



The Corporation for National and Community Service: Overview of Programs and Funding

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Summary

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency that administers the programs authorized by two statutes: the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA; P.L. 101-610), as amended, and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA; P.L. 93-113), as amended. NCSA and DVSA programs were amended and reauthorized through FY2014 by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (P.L. 111-13). The report compares CNCS funding provided in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (P.L. 112-10); the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74); and the President's Budget Request for FY2013.

The NCSA is designed to meet unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs, and to renew an ethic of civic responsibility by encouraging citizens to participate in national service programs. The major programs authorized by NCSA include Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps State and National Grants, and the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The NCSA also authorizes the National Service Trust, which funds educational awards for community service participants.

A central purpose of the DVSA, which authorizes the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps, is to foster and expand voluntary service in communities while helping the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the elderly, and the poor. The National Senior Volunteer Corps includes three main programs: the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

Appropriations for the DVSA and the NCSA programs are made annually through the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (Labor-HHS-ED). The Administration requested \$1,062.6 million for the Corporation for National and Community Service for FY2013, an amount that is \$13.8 million (1.3%) more than the FY2012-enacted appropriation of \$1,048.9 million. Because no regular FY2013 Labor-HHS-ED Appropriations bill was enacted before October 1, 2012, Congress included funds for these agencies in a six-month (through March 27, 2013) continuing appropriations resolution (CR) for FY2013 (P.L. 112-175) at a level that is 0.612% higher than the FY2012 enacted level.

This report will be updated as warranted by legislative developments.

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Most Recent Developments

Full-year appropriations for FY2013 have yet to be enacted. However, a six-month government-wide continuing resolution (CR) for FY2013 (H.J.Res. 117) was signed into law on September 28, 2012 (P.L. 112-175). The CR generally maintains funding for discretionary programs at their FY2012 levels, increased by 0.612%. In FY2012, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was funded at \$1,048.9 million.

The President requested \$1,062.6 million for CNCS for FY2013. This request represented an increase of \$13.8 million (1.3%) over the \$1,048.9 million provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74) for the CNCS for FY2012.

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA)¹ and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA)² were reauthorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (P.L. 111-13) through FY2014.³

Introduction

The CNCS was established by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-82). Operating as an independent federal agency, the CNCS oversees all national and community service programs authorized by NCSA and DVSA. Both NCSA and DVSA programs are funded under the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) Appropriations Act.

This report provides a summary of each NCSA and DVSA program and compares funding under Labor-HHS-ED in

- the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (P.L. 112-10);
- the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74); and
- the President's Budget Request for FY2013.

Program-by-Program Overview and Funding

NCSA Programs and Funding

On November 16, 1990, NCSA was signed into law to address unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs. One main purpose of NCSA is to renew an ethic of civil responsibility and community spirit in the United States by encouraging citizens to participate in national service programs. NCSA programs include Learn and Serve America (LSA),

¹ National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), P.L. 101-610.

² Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA), P.L. 93-113.

³ For more information, see CRS Report R40432, *Reauthorization of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (P.L. 111-13)*, by Ann Lordeman.

AmeriCorps State and National Grants, the National Service Trust, and the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). See **Table A-1** for NCSA funding information.

Learn and Serve America (Title I-B)⁴

Program Update: The Learn and Serve America program is currently unfunded, but remains authorized. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (P.L. 112-10) first eliminated funding for the Learn and Serve America program for FY2011. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74) also contained no funding for the program.

Program Focus: Since 1990, NCSA has authorized community service programs benefitting students and communities through “service-learning,” which integrates community service projects with classroom learning. These programs are (1) school-based programs for elementary and secondary students, (2) higher-education innovative programs of community service, and (3) innovative and community-based service learning programs and research. One of these innovative programs is a summer of service program under which students entering grades 6 through 12 at the end of the summer who complete 100 hours of service in an approved position would be eligible for an educational award of \$500.

Eligibility: Elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students. *Benefits:* Except for the summer of service program, Learn and Service America programs offer no stipends, educational awards, or other direct benefits. *Administrative Entity:* LSA programs are administered, depending on the program, by (1) CNCS, (2) an independent state education agency, (3) a state commission on national service, or (4) a public or private nonprofit organization.

