



Service Year Impact Communities

A Place-based Strategy for Making
Universal National Service a Reality



A Better You.
A Greater Us.



AmeriCorps

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INTRODUCTION

A **service year** is a paid opportunity to develop real-world skills through hands-on service. Service years transform lives, strengthen communities, and fuel civic renewal. A service year is typically a 10-12 month, full-time experience where you can serve a community in areas like education, healthcare, disaster relief, and more.

Service year programs like AmeriCorps are receiving more resources than ever before, and communities have an opportunity to leverage those resources to expand existing and add new service year programs. Meanwhile, more cities and states are standing up their own privately or locally funded corps to address local challenges. Impact Communities offer a powerful way to coordinate all local service year corps – federally funded or not – toward shared goals to ensure even greater impact.

[Service Year Impact Communities](#) are local collaboratives utilizing service years as a strategy to address local community needs among a diverse group of stakeholders. Together, Impact

Communities create the conditions at the local level that are necessary to establish a culture of universal national service. No two Impact Communities are exactly alike – some are structured out of community-based nonprofits, some are driven through a mayor's office, and others are based in a higher education institution. No matter the type of backbone entity, each community works with a local coalition to utilize service year programming to solve locally-identified challenges.

In 2017, Service Year Alliance, with the support of the [Kresge Foundation](#), launched the Service Year Impact Community network. The network began with [Flint, MI](#), [New York, NY](#), and [San Jose, CA](#); today, it includes more than 10 communities. While a handful of place-based national service collaboratives and initiatives existed before the network was established, they were largely disconnected. The Impact Community network was developed to ensure these communities – all working toward a goal of addressing needs in their communities while also creating the conditions for universal national service at the local level – could problem-solve together and learn from one another as each implemented new innovations and solutions in the hopes of creating more service year positions that better meet the needs of their own communities.

Throughout this toolkit we not only talk about how to become an Impact Community, but also lift up case studies written by communities doing this work. Communities highlighted in this toolkit include:

- [Flint, MI](#)
- [Central Florida](#)
- [Philadelphia, PA](#)
- [San Jose, CA](#)
- [New York City](#)
- [Central Texas](#)
- [Eastern Kentucky](#)

Our Impact Communities show the power of coming together to solve problems through service years. Service Year Alliance hopes that this toolkit inspires you to start an Impact Community and utilize the power of service years, combined with the lessons of collective impact and the approaches of community development, to transform your community.

In order to truly make national service universal, we believe it needs to meet five principles. These principles for universal national service, or UNS principles, are critical to our vision and are the driving force behind our work to make service years a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. This toolkit elaborates on each of the five principles and lays out how each principle relates to your community and can provide a framework for your community as it strives to reach its vision for universal national service.



PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL NATIONAL SERVICE



Exist at **scale**



Meet the demand our nation has to address unmet **needs**, which may evolve and change over time



Be an **opportunity** for all (including through pay)



Build **pathways** to long-term success for individuals



Fuel **civic renewal**

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended for community organizations, service year programs, government agencies, higher education institutions, or elected officials who are already familiar with national service, such as AmeriCorps. These ideas can be utilized to strategize on how to create a collaborative approach to service years solving community needs at the local, regional, or state level in rural, urban, and tribal communities. In Part I, the toolkit explains the pieces necessary to operate an effective Impact Community and the types of work a collaborative can take on to utilize service years as a strategy for community development. Part II offers a framework to meet the 5 principles of Universal National Service – exist at scale, address unmet community needs, fuel civic renewal, be an opportunity for all, and build post-service pathways – at a community level. Whether your community is just getting started or has been doing this work together for years, we hope you will build upon what Service Year Alliance and our Impact Communities have learned and use this framework to guide your community's strategy to make progress toward universal national service.

Throughout this toolkit, you'll notice that we use the terms "place-based" and "community" frequently. Place-based means a particular geographic area, such as a neighborhood or city. You should generally consider community to refer to people and places within the geographic bounds of your place-based initiative or Impact Community – so your local community, regional community, or statewide community, depending on the size of your initiative.

For those less familiar with the service year space, this toolkit can be utilized to understand how service years can be effectively leveraged as a tool in community-based initiatives to engage young people in national service, improve community outcomes, and create more lifelong civic leaders.

Beyond the general use of this guide, charitable organizations like local United Ways and community foundations can use this toolkit to identify opportunities in which they can offer their support to a national service initiative in their community. This toolkit includes multiple examples in which charitable organizations and community foundations have been part of the initiative in places like [Flint, MI](#) and [Austin, TX](#).

Further, elected leaders and policymakers can use this toolkit in conjunction with the [State and Local Policy Toolkit](#) – a toolkit that demonstrates the benefits to governors, mayors, state legislators, county executives, and other government officials of utilizing national service to address state and local needs, and offers examples for how to do so. By establishing an Impact Community through your local or state office – like Impact Communities in Philadelphia, New York, and San Jose – or partnering with an Impact Community – like in Flint, MI, Poughkeepsie, NY, or Central Florida – you can help to establish the infrastructure and policies necessary to make service years a flexible, resilient, community-empowering tool in your toolbox.

Additionally, this toolkit is meant to capture and build upon the knowledge the field continues to gain by undertaking this work. As new communities collaborate and existing initiatives innovate, Service Year Alliance will strive to produce new editions of this toolkit as we continue to learn what works and what does not. If you have any questions about how to use this toolkit or want to learn more about becoming an Impact Community, please reach out to partnerships@serviceyear.org.

BENEFITS OF CREATING AN IMPACT COMMUNITY

Service years have a tremendous return on investment, providing \$11.80 in value to government, corps members, and society for every dollar of investment. And yet, there is an even greater return on investment when programs and partners work together in a community-wide initiative. This is demonstrated in a 2020 report released by [Voices for National Service](#) with support from the [Charles Stewart Mott Foundation: AmeriCorps and Senior Corps: Quantifying the Impact](#). This research found that in the Flint National Service Accelerator, a member of the Impact Communities network, for every \$1 of funding invested in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs in Flint, there is a \$27.40 return on investment – more than double the return than that of national service programs working on their own. There is an even broader argument for the benefits of Impact Communities: not only do they make national service more cost-effective, but they make it more impactful, responsive, and resilient as the case studies featured throughout this toolkit demonstrate.

Impact Communities are crucial in order for service years to exist at scale and be an opportunity for all young Americans. They are essential to the long-term integration of service years as an American institution and defining a year of national service as an expectation and opportunity for all Americans.

These local and regional collaboratives can bridge the gap between national and local, coordinating between AmeriCorps and other federal agencies, state service commissions, and the community – all while continuing to amplify the impact of local decision-making. Benefits of being a member of the Service Year Impact Community network include:

- **Access to a network of practitioners working to make universal national service a reality in their communities, including in-person convenings**
- **Monthly coaching and technical support from Service Year Alliance to advance the collaborative work in your community/region**
- **Preferential consideration for Service Year Alliance grant-funded projects and programs**
- **A web presence on the Service Year Alliance's website and frequent promotion of work through conversations, conferences, and public-facing communications**
- **Opportunities to be featured in Service Year Alliance's monthly newsletter, The Connector, to over two thousand service year program contacts and partners**
- **Creation of a network page on ServiceYear.org to promote open service year opportunities in your community/region**

Intersection of Impact Communities



Service Year Impact Communities are an intersection of utilizing service years in a community to address needs via community development practices, while at the same time bringing multiple partner organizations together to work toward collective impact in the community.

Impact Communities and Community Development

Inherent in the work of Impact Communities – and in service years more broadly – is the concept of community development, a process in which members of a community take collective action to solve problems that affect them. Service years, at their core, are a local community development human capital strategy. National service – where the federal government has directed resources to service year programs like AmeriCorps, VISTA and YouthBuild – is structured so that community organizations have the opportunity to direct federal government resources toward local problems. Because of this, service years can be a powerful tool to engage young community members in addressing community needs and leading change.

Impact Communities fit into the community development space in a variety of ways. First, they can systematically engage with community members to identify and develop solutions to local problems, and coordinate resources to begin addressing those problems across many different stakeholders and service year programs. Second, they can recruit members of the community to actively participate in solving those problems through serving their community as corps members. Third, they can provide the collective and collaborative structures, context, and training across many different programs to ensure corps members develop a sense of belonging to and responsibility for the community, putting them on the path to a lifetime of civic engagement.

Further, those interested in community development can also make use of service years and Impact Communities to advance their own goals. Leveraging service years as a tool allows organizations to tap into new resources to ensure problems in the community are addressed by members of the community while developing a talent pipeline into related fields.

Impact Communities and Collective Impact Theory

New to collective impact theory? Check out the [Collective Impact Forum](#) for an overview and resources to further your knowledge. The five conditions that lead to best results in collective impact are:

- A common agenda
- Shared measurements
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Continuous communication
- Backbone support organizations

In structure and approach, Impact Communities draw heavily from the theories and successes of collective impact principles. A concept that is consistently gaining attention in the social sector, [collective impact](#) is a collaborative approach in which a group of cross-sector organizations come together to solve a commonly agreed upon, complex social problem. There can be multiple solutions to the problem, but all of the organizations collaborate in tandem, using shared metrics of success, to systemically work toward the same outcomes. Collective impact efforts are also usually place-based – focused on a particular, defined geography such as a city, neighborhood, or region.

Where Impact Communities diverge from collective impact is in execution. Collective impact efforts use multiple interventions to solve one core problem. Impact Communities use one intervention – service years – to solve for one or more problems in a defined place. Service years can, and should, be leveraged in a collective impact model, but are unlikely to be the only tool able to solve a complex social issue. Though it is possible for an Impact Community to take a collective impact approach – the Appalachian Kentucky Impact Community, for example, has leveraged service years as a powerful tool to improve cradle to career youth outcomes – most Impact Communities instead seek to position service years as a flexible and resilient tool that can address both chronic and emerging challenges in a community.

Impact Communities utilize service years to address community needs through community development practices in a defined place, while bringing together many stakeholders to borrow from best practices in collective impact to address those needs.

Applying to Become an Impact Community

The toolkit that follows offers a deep dive into how to create an effective Impact Community initiative. As you engage in this process, we hope that you'll apply to join the Impact Community network, a cohort of communities across the country that share what they're learning and connect with others doing this work. Service Year Alliance invites you to connect with us along the way – we are here to help you through each stage of the process of establishing an Impact Community. Read about the [application process](#) and reach out to our team at partnerships@serviceyear.org to learn more about what it takes to become an Impact Community.



