving clinical outcomes in key chronic illnesses, reducing the unnecessary use of ERs for primary care, and sharing of the most up-to-date health promotion and education resources).

Conclusion

Every person who comes of age in America should be challenged to serve and contribute something to the country. The Franklin Project envisions a time when a year of national service for every young American becomes the expectation, the norm, the rite of passage that puts them outside their comfort zones and changes their lives forever. Such a rite can harness the talents and imagination of generations to understand and solve our country's toughest challenges.

The 21st Century National Service Summit in Aspen, Colorado will launch the effort to fulfill the promise for largescale national service, secure commitments to implement the plan, and engage leaders from a variety of backgrounds, communities, and sectors. Through the work of the Franklin Project's Millennial Working Group, we will help mobilize the millennial generation to support universal national service, highlight the demand for national service among the country's youth, and spotlight exemplars from the field.

With these efforts, we can imagine a day when a year of national service in our culture is as common an expectation as someone graduating from high school or college, registering to vote, getting a driver's license, or participating as a member of a family and community. America's democracy was built on the belief that we need citizens, not spectators; doers, not observers; and generations who step forward over the course of their lives to serve their nation. It is time to fulfill that vision through this commitment to universal national service.

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Finally, the Franklin Project stands on the shoulders of the leaders and participants in the national service movement who have been in the trenches, changing lives and communities, for decades.



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About The Aspen Institute & The Franklin Project

At the Aspen Ideas Festival in June 2012, General Stanley McChrystal received an overwhelming response to his call for large-scale civilian national service to engage more Americans in serving community and country. The Aspen Institute established the Franklin Project in response to this call to action, to marshal the best case for a voluntary civilian counterpart to military service in the United States.

The Franklin Project's vision is to establish a year of full-time national service as a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans ages 18 to 28. Our goal is to create one million annual opportunities for civilian national service, on par with the number of Americans serving on active duty in our Armed Forces. We seek to dramatically expand opportunities for young Americans to contribute their strengths, knowledge, and entrepreneurial energy to solving our nation's most pressing challenges, in areas such as education, health, food security, environmental conservation, veterans' reintegration, and economic opportunity.

The Franklin Project seeks to unite leading Americans from all sectors alongside citizens at the grassroots in calling for and building this new vision of civilian national service. We propose to fuel the citizen service movement in America by making the case for a year of national service to become a new civic rite of passage that will bind members of generations to each other and to our nation, while enlisting them to work together to address great national challenges.

We are focusing on developing a 21st century architecture for national service that builds off of and strengthens the existing system, while promoting new policy ideas to advance the national service movement. Our work has encompassed a series of gatherings of critical stakeholders and the publication of seminal papers at The Aspen Institute; briefings for the White House, Congress and governmental leaders; the development of the Franklin Project Plan of Action; and an action-inspiring Summit leading into the Aspen Ideas Festival in June 2013, followed by a public campaign to be launched in the fall of 2013.

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