AmeriCorps State and National Grants (Title I-C)⁵

Program Focus: Created in 1993, programs under AmeriCorps State and National Grants identify and address critical community needs, including tutoring and mentoring disadvantaged youth, managing or operating after-school programs, helping communities respond to disasters, improving health services, building affordable housing, and cleaning parks and streams. The Serve America Act specifically authorized programs that can be funded: an Education Corps, a Health Futures Corps, a Clean Energy Corps, a Veterans Corps, and an Opportunity Corps. Grants include formula grants to states and territories, and competitive grants to states, territories, Indian tribes, and national non-profit organizations.

Eligibility: Individuals aged 17 and older. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* Full-time or part-time for a 9- to 12-month period. *Benefits:* Some full-time AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance, health coverage, and child care for those who qualify.⁶ Participants in AmeriCorps receive educational awards for their service through the National Service Trust (see the following section of this report). AmeriCorps members can also obtain loan forbearance (i.e., postponement) in the repayment of their qualified student loans while participating in these programs and have the interest on their accrued loans paid from the Trust once they earn an educational award.

⁴ In statute, Title-B is titled “School-Based and Community-Based Service-Learning Programs.”

⁵ In statute, Title I-C is titled “National Service Trust Program.”

⁶ For more information on AmeriCorps benefits eligibility, see 42 U.S.C.A. §12594.

The educational award for full-time service is equal to the maximum amount of a Pell Grant in effect at the beginning of the federal fiscal year in which the Corporation approves the national service position. AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded in FY2013 will receive an education award of up to \$5,550, the current Pell Grant maximum. Pro-rated awards are also made for other terms of service, such as half-time (see **Table 1**). AmeriCorps members who are aged 55 or older at the beginning of a term of service may transfer the education award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. AmeriCorps State and National participants can serve a maximum of four terms of service.⁷ Full-time, half-time, reduced half-time, quarter time, and minimum time terms of service each count as one term of service.

Administrative Entity: Each state and territory governor appoints members of a service commission to manage, monitor, and administer annual grant applications for the state. CNCS reviews the state commission formula package and makes the awards. For multi-state or national awards, grantees are selected competitively based by the CNCS headquarters office.

National Service Trust (Title I-D)

The National Service Trust, a special account in the U.S. Treasury, provides educational awards for participants in AmeriCorps Grants, NCCC, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). An individual may not receive more than an amount equal to the aggregate value of two awards for full-time service.⁸ The educational award for full-time service is equal to the maximum amount of a Pell Grant in the year in which the Corporation approves the national service position. The maximum Pell Grant award in the 2012-2013 academic year is \$5,550. In addition, the National Service Trust provides interest payments on qualified student loans to recipients of AmeriCorps Grants and participants in NCCC or VISTA who have obtained forbearance (postponement of loan repayment).

Table 1. Educational Awards by Service Term
For Programs Funded With FY2013 Appropriations

Member Service Term	Number of Hours	Educational Award (\$)
Full time	at least 1,700	5,550
One-year half time	at least 900	2,775
Two-year half time	at least 900	2,775
Reduced half time	at least 675	2,114
Quarter time	at least 450	1,468
Minimum time	at least 300	1,175

Source: CNCS, Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity: AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY2013, http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/2013_state_national_competitive_notice.pdf.

⁷ Corporation for National and Community Service, *Amount, Eligibility, and Limitations*, http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_details.asp.

⁸ 42 USCS §12602 (c).

National Civilian Community Corps (Title I-E)

Program Focus: NCCC is a full-time residential program that focuses on short-term projects that meet national and community needs related to disaster relief, infrastructure improvement, environment and energy conservation, environmental stewardship, and urban and rural development.