ELEMENTS OF AN IMPACT COMMUNITY

For any Impact Community to be successful, there are three main elements that set a collaborative up for success: **structure, purpose, and resiliency.**

Element 1: Structure

Structure refers to the key organizational components necessary to create and lead a place-based initiative; including a backbone organization, dedicated staff, and a coalition of partners. While an initiative may lean on one component more than all of them at once, each is important to establishing and maintaining a healthy and successful initiative.

Element 2: Purpose

Purpose refers to the components of a vision for a community, the strategy the collaborative undertakes, and the goals and metrics they set. While some Impact Communities may want to keep their purpose components high level and spend minimal time on this, the more an initiative puts into and commits to a purpose, the greater the success they will have in making an impact, and the more capable they will be of building resilience.

Element 3: Resiliency

Resiliency outlines some of the components and methods an initiative can use to cement themselves as a valued fixture in a community. It includes ideas that can help to sustain the initiative, like maintaining institutional knowledge and capacity, and ensuring the initiative can weather various types of problems and challenges, such as leadership turnover or the loss of a source of financial support. Putting the proper attention into resiliency can ensure that local leaders and organizations see service years as a way to solve the community's needs and can remain sustainable long-term.

The order in which we introduce these pieces is one that we believe may offer some strategic benefits, but it is possible that ordering these elements differently may work better depending on the needs and resources of a burgeoning Impact Community initiative.

Perhaps, for instance, some stakeholders will not be interested in forming a coalition without a lead organization creating a strategic pitch, and will choose to build out the purpose element before addressing structural components. In another instance, an existing coalition may want to identify a lead or a dedicated staff person to dedicate more of their time to addressing a challenge before moving on to the other elements. The order and weight of each component is based on the community, and its unique needs may vary; communities should do what is best for their circumstances. However, for an Impact Community to be high-functioning, Service Year Alliance does promote building the foundations for all three elements in order to be successful.

NOTE: Inspiration for pieces of the three elements come from the resource: In Service of Stronger Communities Revitalizing Community Through the Flint National Service Accelerator: A Toolkit produced by the Flint National Service Accelerator team. This high-quality resource describes in more detail the ways in which the Flint National Service Accelerator formed and demonstrated their impact. As Flint is featured in a 2020 case study that found its Accelerator initiative more than doubled the return on investment of national service compared to the average program, it is valuable to dig deeper into their approach and outcomes – and as the Flint National Service Accelerator is a member of the Impact Community network, we will feature case studies from this community throughout this toolkit as well.

ELEMENT 1: Structure

Structure Component: Backbone Organization

The backbone organization functions as the primary coordinating body that is accountable for the work of the Impact Community. This entity should be well-regarded in the community and hold many local relationships. Ideally – as noted below in the dedicated staff component – the backbone organization should also be the home of one or more dedicated staff members who have time committed to building and maintaining the Impact Community initiative.

Eventually, this organization will come to hold and maintain institutional knowledge about the initiative and will likely serve as a lead convener, pulling together partners from across the community. The backbone organization ensures that all partners and stakeholders are aligned on the initiative's priorities. It often represents the initiative to partners outside of the community in which the initiative is based.

The actual type of organization that can act as a backbone can vary depending on the existing resources and needs in the community. A backbone organization can be a service year program that operates as a significant intermediary in a community, city, region, or state. It can be a nonprofit rooted in a community like a United Way that sees the value in a community-wide service year initiative. A college or university department with positive local relationships and a community-centered mission can also have a strong impact. Additionally, a local or county government agency can serve as a great backbone organization.

INSIGHT: Housing the backbone organization of an Impact Community in the mayor or county executive's office under a Chief Service Officer or another local government agency could have a number of additional benefits. For example, the Impact Community would have ready access to local decision makers, opportunity to make service years part of other key initiatives, funding for staff, and a seat at the table in emergency situations.

A backbone organization does not need to directly manage corps members – they themselves do not need to be a host site, though they might be. However, a strong backbone organization should have good relationships with local programs who will buy into the leadership of the backbone organization, and the organization needs to have a thorough understanding and commitment to utilizing service years as a strategy to address community needs.



INSIGHT: State service commissions can act as backbone organizations to state-wide initiatives – and can do so with much success. However, before deciding to run a place-based initiative like an Impact Community through a commission, or even as a state-wide effort, consider the potential for a more local or regional place-based initiative. More local initiatives could work closely with a state service commission and may be able to do more to extend their reach and impact while sharing some of the strategic and administrative work, rather than duplicating the role and work of the commission or overextending commission staff. It might make sense to approach the work as a local and state partnership, rather than condensing all of the work into one organization.

While backbone organizations look different depending on the place, they should all have a few key characteristics:

- A mission that is compatible with solving community challenges utilizing service years
- Appropriate staff capacity to launch and coordinate the initiative, particularly in the first few months to a year as it is established
- Positive existing community relationships – ideally, they should be recognized as an established and respected local leader who understands the needs of the community

While it may be possible to do this work without a backbone organization – a dedicated staff person can serve the functional role of a backbone organization, or a coalition of organizations can share the responsibilities – the core functions of a backbone organization must be filled in order to successfully and sustainably undertake a place-based service year initiative.

If your backbone organization is not in local government, engaging local government in the work of the collaborative, particularly a Chief Service Officer if one exists in your community, may offer substantial benefit. Part of the responsibility of local government is to participate in, plan, and/or oversee community development initiatives. Engaging other community development initiatives as part of a service year initiative may help ensure that service years are recognized and leveraged as a key tool in improving the services and quality of life in a community. Doing so helps to highlight that service years are critical components of the local social service infrastructure and are not just nice-to-have volunteer positions. Further, these connections can work to ensure that service years, given their flexibility and ability to pivot activities quickly, are incorporated into emergency and disaster response and management plans for the community, an area in which they have [proven extraordinarily successful](#).

Structure Component: Coalition

Another key part of establishing a place-based initiative is forming a coalition. A coalition can be crucial to establishing buy-in from community stakeholders, sharing capacity, expertise, and resources, creating a shared vision, and measuring shared outcomes.

This coalition should include anchor institutions rooted in a community through place or mission such as nonprofits, school systems and universities, local or state government agencies, foundations, or other organizations that represent key, established community stakeholders. Your coalition should also include funders. Bringing funders to the table early will result in better engagement and commitment from them to the impact the coalition is looking to have in the community (funder engagement detailed further in the Resiliency section). Most funders want to be engaged early and see the progress over time.



INSIGHT: If your initiative is concerned with talent pipelines and building career pathways, engaging established and respected business leaders and workforce development boards, either as partners or as members of the coalition, could provide necessary expertise that can help ensure service years allow young people to develop the skills they need to fill local workforce needs.

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DEFINITIONS: National Service & Service Year Programs

A service year is a paid opportunity to develop real-world skills through hands-on service. Service year programs can be funded through federal resources like AmeriCorps, but could also be funded exclusively through private, state, or local funds. National service tends to refer specifically to those programs that receive federal resources like AmeriCorps grants. We encourage seeking out and engaging service year programs that do not receive AmeriCorps funding to join your coalition alongside those that do. Not only does this expand the universe of an initiative's relationships, but it also ensures that there are organizations readily engaged, capable, and well-poised to apply for grants should significant resources be appropriated to drastically expand the AmeriCorps suite of programs.



INSIGHT: Communities with robust coalitions that bring their corps members together across programs have found another benefit – corps members can be highly effective at creatively partnering with one another to solve problems and build relationships. Connecting corps members through effective collaboration can thus improve the function of the civic infrastructure in the community, developing even more novel and impactful ways to address community needs.

Structure Component: Dedicated Staff

Placing or assigning a dedicated staff member at the backbone organization of a place-based initiative provides extraordinary value to the Impact Community's ability to coordinate, share information, provide consistency, develop resources, track progress, and fundraise. In some cases, a dedicated staff person can operate in lieu of a backbone organization. [AmeriCorps Central Texas](#), for example, features a coalition of service year programs that pool resources to hire a consultant who functions as the core coordinator.

Particularly in the first year or two, having a dedicated staff person who, as part of the core functions of their job, works to establish and set the agenda for a coalition, leads the process of defining a shared vision, and establishes and tracks metrics can set the initiative up for long-term success and help to develop an infrastructure that, once it exists, is more easily maintained.

In the more medium- and long-term, a dedicated staff person can represent the place-based initiative externally to the community. They can also help to secure, manage and implement shared resources. For instance, if those involved in the initiative decide to lighten the burden of each individual program by offering shared trainings to corps members, they might determine that a dedicated staff person or people in their place-based initiative will be best suited to offer certain trainings or experiences to all corps members across programs. Not only does this aid programs that are often challenged in their capacity, but it also creates an opportunity for corps members to get to serve and interact with those from other programs, creating for corps members a greater sense of belonging to the community at large rather than having them identify solely with the program in which they serve.

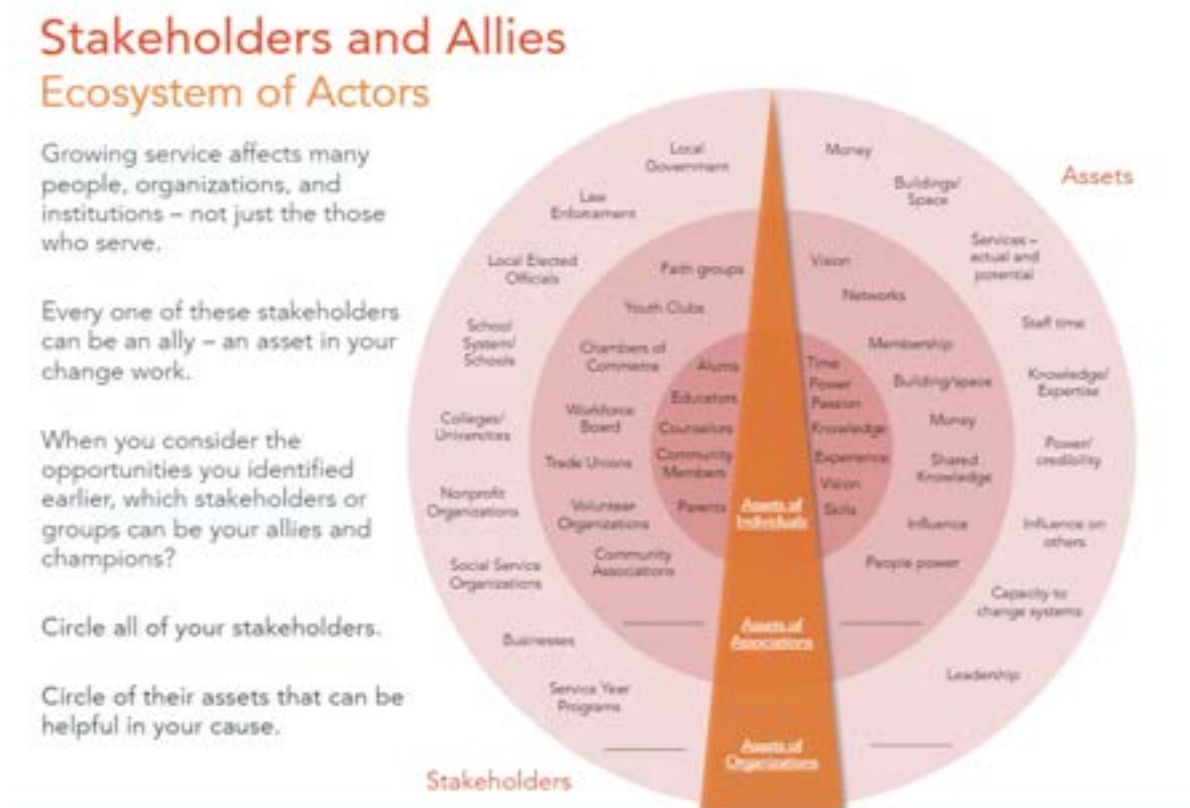
We recommend having at least one individual whose time is at least in part dedicated to the work of coordinating the place-based initiative – ideally placed in the backbone organization. To do this sustainably, however, this individual may need to spend part of their time raising funds to maintain the position. Unless an early funder is identified or programs in the coalition have the resources to chip in funding for this individual, it should be acknowledged early that part of their role is raising funds. As we will discuss further, there are many reasons a place-based initiative might need funds, but raising funds takes time and is unlikely to be done quickly. It is important to be thoughtful in understanding what the role will entail at the outset, and build in the activities necessary for sustainability early.



ELEMENT 2: Purpose

Purpose Component: Developing a Shared Vision

A shared vision is essential to understanding the purpose of an initiative and establishing buy-in from existing and potential partners – without a vision, it's difficult to understand the why behind getting involved. Additionally, it's easy to slip into building a collaborative that doesn't make progress toward goals. Though we will further cover our approach to developing the purpose of an Impact Community in the next section of this toolkit as it relates to pursuing the universal national service principles, it is worth noting that there are many ways an initiative can approach developing a vision. Collective impact initiatives generally rally around a particular problem or need, such as the cradle-to-career efforts undertaken by StriveTogether and its network.



Service year programs too can determine if their collective purpose is solving a singular or particular community need. Does your initiative want to create a better workforce development pipeline into high need careers? Do they want to create more community leaders through service years? Do they want to make a community more livable by creating green spaces, cleaning up urban blight, and improving safety? It can also be a tactical need – the program partners in the coalition struggle with recruiting corps members from the communities they serve and need to collaborate and share resources to do so more effectively. Or it can be more abstract – local civic engagement and social capital is atrophying and partners have determined that engaging young people in service years would help revitalize the civic community. The second part of this toolkit on the principles of universal national service can help your community define its purpose and identify what is needed to fulfill it. An initiative may also identify more than one priority that they are able to tackle simultaneously. If the community feels they should prioritize the learning gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, but also hopes to ensure more of their young people have pathways to higher education, they can ensure that service year program activities address the former, while the training and supports available to corps members address the latter.

TIP: If you are getting stuck on defining your community's purpose, review Part II about the community roadmap for universal national service and then come back to this section. New to the work of community engagement? There are plenty of resources out there to aid in developing a community engagement plan. Check out this [Community Planning Toolkit](#) as one example to help lead you through the process.

Creating a shared vision can be complicated, as communities have many needs that may compete with one another for precedence. It is important to include as many community stakeholders in the process of defining a purpose for the initiative as possible so that those who are most affected by and closest to the work feel included in defining the solutions. This process may take you several meetings or a long planning session, but is worth the effort you put into it to ensure all stakeholders are on the same page.

Purpose Component: Establishing Shared Goals and Metrics

Developing shared goals, benchmarks, or even more advanced metrics of success is the next step to actioning out a vision and defining the initiative's purpose. Setting goals gives all stakeholders participating in the initiative a common objective and helps everyone understand how to fit their own work into the vision and work toward shared outcomes.

TIP: S.M.A.R.T. GOALS 101: It's important to write your goals in a way that helps you take action toward achieving them. A great way to make sure your goals are actionable is to use the "SMART" goals format, which commonly stands for:

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. [Here is an example for more direction.](#)

To return to a previous example, if an initiative determines that their programs struggle with recruiting corps members locally and need to share resources to increase their local recruitment, then an overarching shared goal may be to increase the number of corps members recruited locally. From there, the initiative can determine basic benchmarks – what percentage of corps members were recruited locally last year, and how much of an increase do they want to see in year one of the initiative? They can then work backwards to understand how to achieve this goal, perhaps by contributing funds to hire a staff person to manage a local service year recruitment campaign, or working with local high schools to offer information to students about service years.

It's also important to understand whether the goals have key sub-goals that should be named and measured, or the why of the goal. For example, is the initiative focused on local recruitment because it wants to ensure that program corps members reflect the communities they are serving – i.e. are racially and ethnically diverse, or have similar lived experience as those being served? Is it an issue of wanting corps members to have more of a financial safety net by being able to live with their families while they serve? Is it rooted in a desire to keep talent local and reduce brain drain? Each of these might be measured in different ways and may require different strategic approaches.

Once stakeholders in the initiative agree on the goals or intended results, be sure to define any concepts that might be ambiguous. Continuing with our example, what constitutes as local – the same city, county, or state as the program? The same zip code? Does having attended high school elsewhere, but having attended university in the area count? Having a clear, shared understanding will be critical to ensuring that you each know what success looks like. Next, you can determine how you're going to measure progress. This should include, at the most basic level, setting a target that is necessary for achieving the goal. Additionally, targets should be realistic and agreed-upon by stakeholders. It is worth noting, however, that unless metrics have been previously tracked, determining a target number at the outset may be arbitrary, and it may take more than one cycle of data collection to settle on an achievable, appropriate goal.

Working with our example, if the group of programs aiming to increase local recruitment have never thought to measure local recruitment before, they may choose an initial target of 20% of corps members are from the local community. They will need to develop ways to capture information about where corps members live prior to starting service in order to understand if they are recruiting locally. After their first recruitment cycle, they may find that their goal was unachievable – after all of their efforts, they were only able to increase local recruitment to 10% – and may need to iterate on their learnings to set a more realistic target for the next year. They may also find, however, that their target was too easy – they recruited 30% locally, meaning they can easily increase their goal to 35% the following year. These targets should act as benchmarks, giving the initiative context to reassess new, achievable targets and relative performance each year.

But don't forget to capture metrics to measure your subgoals as well! If you're recruiting locally so that your corps reflects your community, make sure you are measuring the self-identification of corps members to understand if your recruitment efforts are getting to the people you're hoping to engage in service years. And if you're attempting to reduce "brain drain" from your communities, you may need to set up a process for tracking where your corps members go after they serve.

Finally, your initiative can collaborate to create a plan of action. What resources do you need to develop and execute the plan? Who is responsible for capturing the information needed for metrics and who within each organization will share information? Who collates the information across programs? Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities across the initiative will be crucial here – everyone should contribute, and they need to know what role they play and their specific responsibilities.

Understanding goals, capturing metrics, and knowing your benchmarks will help you understand your successes and barriers, make adjustments to the strategies and activities you've identified to reach your goals, and ultimately, demonstrate your initiative's impact.

INSIGHT: When it comes to your initiative's purpose, creating a vision may bring key stakeholders on board, but demonstrating impact will keep them there. If you cannot show that you're achieving your vision and fulfilling your purpose, stakeholders, partners, and funders may lose enthusiasm and interest in the initiative. While establishing metrics and tracking them may seem daunting at first, it's important to build to a point in which you are collecting the information you need to demonstrate impact.

Purpose Component: Determining a Need for Growth

There are a few ways in which a place-based initiative can consider growth, either as part of its purpose, or as a useful or necessary step toward achieving its purpose. Growth could be increasing the number of partners involved in the coalition, increasing the resources available to achieve goals, or increasing the number of service year programs or positions available in a community. An initiative could identify any or all of these as an important part of achieving their long-term goals – or it could consider none of them important for their purpose as presently defined.

While Service Year Alliance hopes communities will seriously consider growth in one aspect or another of their long-term plans given our own vision of making a service year an expectation and opportunity for all, we know this may be low on the list of priorities for some communities. However, it is worth giving serious consideration as you define your initiative's long-term vision.



If a Service Year Impact Community initiative is working with local government on a community development plan, growth may well become a secondary priority as resources and effort may need to go toward tackling other community-defined needs. The next section of this toolkit outlines some of the goals and strategies that can help define long-term success for scaling as a priority.

Let's consider a new example – a community decides that dealing with long-term learning loss stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority. A handful of education-focused service year programs decide to come together to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and decide to work with the local school systems. However, it becomes clear that the goals as defined cannot be achieved without more corps members to serve in schools, so the existing programs must expand the number of positions they offer, and therefore the number of resources at their disposal to support those corps members.

After a year of capturing metrics on outcomes, it seems clear that the programs, which operate during the school year, are not sufficient. There needs to be an option for students to continue learning during the summer through camps and other extracurricular activities. Perhaps an organization exists that does this work in the school system, and it would be of benefit to bring them into the coalition alongside the existing programs so that all of the organizations are driving toward the same goal and using the same measurements of success. Perhaps it makes sense to engage this program on the possibility of developing a formal service year program, and the existing initiative aids this organization in applying for an AmeriCorps grant.

In this example, it was clear that growth needed to be considered in a couple of ways. Perhaps an effective solution could have been found without growth, but an initiative might need to work with their coalition to determine how to solve for the gap – either by altering and scaling existing positions, or working to bring in a new partner to add service year positions.