Eligibility: Individuals aged 18 to 24. By statute (42 U.S.C.S. §12613(c)), the Corporation is required to take steps to increase the percentage of participants in the program who are disadvantaged to 50% of all participants by 2012.⁹ *Amount of Volunteer Service:* Participants can serve up to two years full time. Full-time service is defined as 10 months each year. *Benefits:* NCCC participants may receive a living allowance, room and board, and an educational award through the National Service Trust. NCCC participants can serve a maximum of two terms of service.¹⁰ *Administrative Entity:* NCCC programs are administered by the CNCS.

Innovation, Demonstration, and Assistance Activities (I-H)

CNCS continues to have broad authority to fund a range of activities as authorized by Subtitle I-H, Investment for Quality and Innovation. The Serve America Act established the following programs.

Social Innovation Fund (SIF). The Social Innovation Fund leverages federal investments to increase state, local, business, and philanthropic resources to replicate and expand proven solutions and invest in the support of innovation for community challenges.¹¹

Volunteer Generation Fund. The Volunteer Generation Fund awards competitive grants to State Commissions and nonprofit organizations to develop and support community-based entities that recruit, manage, or support volunteers.¹²

Nonprofit Capacity Building Program. The Nonprofit Capacity Building program supports development of nonprofit organizations facing hardship challenges.¹³

⁹ “Disadvantaged youth” are defined at 42 U.S.C.S. §12511(b) as youth who are economically disadvantaged and one or more of the following: out-of-school youth, in or aging out of foster care, have limited English proficiency, homeless or have run away from home, at-risk to leave school without a diploma, juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency, individuals with a disability.

¹⁰ Corporation for National and Community Service, *Amount, Eligibility, and Limitations*, http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_details.asp.

¹¹ In July 2012, CNCS awarded \$2 million each to four new grantees over two years. CNCS also awarded \$33.9 million in continuation awards to seven existing grantees. See http://www.serve.gov/stories_detail.asp?tbl_servestories_id=872.

¹² According to correspondence with the Corporation for National and Community Service on March 22, 2012, the FY2012 funding will support the third-year continuation funding to grantees. In August 2010, CNCS awarded \$4 million to the first year of Volunteer Generation Fund grants to 19 U.S. state service commissions. See the CNCS announcement at http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=1856.

¹³ In September 2011, CNCS awarded about \$1 million to five organizations for two-year grants under the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program. See the CNCS announcement at http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=2040.

DVSA Programs and Funding

In 1973, Congress passed the Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA). The purpose of DVSA is to foster and expand voluntary citizen service throughout the nation. DVSA programs are designed to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and the elderly. Administered by the CNCS, the DVSA programs include VISTA and the National Senior Volunteer Corps. See **Table A-1** for DVSA funding information.

VISTA (Title I-A)

Program Focus: The VISTA program encourages Americans to participate in community service in an effort to eliminate poverty. *Eligibility:* individuals aged 18 and older. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* VISTA members serve full time for up to five years.¹⁴ *Benefits:* VISTA members may receive a living allowance, student-loan forbearance, health coverage, relocation costs, training, and child care assistance. VISTA members have the option of receiving an educational award, which is equivalent to the educational awards earned by AmeriCorps or NCCC members, or they may choose to receive an end-of-service lump sum stipend of \$1,500 instead. Like NCCC members, VISTA members receive an educational award based on the Pell Grant. VISTA participants can serve a maximum of three terms of service.¹⁵ Full-time, half-time, reduced half-time, quarter time, and minimum time terms of service each count as one term of service. *Administrative Entity:* CNCS state offices.

National Senior Service Corps (Title II)

The National Senior Service Corps consists of three programs, summarized below: the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), and the Senior Companion Program (SCP).

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (Title II-A)

Program Focus: Volunteers in RSVP may play community service roles in education, health and nutrition services, community and economic development, and other areas of human need. *Eligibility:* individuals aged 55 and older. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* Participants can contribute up to 40 hours each week. *Benefits:* The RSVP offers no direct benefits (e.g., stipends or educational awards), with the exception of mileage reimbursement and insurance coverage during assignments. *Administrative Entity:* CNCS state offices.