Looking for examples of how state and local governments can create or grow service year programs to meet the needs of the community? Check out our toolkit, [Expanding Service Years in States and Local Communities](#).

ELEMENT 3: Resiliency

Once a developing Impact Community has established its core structure and its purpose, stakeholders and partners should consider how to build long-term resiliency for the initiative. Doing so successfully may depend on a number of factors: What type of organization serves as your backbone? Can you fundraise in a traditional way? Do you have complementary structures engaged in the work?



The following will explore some best practices, common challenges to resiliency, and ways to overcome them. While building resiliency is not easy, doing so strategically can add real value to your initiative and will consistently build upon the successes of the work, allowing strong demonstrations of impact that will make maintaining resilience easier over time.

Resiliency Component: Leadership

Having a strong, resilient leadership model is essential when determining the best backbone organization to lead your initiative. While changing from the initial backbone organization to another organizational lead of the Impact Community can be challenging, sometimes a community may decide that is in the best interest of the initiative. Setting up a thoughtful reason for situating the effort from a particular organization and a game plan for how that might need to change over time, can help withstand any transitions.

As discussed in a previous section, for example, leading an organization from a mayor or county executive's office can open doors and expedite the delivery of funds and resources. However, such initiatives could find themselves facing new elected leadership that may or may not support the initiative. Creating redundancies in the backbone organization or dedicated staff for the initiative is an effective strategy to sustain the initiative over time. Consider naming one or more co-leads of the coalition of stakeholders. Not only could these co-leads share the responsibility of agenda-setting and meeting facilitation – perhaps on a rotating basis – but through their partnership, they can become deeply familiar with the work of the initiative and well-poised to step up should the backbone organization need to step away from a lead role.

Further, sharing responsibility nominally and practically across multiple types of stakeholders can minimize the appearance of partisanship or special interest. For instance, if an initiative's backbone is run out of a department at a higher education institution that has opted to cut funds to that department, having a variety of external, community stakeholders making the case for the initiative could provide added weight in stopping that decision. Similarly, if a Chief Service Officer in a mayor's office leads a coalition which includes an important local funder as a stakeholder, the case for maintaining that initiative may be stronger to a new elected leader who sees external, widespread, and, ideally, nonpartisan commitment to the initiative.

Resiliency Component: Funding Community-Wide Initiatives

One of the biggest challenges to almost every Impact Community initiative in their first few years is securing sustainable funding. Nevertheless, a sustainable funding structure is essential to the success of an Impact Community. Most often, funding for the dedicated staff member managing the coalition ends, and no sustainable source of replacement funding is found. Depending on the nature of the initiative and the shared goals or services the coalition is working toward, maintaining a pool of funds or funding a dedicated staff position can be critical to the success of the initiative.

In a coalition like the Flint National Service Accelerator, local funders have been included from the beginning, supporting the initiative with staff support and with an accelerator fund that can be used to help provide match support for new programs or to pay for shared training and resources for corps members. Engaging a local funder from the outset as a key stakeholder or coalition member, and ensuring that they continue to stay committed and feel ownership over an initiative, can ensure the longevity of the initiative.

Regardless, it is important to begin thinking through a funder engagement strategy early. Receiving a grant can take more than a year from outreach to cultivation to funds in hand, so it is important to build this into the work of the initiative or the role of the dedicated staff person. Often, Impact Communities look to local grantmakers supporting existing service year programs and make the case for supporting a community-wide initiative. Because organizations can feel territorial about their funder relationships, having service year program leadership engaged and touting the benefit of a collaborative model can help ease concerns about funding.

Resiliency Component: Demonstrating Impact

As mentioned above, finding ways to demonstrate impact, ideally through tracking metrics, is crucial to the long-term success of a place-based initiative. In part, this is because funders want to see data and hear stories that show them that their resources are being spent well and the initiative is fulfilling its purpose. It will also keep stakeholders interested in continuing to invest their time, energy, and capital into the work of the initiative, as they will be able to see the value of the work through the results it garners.

Resiliency Component: Gaining Popular Support

Having popular support for the initiative in a community is another way to maintain interest and enthusiasm for your initiative. If community members see tangible evidence of the work of the initiative – corps members all wearing the same jackets or t-shirts helping the community's children in schools, creating green spaces in their neighborhood, supporting seniors, coordinating volunteers, or distributing supplies after an emergency – they will likely be more willing to express their support for the structures that enabled those corps members to improve their quality of life. While this concept may feel esoteric or irrelevant to some, certain partners like local government, colleges and universities, or funders may find a great deal of value in connecting their names and reputations with this work and may want or need popular support or interest in order to sustain their involvement.

Further, your initiative, as part of a state and national ecosystem, can be intentional about building local support for service years and their utility in serving broader causes, creating a positive feedback loop that may ultimately benefit your community with additional resources and capacity. Putting thought and intention into how members of your community positively perceive and value the work of your service year programs and corps members can have a huge long-term impact. It can also lead to sustainability through leadership transitions.

Resiliency Component: Complementary Infrastructure

Developing strong relationships with other national service infrastructure can offer partnership, support, and capacity. Two major structures that can provide significant value are state service commissions and alumni chapters.

[State service commissions](#) are the state partners of the federal AmeriCorps agency. While the scope and interests of each commission may differ, each administers AmeriCorps State grants, Volunteer Generation Fund, and related programs to address critical community needs and engage citizens in national service. Your state service commission can be a strategic partner and can aid in ensuring that you have the resources you need to be successful in growing service years to address needs in your community. There are a number of state service commissions currently supporting community collaboratives. The OneStar Foundation, the Texas state service commission, funds a grantee, CitySquare, in North Texas to organize a collaborative and provide professional development and training to corps members or other grantees' staff across the region. VolunteerFlorida is testing a model of supporting regional recruiters to assist with recruitment in communities across the state. Additionally, PennServe and the Michigan Commission both provide continual technical assistance through partnerships with their local service year collaboratives.

Alumni chapters are a second, often more local, group that may exist in your community. Alumni chapters keep service year alums in your community connected and could be an avenue through which alums who move into your community from elsewhere can engage with your initiative. Depending on your initiative's priorities, an alumni chapter can be a key partner in accomplishing your goals by offering alums continued professional development opportunities, a continuum of service, a pipeline into local careers – particularly in nonprofits – and a network.

[Check here](#) to see if the [Alumni Chapter Steering Committee](#) has identified a Chapter near you. If not, consider encouraging alums in your area to start their own Chapter using the toolkit, [Best Practices for Starting and Running an Alums Chapter](#).



Bringing All The Elements Together: *Impact Community Examples*

FLINT, MICHIGAN

HIGHLIGHT IMPACT COMMUNITY ELEMENTS & COMPONENTS:

- Nonprofit backbone organization
- Dedicated staff person
- Coalition of nonprofits, local government, national service programs, state service commission, and higher education
- Shared vision, goals, and metrics that led to an important ROI case study
- Engaged funder
- Demonstrated impact and growth

The Flint National Service Accelerator

[The Flint National Service Accelerator](#) has been a highly successful example of a place-based initiative leveraging national service for community development.

In 2011, the leading nonprofits in Flint, Michigan saw the benefit that the 25 AmeriCorps members serving in the city offered to the community. Those nonprofits, in coordination and with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and working with local government and service year organizations, concluded that if they were better coordinated on training, community support, and fundraising, they could both increase the number of service year positions and the impact those positions had in Flint, making national service a highly effective community development strategy. This determination led to the creation of the Flint National Service Accelerator.

By all accounts, the initiative has been extremely successful. Between 2016 and 2017 alone, 444 AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members served in Flint, and the Accelerator has become a model to which other communities aspire.

The Accelerator initiative provides the support that nonprofit partners need to successfully recruit, select, assign, and train AmeriCorps members. The backbone organization in the initiative, the United Way of Genesee County, manages a National Service Accelerator Fund which provides matching funds for federal AmeriCorps grants, as well as support for new programs wanting to access AmeriCorps funding. The Mott Foundation has provided well over \$1 million to support all components of the Accelerator. Their structure and purpose are well-documented in their toolkit, [In Service of Stronger Communities, Revitalizing Community Through the Flint National Service Accelerator](#).



The Accelerator has been directed by the United Way of Genesee County's Civic Engagement Manager. This dedicated staff role has been crucial to the ability of the programs to grow their positions while also providing a quality experience for corps members. All corps members in Flint participate in monthly trainings that provide a cohesive professional development experience, creating a pipeline of young leaders that can continue to engage in making the community a better place.

The initiative has worked to demonstrate the impact of their efforts. Most recently, a [2020 report](#) funded by the Mott Foundation examined the return on investment of national service in Flint, Michigan. For every dollar spent by the federal government on programs in Flint, the government saw a \$8.40 return. This is more than double the return of AmeriCorps programs overall. Further, when considering the benefits to corps members, the community, and local, state, and federal government, these programs offer a \$27.40 return on every dollar spent on federal and match funding.

By using a collaborative approach across multiple partners, the Flint National Service Accelerator initiative has become a leading model for making national service a more efficient and beneficial community development tool that strengthens the community and offers a positive experience for corps members. Building infrastructure that includes dedicated staffing, shared efforts and goals, coordination with local funders and government, and emphasis on creating a quality, shared experience for corps members across programs has enabled their success.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

HIGHLIGHT IMPACT COMMUNITY ELEMENTS & COMPONENTS:

- Local government backbone organization
- Dedicated staff
- Coalition of nonprofits, local government, national service programs, state service commission, higher education, businesses, & community based grantmaker
- Shared vision, goals, and metrics
- Demonstrated impact and growth
- Alumni chapter working with collaborative

Philadelphia National Service Task Force

Officially designated in 2018 as an Impact Community with its beginnings around 2015, the Philadelphia National Service Task Force sought to create a community development strategy empowered through service years, where needs are met and problems addressed through a coordinated system of targeted investment across Philadelphia neighborhoods. Their goals included growing and diversifying the programs available to resolve the unmet needs of under-resourced populations, developing career and leadership skills, and increasing the sense of collective community responsibility that Philadelphians already pride themselves in demonstrating.

The Philadelphia National Service Task Force (NSTF) is composed of three entities: the National Service Task Force Steering Committee, the NSTF Program Council, and the newly created PHL AmeriCorps Alumni Chapter. Each of these groups work together to help move the goal of envisioning a future when a year of service is a common expectation for all Philadelphians. NSTF is led out of the Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service under the city's Chief Service Officer and a Service Year Expansion Manager. As the backbone organization, this local government agency has been highly effective as a convener given its neutral position, its ability to organize wide-scale volunteer efforts, and its experience hosting service year positions.

The initiative has had a functioning coalition since 2015. The National Service Task Force Program Council was created to increase collaboration within, and recognition beyond, the national service community of Philadelphia and marshal resources to advance that agenda while being supportive of one another. Member organizations operationalize the vision of the initiative by sharing best practices and resources, staying connected, promoting each other's programs and services, leading annual service events as a collective to promote the AmeriCorps brand and and staying accountable to each other. The NSTF Program Council is co-chaired by two member organizations serving a two-year term and advised by the Service Year Expansion Manager. It focuses on events like the AmeriCorps Launch, attended by over 500 service year corps members in Philadelphia each year, and providing program corps member support.



The NSTF Program Council has been an incredible resource in providing and coordinating between programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it allowed programs to work together as an Impact Community to redeploy corps members, build partnerships to create a Commonwealth Civilian Coronavirus Corps (PHL COVID Response Corps), and coordinate vaccine distribution using service year corps members.

Further, the National Service Task Force Steering Committee is the managing entity composed of executive directors from some of Philadelphia's service year programs as well as other cross-sector leaders in the Philadelphia service year community. The NSTF Steering Committee focuses on service year expansion through program development, fundraising and resource leveraging, and supporting public policy efforts. An emphasis is placed on identifying barriers to service and, in collaboration with the NSTF Program Council, incorporating solutions into new and existing service year programs and engaging the alumni network to support this work. The Steering Committee builds partnerships with Philadelphia businesses, organizations, and universities to expand service year opportunities as well as access to post-service career pathways. Recently, the Steering Committee managed a \$75,000 gift from American Airlines to implement a diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative within the Impact Community.

Both the coalitions and dedicated staff infrastructure components of the Impact Community are guided by an Advisory Board made up of representatives from PennSERVEAmeriCorps, Service Year Alliance, and the city. In particular, the Philadelphia Impact Community has a strong relationship with the Pennsylvania state service commission, PennSERVE, which has contributed to many of the Impact Community's successes.

The strategic goals for the Impact Community are as follows:

- Find additional funding streams for expanded service year opportunities.
- Find opportunities for new service programs or current program expansion.
- Connect employers to graduating members.
- Make a year of service a common expectation for Philadelphians.
- Support coordinated recruitment efforts.
- Diversify programs and corps members to support equity in both the job pipeline and communities.

Finally, the Philadelphia AmeriCorps Alums Chapter has offered an effective way to keep alums engaged in service after they complete their service year. The chapter stays closely connected with the work of the Impact Community and offers a variety of opportunities like career panels and education award workshops, so that alums can succeed in their post-service pathways. The Impact Community sees the alums chapter as an effective way to develop the leadership potential of alums in their community.

CENTRAL FLORIDA

HIGHLIGHT IMPACT COMMUNITY ELEMENTS & COMPONENTS:

- Higher education backbone organization
- Coalition of nonprofits, local government, national service programs, state service commission, & higher education
- Shared vision, goals, and metrics
- Demonstrated impact and growth

The Central Florida Service Collective

With the tagline “one service year,” the Central Florida Service Collective (CFSC) connects national service to higher education and serves as an incubator of service year programs and partnering organizations for the purpose of collaborating on service-related engagement that positively impacts the community. With about 30 partners across the Central Florida region – which includes the counties of Lake, Orange (including Orlando), Osceola, and Seminole – and a handful of state and national partners who engage regularly, the CFSC created a highly engaged collaborative that is well-positioned to raise the profile of national service within the Orlando area. The group has been collaborating since 2018 and officially joined the Impact Community network in December 2020.

The CFSC is housed within the University of Central Florida, as the CFSC believes that higher education institutions are well-positioned to act as innovators and offer three key elements that can benefit national service programs and help partnering organizations get connected to the university setting: (1) neutrality; (2) access; and (3) resourcing. They also partner with the City of Orlando, county governments, and the state service commission, Volunteer Florida, to expand their reach.

There are five value focus areas that serve as a framework for the efforts of the CFSC. Each value statement includes examples of the initiatives, programs, and impact occurring within that focus area:

Outreach – Educating and increasing awareness of national service opportunities to prospective service year corps members as well as preparing individuals for their service year experience.

Service – Piloting and seeking out initiatives that can be shared and replicated as best practices.

Advocacy – Acting as ambassadors for current and prospective service year corps members; engaging with local, state, and national officials on behalf of national service.

Scholarship – Innovating, researching, publishing, and presenting new ideas and thought leadership to inform the work of and for other service communities.

Partnership – Creating and stewarding partnerships between various service-based organizations as bridge builders to strategically meet community needs.



Through their collaboration and partnership-building, the CFSC has been able to launch a number of new initiatives. First, they have helped to establish new programs and service year positions throughout the Impact Community area, like collaborating with the City of Orlando's Orlando Cares as an intermediary, placing an AmeriCorps VISTA at a local Community Partnership School as their wellness coordinator, and managing a Jumpstart grant engaging college students with early learners at area childcare settings.

They were also able to create the first non-program specific college-based AmeriCorps recruiter position on the University of Central Florida campus, modeled after their Peace Corps recruiter model. This individual works to improve the pipeline from higher education into national service, and has recently been replicated at the University of Miami with both positions being funded by Volunteer Florida – the state service commission. They have also developed subject-specific subcommittees to address specific problems facing national service, like a housing subcommittee, to explore solutions to the high cost of rent in the area. Several peer reviewed manuscripts have been published including [Civic Value of National Service: Ethics to Students](#); and [The Central Florida Service Collective: Connecting National Service to Higher Education to Strengthen Communities](#).



IMPACT COMMUNITY GOAL SETTING

Utilizing Service Years as a Strategy for Your Community Needs

This part of the toolkit takes a deeper dive into the areas for Impact Communities to **build their coalition's shared vision and the strategic elements** needed to bring service years to their fullest potential in a community – the main reason to build a strong collaborative in the first place! To best utilize service years, communities must understand their priorities and goals, as well as basic benchmarks to achieving those goals.

Service Year Alliance works with communities to establish and advance goals that create the conditions for universal national service in communities. Working in collaboration with practitioners within Impact Communities across the country over the past several years, we outlined the following five principles or elements to create universal national service with several strategies communities can pursue. While what we outline below is not the only way to understand this work in community, it does offer a comprehensive look to date at the strategies that Service Year Alliance has identified as necessary to make a service year an expectation and opportunity for all Americans.

Principles of Universal National Service (UNS)

Service Year Alliance has identified five key areas of work that we believe are necessary for service years to truly be utilized in communities across America to address community needs and make a year of service a common expectation and opportunity in America. These five areas create the conditions for universal national service (UNS). These principles are ways for Impact Communities to build shared visions and goals for the most pressing needs in their community and understand the elements that build upon the strength of service years as a model for impact in communities.

The five key principles of universal national service are:

- 1. National service should exist at scale.** The strength of national service is not only that it addresses community needs, but that it transforms the lives of the person serving. More national service programming means more community needs being addressed and more people seeing the power of serving one's community while attaining new skills. Service Year Alliance is working toward a future in which one million young people are engaged in national service each year – that's approximately one in every four young people in America. To reach that level of saturation, we'll need to see each community grow their number of positions.
- 2. National service should address America's unmet needs.** As communities look to tackle local problems, national service is an effective way to address them. Whether that's fighting climate change, expanding broadband, supporting state and local governments, combatting learning loss, or something else entirely, national service should be viewed as a critical tool and be utilized to meet evolving unmet needs within communities. Communities may be leveraging national service for only a fraction of the needs in the community, and a collaborative can identify ways for national service to be fully leveraged to address the diverse needs in a location or geographic region.



- 3. National service should bridge divides and fuel civic renewal.** We know that service year alums tend to be more civically engaged and that there is value in serving alongside someone with a different background than one's own. But we must be intentional about ensuring that developing cultural competence and strengthening civic attitudes in corps members are outcomes that national service programs strive to achieve. Part of this work includes bringing national service programs and corps members together in a community for shared learning and experiences. This collaboration allows communities to address needs together and allows corps members to understand that they are part of a larger network in their community.
- 4. National service should be an opportunity for all.** This means we need to ensure that barriers to serve are eliminated, and pay and wraparound services are increased so that people of all backgrounds see national service as an accessible option. Until everyone – regardless of education level, socioeconomic background, or the community that they come from – can see themselves in national service and feel empowered to pursue it, this will not be an opportunity for all. Communities can come together to solve these issues collectively and national service programs can increase their capacity to build supports and benefits for corps members as a community.
- 5. National service should build pathways to long-term success for individuals who serve – both through benefits and key personal and professional development with connectivity to future education and careers.** Large strides have been made in national service addressing community needs and demonstrating community impact, but few programs devote resources to understanding the outcomes for corps members. Notably, though, individuals who complete service years are more likely to obtain four-year degrees than their peers who have not. Building a strong community coalition with the engagement of higher education institutions and employers can strengthen the education and career pathways for all corps members across programs. Imagine the potential impact if we brought more intentionality to the pathways service years can create.

Our Service Year Impact Communities strive to be exemplars of all five principles, and to do so, each community typically focuses on a specific principle or two to advance at any given time, based on their community's priorities and needs.



UNS Principle 1: Exist at Scale

The strength of national service is that it both addresses community needs and transforms the lives of the people serving. More national service programming means more community needs being addressed and more people seeing the power of serving one's community while attaining new skills. Research shows that, [if given the opportunity, almost half of young people](#) would consider doing a year of service. Other barriers that continue to prevent people from committing to a year of service will be addressed in other UNS principle sections, but one thing is certain – there are not enough service year positions in America for even one in forty Americans between the ages of 18-28 to do a service year today.

Partnering with higher education institutions can be a great way to capture and track progress on UNS Community Roadmap strategies. The Philadelphia National Service Task Force partnered with Drexel University to have students do a landscape study of existing service year programs. Similarly, ServeNC, the North Carolina Impact Community, worked with University of North Carolina seniors on a capstone project to map out nonprofits in the state and existing AmeriCorps programs to understand where there were gaps in service year placements and to start to explore which organizations might have the capacity to take on new AmeriCorps positions.