Foster Grandparent Program (Title II-B)

Program Focus: FGP participants support children with exceptional needs by providing aid and services. FGP participants mentor children and teenagers, teach model parenting skills, and help care for premature infants and children with disabilities. *Eligibility:* Individuals must be aged 55

¹⁴ Memorandum of August 4, 2011 from Mary Strasser, AmeriCorps VISTA Director on Limits on Duration of Service for Members.

¹⁵ Corporation for National and Community Service, *Amount, Eligibility, and Limitations*, http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_details.asp.

or older to participate in FGP and meet income eligibility requirements to receive a stipend. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* Volunteer schedules, which range from 15 to 40 hours each week, average 20 hours per week. *Benefits:* Income eligible participants may receive a stipend of \$2.65 per hour.¹⁶ Participants may also receive mileage reimbursements and accident, liability, and automobile insurance coverage during assignments. *Administrative Entity:* CNCS state offices.

Senior Companion Program (Title II-C)

Program Focus: SCP gives older adults the opportunity to assist homebound elderly individuals to remain in their own homes and to enable institutionalized elderly individuals to return to home care settings. *Eligibility:* Individuals must be 55 or older to participate in SCP and meet income eligibility requirements to receive a stipend. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* Volunteer schedules, which range from 15 to 40 hours each week, average 20 hours per week. *Benefits:* Participants receive a stipend of \$2.65 per hour.¹⁷ Participants may also receive mileage reimbursements and accident, liability, and automobile insurance coverage during assignments. *Administrative Entity:* CNCS state offices.

¹⁶ The Serve America Act authorized an increase in the stipend to \$3.00 per hour if the funds appropriated in a fiscal year are sufficient to maintain the same number of participants serving in the previous fiscal year. Appropriations have not increased to facilitate this change.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Appendix. CNCS Program Funding

Table A-1. Corporation for National and Community Service Funding
(\$ in thousands)

	FY2011 Appropriation ^a	FY2012 Appropriation ^b	FY2013 Request
AmeriCorps State and National Grants (NCSA Title I-A)	349,300	344,348	345,000
Learn and Serve America (NCSA Title I-B)	0	0	0
National Service Trust (NCSA Title I-C)	199,260	211,797	208,744
National Civilian Community Corps (NCSA Title I-E)	28,942	31,882	30,110
Innovation, Demonstration, and Assistance Activities (NCSA Title I-H)	60,379	53,280	53,215
—Innovation, Demonstration & Other (non-add)	5,489	4,481	3,215
—Social Innovation Fund (non-add)	49,900	44,815	50,000
—Volunteer Generation Fund (non-add)	3,992	3,984	0
—Nonprofit Capacity Building Program (non-add)	998	0	0
Disability Inclusion Grants (NCSA Title I-C, Sec. 129)	4,990	n/a ^c	3,000
State Commission Administrative Grants (NCSA Title I-C, Sec 126(a); and Title I-F, Sec 178)	16,966	13,440	15,990
Evaluation (NCSA Title I-F, Sec. 179)	5,988	2,994	5,000
Training and Technical Assistance (NCSA Title I-J)	7,485	1,996	5,000
VISTA (DVSA Title I-A)	98,876	94,820	95,300
National Senior Service Corps (DVSA Title II)	207,883	207,491	207,883
—Retired Senior Program (non-add)	50,299	50,204	50,299
—Foster Grandparent Program (non-add)	110,774	110,565	110,774
—Senior Companion Program (non-add)	46,810	46,722	46,810
Inspector General	7,684	3,992	5,400
Salaries and Expenses	87,824	82,843	88,000
Total	\$1,075,577	\$1,048,883	\$1,062,642

Source: Compiled by CRS on data from the Corporation for National and Community Service at http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/300006-000CBJ_2012_final.pdf

- a. Incorporates a 0.2% across the board rescission to all CNCS programs.
- b. Incorporates a 0.189% across the board rescission to all CNCS programs.
- c. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service FY2013 Budget Justification, “No specific amount was enacted for disability inclusion activities. In accordance with the Kennedy Serve America Act, CNCS will utilize program funding to support this activity in FY2012.” (p. 38).

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