Of course, scale of this size cannot be achieved without significant increases in federal funding to AmeriCorps and other national service programs. Still, work is being done at the state and local level to build organizational capacity to successfully run service year programs. Additionally, states and local communities are making progress on scaling the number of positions available by engaging state and local funding streams to respond to community-based needs and building private sources of support.

TIP: CALCULATING YOUR SCALE GOALS

Service Year Alliance considers service years at scale to mean about one quarter of all Americans have served in civilian national service positions in their lifetimes. This, of course, will take decades of people matriculating through service year programs to achieve, so we calculate the approximate number of positions needed each year to reach national service saturation in the long-term. If you're interested in Principle 1, calculating your scale can be a valuable tool for setting and evaluating benchmarks. The easiest way to figure out a rough estimate of this number is to divide the number of 18 year olds in your community by 4. More accurately, you can add up the number of 18-28 year olds (the typical age range of service year participants) and determine 2.5% of that number – this equates to 25% of the population over 10 years. That is your "scale number of positions" or your "saturation number."

While your "saturation number" assumes the existence of upwards of 1 million positions nationwide, you can use this to understand your community's growth potential when AmeriCorps, state/local, or private funders consider expansion. For example, if AmeriCorps receives federal funding to expand its positions, you can use this number to understand approximately how many positions could come to your community. Let's say AmeriCorps expands from 75,000 to 100,000 positions – 100,000 would be about 10% of the number of positions needed to reach scale nationally (utilizing the one million per year serving benchmark). Therefore, 10% of your "saturation number" is approximately your share of positions in the case of expansion.

For Impact Communities and place-based initiatives, scaling will most likely be linked or related to the other four UNS principles. Your goal may be to address unmet needs in the community, make national service an opportunity for all, fuel civic renewal in the community, and/or build pathways for citizens in the community – and the way to be successful in those areas is to scale national service to meet the goals in your community.

Scale is about understanding the long-term saturation of national service in your community. It's important to understand your current number of positions and set achievable benchmarks for how much you would like to see that number of positions grow in a given period of time. Then, set forth a plan in partnership with your community collaborative on where and how to grow those positions. If there is a secondary goal that you hope to meet by growing the number of positions, such as tackling an unmet need through service years or increasing civic engagement, consider the types of organizations that would benefit from (and have the capacity to host) an increase in positions, or whether new host sites are required. An intermediary could also be beneficial to a community to help smaller organizations with less capacity take on new positions. Check out the roadmap below for additional tactics that could help create the conditions for scaling service years in your community.

Ultimately, Impact Communities, collaborating with state service commissions and the federal AmeriCorps agency, private foundations, and state or local government can play a key role in planning for and successfully implementing universal national service. They can ensure that there are organizations ready and willing to expand or create service year programs that are impactful and meaningful for corps members and the community in which they serve.

What Success Looks Like

An Impact Community that has met the conditions for existing at scale will likely have the following qualities:

- There are enough positions in the community to engage about 2.5% of 18-28 year olds in your community in service years annually
- Smaller nonprofits and community-based organizations are able to participate in service year programming
- A pool of funding, similar to the Flint National Service Accelerator fund, is available as start-up matching funds for AmeriCorps grants for new organizations to create positions or to combine funding with other funding sources to create service year positions
- Trainings and supports are offered to corps members across service year programs at the community level to reduce that capacity burden on individual programs



UNS COMMUNITY ROADMAP: EXIST AT SCALE

BEGINNER/NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE/EMERGING	ADVANCED/SKILLED
As a beginner/novice collaborative, my community can...	As an intermediate/emerging collaborative, my community can...	As an advanced/skilled collaborative, my community can...
Develop basic growth targets to ensure service years exist at scale.	Set goals to meet scale and growth benchmarks from previous and upcoming years.	Meet long-term saturation goals (see Principle 1 text for more information on calculating scale).
Survey programs to gather baseline information around the current number of service year positions.		
Invite all service year programs to participate in a regular steering committee focused on scaling the number of opportunities in the community.	Create shared trainings and service days across programs to reduce some capacity burden from individual programs as positions increase in the community (relates to Principle 3).	
Identify potential local, state, and philanthropic partners that can fund collaborative efforts to scale service years in the community.	Develop an engagement strategy to convince local, state, and philanthropic partners to fund collaborative efforts and new service years in the community.	Secure funding from local, state, and philanthropic partners for service year positions and collaborative efforts in the community.
Identify organizations in the community that could benefit from service year positions.	Support organizations who expressed interest in running a service year program in the community.	Remove barriers preventing small organizations in the community from accessing service year funding. Establish separate 501(c)3 or designate non-program nonprofit or community foundation to manage an Accelerator fund that can be used as match or start up funds to support new service year positions.
Survey existing service year programs to identify recruitment needs and opportunities.	Assist other programs in the community with recruitment by sharing strategies, offering resources, or providing technical assistance.	
Educate elected officials on the value of service years in their community.	Advocate, where permitted, that elected officials and representatives increase funding for the number of service year positions in the community and nationally.	Support efforts to fund service year positions with state and local funding.

SCALING CASE STUDY: FLINT NATIONAL SERVICE ACCELERATOR

The Flint National Service Accelerator was established in 2011 to increase the number of national service positions with the idea that more national service positions would give more opportunities to Flint, MI residents and address more challenges in the community to improve quality of life in Flint. Part of the role of the Accelerator was to align with the Flint Master Plan, a community development plan created by the City of Flint, MI, by growing service year positions that met community-identified needs. The Accelerator then maintained a pool of funds – the Flint National Service Accelerator Fund – that those aspiring to create national service programs could tap into to help establish a new national service program.

Initially, they focused on adding corps members to Flint schools and aligning across programs. By expanding national service positions in Flint and creating additional infrastructure and capacity, Flint was able to rapidly leverage corps members when the Flint Water Crisis occurred, allowing the community to quickly pivot and engage residents serving as corps members to address the acute and chronic needs that resulted. The first teams on the ground included National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) that Flint could easily call on from building pre-existing relationships with the [AmeriCorps state office](#).

The community has continued to turn to national service for other community needs. The high concentration of corps members, combined with the wraparound trainings and supports that the Accelerator has created, has significantly increased the impact of service years on the community and on corps members.



UNS Principle 2: Address America's Unmet Needs



Service years are a tool that communities can deploy quickly and efficiently to address pressing and chronic community challenges. We've seen service years adapt to meeting local needs after natural disasters and respond to crises like COVID-19, and we have seen them add much-needed capacity to under-resourced schools, local government agencies, environmental projects, nonprofits, and a host of other sectors tackling a wide array of problems. Research has shown that there are significant needs throughout the public sector that are going unmet, and that does not account for unplanned emergencies such as natural disasters or pandemics. Service years are a great return on investment and are flexible enough and provide the infrastructure to fill existing needs quickly and efficiently when they arise.

Most service years are a public-private partnership, bringing a mix of federal, state, and/or private funds, resources, and capacity to the local level. The footprint of service years in Birmingham, AL will look different than in Butte, MT or Boston, MA. A system of universal national service would broaden this approach by supporting the development of state and local plans and expanding the number of communities deeply engaged in expanding opportunities to serve. The success of such an expansion is dependent upon service years being flexible enough to address local problems and engaging the leadership of local communities to see service years as a strategy for meeting their needs.

Understanding the needs of your community to ensure that service year program interventions are meeting them is crucial. As discussed earlier in this toolkit, it might necessitate intensive stakeholder engagement, including engaging members of the community who are recipients of service. Working with your local government, assuming they have an existing community development plan that successfully engaged community stakeholders, can expedite this effort. Then, it may be of use to survey existing service year programs to understand whether the community-identified needs are being met by their interventions. Finally, it requires working on a plan to fill any gaps left in this needs assessment. Further, it's important to ensure that typically underserved communities are intentionally engaged in the process, and that programs are doing their best to target their interventions in those communities that need them most.



Finally, engaging with local governments on how corps members can be of use during an emergency management scenario can be important for the long-term preparedness of a community. In the case of an emergency like a natural disaster, new and highly pressing needs will take precedence. Service year programs can be a flexible tool that can quickly pivot to address those newly arisen, immediate problems. Working with the local government in advance can ensure smooth collaboration and deployment should an emergency occur. Ultimately, an Impact Community can help make certain that service years continue to target the most pressing unmet needs in communities, identifying gaps that may be difficult for the state or federal agencies to see – without direct, on-the-ground knowledge – and ensuring that federal resources are distributed to states and communities to make the most impact.

What Success Looks Like

An Impact Community that has met the conditions for addressing unmet needs will likely have the following qualities:

- Community development and emergency management plans include service years as a strategic resource
- Service years address the most pressing problems in a community, and the community has been engaged in identifying those problems
- Recipients of service year programming are regularly engaged to determine if their needs are being met with a high level of satisfaction, inclusion, and dignity
- Data is collected and maintained to understand the impact of service year programs at the program level, the issue area level, and the collective level

UNS COMMUNITY ROADMAP: ADDRESSING AMERICA'S UNMET NEEDS

BEGINNER/NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE/EMERGING	ADVANCED/SKILLED
As a beginner/novice collaborative, my community can...	As an intermediate/emerging collaborative, my community can...	As an advanced/skilled collaborative, my community can...
Survey programs to identify what unmet needs corps members are addressing within the community.	Engage stakeholders and beneficiaries in a community assessment to identify and develop goals around how service years can support additional needs within the community.	Regularly engage a broad cross-section of community stakeholders and community members to understand the continuing needs of the community and how service years can support them.
	Engage local elected and government leaders in identifying unmet needs in the community. Use public information such as community plans or reports to map opportunities for service years to address unmet needs (relates to principle 1).	Encourage collaborative members/ service year programs to join or advocate for their inclusion in issue-based councils (e.g a citywide children's cabinet, climate working group).
Utilize relevant data to identify specific regions within the community that do not currently utilize service years.	Collect programmatic data to identify regions that utilize service year positions and identify opportunities or challenges to equitable distribution across the community.	Develop and implement recurring goals to achieve equitable distribution of service years across the community.
.	Engage with local government or agencies to include service years in disaster preparedness and management plans, or other strategic and community development plans.	Working with a combination of corps members and a local alumni chapter partner, develop a plan in the community for surge capacity in disasters using service year corps members and volunteers from the alums community (relates to principle 3).

SAN JOSE, CA

ADDRESSING UNMET NEEDS CASE STUDY: SAN JOSE IMPACT COMMUNITY

In San Jose, CA, the Chief Service Officer manages the Impact Community initiative. The city works to improve the service year infrastructure locally, so that more San Joseans can serve and service year programs in San Jose achieve their programmatic outcomes. As the “City of Innovation,” San Jose has been working to identify local policy areas that can support the creation of service year opportunities, as well as address systemic challenges like the high cost of housing that poses a barrier to service years becoming a cultural expectation within the city. The Impact Community initiative is run out of the mayor’s office with the mayor being a huge supporter of service years – both because of the impact on the person serving and the impact on the community.

The San Jose Impact Community has developed several new service year programs to address local community needs over the years. The unmet needs come from the city plan and the Chief Service Officer works with the mayor to identify the needs that can be met through national service. The latest include a [Climate Action Corps](#) and a [Resilience Corps](#) to help the community address climate resiliency and wildfire prevention, and respond to the pandemic more broadly. These programs provide a path for a person to serve their community and gain skills while addressing the needs in the community. Several of the other community initiatives can be found on their [ServeSJ](#) site and they continue to work with local partners in San Jose to see how service years can address local needs.





UNS Principle 3: Bridge Divides and Fuel Civic Renewal

Service years are an opportunity to serve the country and your community beyond traditional military service. Historically, periods in American history that saw significant jumps in voluntary service, like the period in which the Civilian Conservation Corps was activated during the Great Depression, saw a secondhand effect of Americans becoming more civically active both nationally and in their communities. In fact, AmeriCorps alums today vote at a higher rate compared to their peers. Imagine the revival of American democracy and civic engagement that could occur if every young person in America had the opportunity to serve.

At the community level, this means people who do a service year are more likely to engage in volunteering to solve community problems and to stay engaged after their service year is over. Service year alums are more likely to be civically engaged in the community, become local leaders, give back to the community, and become involved in volunteer activities. Serving alongside people from different backgrounds in common purpose helps an individual learn skills like empathy and cultural self-awareness, and makes them more tolerant and curious about others. Our [Service Years & Bridging](#) report found that service year programs implicitly teach some of these skills, but that being intentional about creating trainings with a focus on fostering these skills and attitudes can bolster their impact, and in turn graduate cohorts of engaged, empathetic servant leaders. Part of this work is bringing national service programs and corps members together in a community for shared learning and experiences so the work is more about addressing community needs together and less about one national service program over another. National service can be the shared experience to bring many different actors and organizations together in the community.

Service Year Alliance's [Service Years & Bridging](#) report defined bridgers as young people who form positive relationships across lines of difference and proactively fuel civic renewal in America. A bridger has a combination of attitudes, skills, and the motivation to act and produce inclusive outcomes in their community and in the nation.



UNS COMMUNITY ROADMAP: BRIDGE DIVIDES AND FUEL CIVIC RENEWAL

BEGINNER/NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE/EMERGING	ADVANCED/SKILLED
As a beginner/novice collaborative, my community can...	As an intermediate/emerging collaborative, my community can...	As an advanced/skilled collaborative, my community can...
Survey programs to identify if and how cultural competence is prioritized in service year programming.	Create partnerships to develop minimum standard training on cultural competence for both service year program staff and corps members across the community.	Implement community-wide cultural competency training or standards that offer lessons on civic leadership and how to work across differences for corps members.
Survey programs to identify if and how civic engagement is prioritized in service year programming.	Create training designed to give corps members explicit lessons in civic leadership that compliment their implicit experience through their service year program.	
Engage existing local government service year programs in collaborative (if existing).	Advocate for or create local government corps for placements in agencies.	Develop local government corps programming and professional development opportunities that make corps effective on-ramps into public service careers (relates to Principle 5).
Survey service year programs to understand how they are cultivating an intentional cohort experience amongst service year corps members.	Develop an intentional networking and collective engagement strategy to connect corps members across various programs in a community.	Facilitate community-wide activities and engagements to connect corps members and alumni across programs through mentorship and networking opportunities.
Identify service year alumni in the community who are interested in continued engagement with national service and an alumni network.	Partner with a core group of service year alumni, such as an AmeriCorps Alums or Service Year chapter in the community. If an alumni chapter does not exist, work with alumni in your area to create one (see Alumni Chapter Toolkit).	Establish a robust alumni engagement plan to support alumni and/or engage an alumni chapter in recruitment, trainings, and mentoring of incoming corps members, as well as a communications plan for engaging with alumni in their life after service (relates to Principle 5).
Identify the explicit elements of service year alumni engagement that add value to the community (such as civic infrastructure pathways, civic leadership, volunteerism, etc.) and create a periodic survey to measure this impact amongst local alumni.		Compile and analyze data from alumni surveys to increase quality programming and leverage outcomes data in demonstrating the power of service years.
Identify intersections between military service and service years in the community.	Develop partnerships with entities engaging those interested in service, currently serving soldiers, and veterans to encourage service years as an additional service pathway (e.g. partnering with military recruiters to suggest service years to those who are unable to do military service).	Cultivate experiences and opportunities for service year alumni and veterans to connect in an effort to link military and civilian service.

NEW YORK, NY

CIVIC RENEWAL CASE STUDY: NYC SERVICE

The New York City Impact Community – led by NYC Service – has an inspiring track record in terms of collaboration and innovation. The initiative, started in 2016, is centered in the New York City Mayor’s Office and led by a Chief Service Officer, National Service Support Director, and team. From an ambitious growth plan that examined community challenges borough by borough to identify needs that service years could address, to a first-of-its kind Service Year Leadership Council made up of programs across the city jointly fundraising to seed and accelerate the growth of programs across the community – the New York City Impact Community is a leader in cross-program and cross-sector collaboration to make a service year an opportunity for all. The collaborative both works with programs across the city and builds out how local government agencies can utilize service years in their work – building the public and private partnership and utilization of service years.

One of the largest elements of their programming is bringing corps members together across New York City for an annual conference and career fair. By bringing corps members together from different programs and different neighborhoods and boroughs, it creates an opportunity for the corps members to have a deeper commitment to the city and to addressing needs. Corps members are able to meet, hear from one another, and build an understanding of the similarities and differences among them – while receiving similar trainings to set them up for success. Many of the combined trainings from NYC Service center around reflection and professional development which gives equal opportunity for all corps members to succeed during and post-service. By bringing corps members together, they intentionally grow bridgers and civically engaged individuals who are committed to the health of New York City and the surrounding area.





UNS Principle 4: Opportunity for All

Service years have the potential to be an opportunity for all: it can offer millions of young people an opportunity to serve their community and country, while setting them on a path to succeed post-service. Yet, for too many Americans, service years are out of reach or they are unaware that service years are an option for them. Impact Communities, however, can prioritize building local awareness, as well as increasing benefits and wraparound services, to help make a year of service an opportunity that is accessible to all young people.

POLICY NEEDS

Increasing pay and benefits available to corps members would make national service a more appealing and accessible option for all young people, no matter their background. Increases to the living allowance, supplemental benefits like healthcare, and the Segal Education Award – as well as making all of these benefits tax-free – are critical and necessary to eliminate barriers to national service and demonstrate the value the nation sees in service years. In addition, a nation-wide awareness campaign and the creation of an online portal for all service year positions would ensure that all young people are aware of the options available to them to serve. Most of these improvements require policy changes at the federal level ([though states can make meaningful changes as well](#)). Service Year Alliance and our coalition of partners advocate for these changes on Capitol Hill and through our [Serve America Together](#) campaign.

Communities choosing to work together to recruit some of their corps members locally can make a difference to many young people who are unaware that service years are an option. By recruiting locally, an emphasis can be placed on engaging corps members that reflect the communities they serve. Impact Communities can develop partnerships with other organizations to offer stronger supports through wraparound services, which can make a significant difference in the accessibility of service years as well as the ability of corps members to complete their service year by making sure they have supports like childcare, social services, GED completion programming, and so forth. They can also explore other benefits like offering free or affordable housing options or transportation stipends to corps members in their communities.

On the local level, there are several activities a community could undertake to help pursue making service years an opportunity for all. A community should assess its programs to remove any unnecessary barriers, such as minimum education requirements, a lack of application accessibility for people with disabilities, or barriers for justice-involved youth. They should also look at who is serving, likely through intake surveys that allow corps members to self-identify and collect information about who is serving locally.

If the data collection indicates a lack of people from underserved communities participating in service years, the programs in the community should collectively pursue ways to offer additional benefits such as housing or transportation, supports like mental health resources or guidance on applying for SNAP benefits, or additional resources like an emergency fund in case something comes up that could interrupt corps members' ability to complete their service. A community should also consider methods to raise awareness in underserved communities. This could include engaging local guidance counselors in suggesting a service year as an alternative path post-graduation, or working with community and faith-based organizations that are trusted by young people to educate them about service years.

For communities that have done all they are able to do within the confines of their resources, the next step is educating lawmakers on the benefits of service years in the communities, and suggesting fixes that could make it an even better opportunity for all.

There are many synergies between principle 4 around opportunity for all and principle 3 around civic renewal. Many of the trainings for civic renewal, belonging, and bridging make programs more inclusive so people from diverse backgrounds can see themselves succeeding in those programs. Similarly, there are synergies in the opportunity for all principle and principle 5 around pathways. People want to know that the year of service is leading to long-term pathways to set them up for success in a career or future education. If you take on goals around opportunity for all, you may find yourself also taking on goals around civic renewal and pathways.

Ultimately, Impact Communities have the power to improve conditions and lower barriers to service years at the local level in ways that AmeriCorps may not be able to achieve. Universal national service is not attainable without ensuring that everyone who wants to serve can do so without causing or exacerbating hardships, and Impact Communities can work to ensure that those conditions are met locally, while collectively advocating for necessary changes at the national level.

What Success Looks Like

An Impact Community that has met the conditions for making service year opportunities accessible to all will likely have the following qualities:

- All prospective service year corps members are able to commit to a service year without major financial constraints, and have access to positions despite justice involvement, socioeconomic status, or educational attainment.
- Safe and affordable housing options are accessible to corps members.
- The demographic makeup of corps members reflects the communities they serve; while noting that a healthy program might be a mix of people from the community and from outside the community.
- (If applicable) Rural communities have access to service year programs at the same rates that urban communities do.
- A system of wraparound supports exists that includes case management, emergency stipends, childcare, and quality healthcare access.

UNS COMMUNITY ROADMAP: OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

BEGINNER/NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE/EMERGING	ADVANCED/SKILLED
As a beginner/novice collaborative, my community can...	As an intermediate/emerging collaborative, my community can...	As an advanced/skilled collaborative, my community can...
Assess awareness of young people about service year opportunities with demographic break outs.	Raise local awareness of service years among 18-28 year olds by 20%/reach 50% awareness level.	Track where service year corps members across programs come from and serve within subsections of the community to ensure every part of the community has awareness of, access to, and can benefit from service years.
Survey service year programs to understand the inequities in pay between service year positions in the community.	Promote practices from service year programs that are paying their corps members an equitable wage and/or offering supports to address the pay gap.	Advocate to elected officials that all service year positions should be paid opportunities that receive the benefits for AmeriCorps if they fit other service year criteria to be a service year.
Collect data to identify the populations service year programs in the community are serving.	Use data collection to define what diversity means for service year programming in the community and develop a strategy for diversity and inclusion across programs.	Identify ways to support programs in ensuring the diverse corps in the community are supported and represented by program managers that understand their background and identity.
Assess whether certain groups of applicants are continually turned away from serving across your community's portfolio of programs and determine if barriers can be removed that keep them from serving (e.g. education requirements, justice involvement, opportunity youth, people with disabilities, etc.).	Create a community-wide plan to improve recruitment of historically marginalized groups (e.g. justice involved or opportunity youth, people with disabilities, etc.).	Ensure corps largely reflect the demographic makeup of the communities they are serving.
Survey corps members across programs to identify what their greatest needs and barriers are to participating in or completing their service year.	Develop a strategy for addressing the needs of corps members to ensure engagement and retention in service years in the community (including physical and emotional well-being).	Establish a system of wraparound supports, including case management, housing, and emergency funds for people who serve (make sure to map what supports are needed for which group of individuals (i.e., opportunity youth, justice involved, recent high school graduates, etc.)).
Survey programs to identify the resources and support they offer to individuals that may create barriers to participation (e.g. increased living stipends, access to credentialing, creating part-time positions so corps members can work or go to school).	Identify potential partnerships and methods to remove barriers to service years or offer additional benefits to support corps members (such as supplementing high quality health or child care, offering emergency support, etc.). Develop goals related to implementing a shared fundraising strategy if needed.	Implement a shared strategy amongst service year programs (such as an emergency fund) that provides access to resources. Advocate that local, state and federal governments take steps to add benefits or remove barriers that discourage engagement or retention in service years (such as making the education award and/or stipend tax-free at the state and federal level).

CENTRAL TEXAS

OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL CASE STUDY: AMERICORPS CENTRAL TEXAS COLLABORATIVE

AmeriCorps Central Texas, which includes Austin and the surrounding area, was formed in 2015 by the AmeriCorps service year programs that provide direct service to youth and adults living in low-income communities in Central Texas. While they originally formed the collaborative to recruit corps members jointly, their strategy expanded with the co-creation of a strategic plan in 2018. Since then, they have been working together toward four key aims: to build a more local, more diverse corps, to strengthen corps member development and support, to build stronger pathways from service to higher education and employment, and to make each partner organization more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

AmeriCorps Central Texas has garnered major support from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to set and execute strategy, including a community awareness building campaign. In addition, OneStar Foundation, Texas' state service commission, has supported corps member development (including an annual Life After AmeriCorps Conference) and joined with the Webber Family Foundation to increase living allowances for returning corps members. To date, the collaborative has seen meaningful organizational DEI advances (via its work and surveys with Promise54) as well as seeing its percentages of local corps members and corps members of color increase, even amidst the pandemic. In addition, the number of returning corps members has doubled and even tripled for those organizations that had not previously offered additional funds for serving beyond one year. Together, the nine organizations that make up AmeriCorps Central Texas today are building a more robust, more diverse corps that will make each organization more effective on its own and increase their collective ability to help build a more racially and socioeconomically equitable Central Texas.



UNS Principle 5: Build Pathways Through Connections to Education and Careers



Service years have the potential to put young people on a path to be part of a dynamic, purpose-driven workforce that meets the needs of the 21st century economy. Making service years an opportunity and expectation for all Americans requires ensuring that service year opportunities convey the experiences, knowledge, and skills that young Americans need to thrive in their post-service career or education. By nature of the service year model, corps members gain valuable skills that can be used for their post-service pathways. Infusing purposeful professional development tied to in-demand sectors and well-established pathways into corps members' training increases the valuable skills corps members learn and are able to translate into their next opportunity.

Impact Communities are also well poised to take on relationships with local employers to create specific pipelines into local jobs. Most local economies have particular leading industries. Often, those leading industries encounter workforce shortages or gaps in their talent pipelines. Service years can be leveraged as a hyper-local way to develop pipelines into industries in need of skilled workers. By partnering with local employers and unions, programs can develop additional professional development to ensure their corps members are set up to move into industries that need them, or entire programs can be created that prepare corps members with the skills to enter high-demand careers. Impact Communities can work with local workforce development boards to understand the programming and workforce needs locally in order to inform how to plug into specific industries.

TIP: [Employers of National Service](#) & [Schools of National Service](#). If your program is an AmeriCorps program, you should promote to your corps members the online database for both Employers and Schools of National Service. These are employers and education institutions that value someone who has done a year of service and, in many cases, gives benefits or priority to said individuals in their application processes. Schools of National Service, in particular, are education institutions that provide added benefits in addition to accepting the [Segal AmeriCorps Education Award](#). Impact Communities and service year programs should work with local employers and education institutions to get them listed in these databases and ensure their information and contacts are up to date. This is an invaluable resource for corps members as they exit service.



EASTERN KENTUCKY

PATHWAYS CASE STUDY: APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY IMPACT COMMUNITY

The backbone organization of the Appalachian Kentucky Impact Community, Partners for Education (PFE) at Berea College, is focused on accelerating educational outcomes cradle-to-career in Appalachia Kentucky. As a Promise Zone partner, they first encountered service years through VISTA placements and quickly saw the benefit of increased capacity in their programming. Over time, their focus on K-12 school outcomes expanded as they saw how corps members benefited from their service year as a pathway to continued education and an on-ramp to education and youth-serving careers. PFE started an AmeriCorps program, not for the sake of national service, but to move the dial for students in rural Kentucky. PFE believes that service years have a triple bottom line: provides services to the kids and families, provides the opportunity for residents to get back on the path of economic mobility, and provides the organizations and the community a workforce now and for the future. They work to incorporate career and education pathways into their service year program to give opportunity to the corps members for advancement that they normally would not receive, especially targeting young adults with two years of college. PFE continues its mission focusing on cradle-to-career youth outcomes, incorporating service years into its strategies in Kentucky and in its more recent consultative work across the country in rural communities.

In 2018, PFE launched an annual national summit, [Rural Summit for College Access and Success](#) and has continued the event to ensure individuals in rural Kentucky and throughout rural America have access to education pathways. PFE works with local workforce boards, education institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and local governments to ensure there is a coalition of entities focused on the success and skills attainment for the population in rural Appalachian Kentucky, and in other rural communities across the country.



UNS COMMUNITY ROADMAP: BUILD PATHWAYS THROUGH CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION AND CAREERS

BEGINNER/NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE/EMERGING	ADVANCED/SKILLED
As a beginner/novice collaborative, my community can...	As an intermediate/emerging collaborative, my community can...	As an advanced/skilled collaborative, my community can...
Survey corps members to identify pathways they are interested in post-service within the state. Develop a strategy for partnering with state and local leaders focused on pathways in which corps members have expressed interest (such as career fairs and networking/mentorship opportunities).	Track whether graduating corps members move onto next steps after service across programs (relates to principle 3).	<p>Regularly evaluate the impact of state/local partnerships to ensure corps members have the opportunity to benefit from the direct pipeline to relevant pathways post-service.</p> <p>Ensure that 80% of service year corps members graduating from service into a career or education pathway.</p>
	Provide training and support that encourages corps members to reflect on the skills and development they want to gain during service for post-service pathways.	Build relationships with Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), workforce and economic development agencies, unions, employers, and related organizations in mapping potential pathways, in-demand, and growth sectors. Engage them in regular coalition meetings focused on this principle to build necessary certifications, trainings, and credentials.
Introduce service years as an opportunity to gain skills that will contribute to successful pathways post service.	Analyze how the current makeup of your programs aligns with skills assessments done by local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) and workforce and economic development agencies, and how programs might pivot to better align (ie adding tech training or a certificate program, or a new type of service year) (see Service Year + Academic Credit Guidelines including Tufts 1+4 Bridge Year program and UMass Dartmouth Community Health Workers) for service year programs ideas.	<p>Create a local or statewide Employers of National Service (EONs) where national service is recognized and rewarded by employers who sign on.</p> <p>Build relationships with Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), workforce and economic development agencies, unions, employers, and related organizations in mapping potential pathways, in-demand, and growth sectors. Engage them in regular coalition meetings focused on this principle to build necessary certifications, trainings, and credentials.</p>
Identify programs in the community that embody best practices for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in conjunction with a service year model.	Discuss with your coalition of programs and stakeholders ways your programs can follow best practices for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships and could further align (Service Years as a Strategy for Talent Pipelines).	Develop resources or offer technical assistance to support programs in implementing best practices around pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship models in their service year program.
Assess current education pathways of service year programs in the community (such as programs that currently offer any credits for service years or pathways from service years to post-secondary education). Build relationships with local community colleges and technical and higher education institutions – especially admissions offices, leadership, community service-related offices and related disciplines – to allow current service year programs to share more about corps members and alumni and to discuss how to align current programs with their needs or to create new program models.	Determine higher education strategies you might engage local institutions on to increase connections to education pathways, like including a box for service year alumni to identify themselves in applications or establishing academic credit for service year programs.	Maintain partnerships with education institutions to provide certifications, accreditation, and course credit for and during service, offering application waivers, matching the Segal education award for AmeriCorps alumni, and offering scholarships or tuition discounts for those completing service. Have them join Schools for National Service .



ABOUT

SERVICE YEAR ALLIANCE

Service Year Alliance is working to make a year of paid, full-time service – a service year – a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. A service year before, during, or after college gives young people the chance to transform their lives, make an impact in their community, and become the active citizens and leaders our nation needs. Expanding service years has the power to revitalize cities, uplift and educate children at risk, and empower communities struggling with poverty. It can unite the most diverse nation in history, binding people of different backgrounds through common cause.

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