

Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act One Year Later

A New Era of Growth, Innovation, and Impact for National Service

On April 21, 2009, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, the most sweeping expansion of national service in a generation. Its swift bipartisan journey through Congress reflected a national consensus that service is a powerful response to the economic and social challenges facing America today. This landmark law is making America stronger by focusing service on key national issues; expanding opportunities to serve; building the capacity of individuals, nonprofits, and communities to succeed; and by encouraging innovative approaches to solving problems.

Fulfilling the promise of the Act has been the top priority of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that leads the nation's service and voluntary sector. The Corporation has made excellent progress, from standing up new programs and achieving an historic budget increase to improving technology and mobilizing more Americans to serve, all while using a collaborative and transparent process with a high degree of public input. One year after its enactment, volunteering is up, momentum is strong, and a new vision for service is taking effect, one based on growth, innovation, and targeting resources on our nation's pressing problems.

Expanding Opportunities to Serve and Focusing Service on Tough Challenges

The Act ushers in a new era of service:

- Sets **AmeriCorps** on a path to more than triple in size from 75,000 members annually to 250,000 by 2017
- Drives service as a solution in the areas of education, health, clean energy, veterans, and economic opportunity
- Increases the amount of the **Segal AmeriCorps Education Award** to match the maximum Pell Grant level and allows individuals 55 and older to transfer their award to a child or grandchild
- Increases service opportunities for older Americans by expanding age and income eligibility for **Foster Grandparents** and **Senior Companions** and creating a Silver Scholars program
- Strengthens the nation's civic infrastructure through creation of a **Volunteer Generation Fund** to help nonprofits recruit, manage, and support more volunteers, and the **Nonprofit Capacity Building Program** to improve nonprofits' performance in communities facing resource hardships
- Creates a **Social Innovation Fund** to promote public and private investments in effective nonprofit organizations to help them replicate and expand to serve more low-income communities
- Puts young people on a path of service by establishing a **Summer of Service** program to provide \$500 education awards for rising 6th-12th graders, and **Youth Engagement Zones** for secondary students and out-of-school youth
- Provides an on ramp for millions of working Americans to serve by establishing a nationwide call to service campaign, **United We Serve**, and establishes September 11 as a **National Day of Service and Remembrance**
- Strengthens management, cost-effectiveness, and accountability by consolidating funding streams, giving the Corporation more flexibility to support the best programs, simplifying application and reporting requirements; increasing competition, and establishing national performance measures



Progress on Implementation

The Corporation has worked swiftly, carefully, and openly to implement the Serve America Act, and has made excellent progress.

Increasing the Investment in National Service: To implement the Serve America Act, Congress fully funded the President's FY 2010 request of \$1.149 billion for the Corporation, an historic funding increase. The budget increases each of the Corporation's existing programs, and funds new Serve America Act initiatives including the Social Innovation Fund, Volunteer Generation Fund, Summer of Service and the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program. President Obama's FY 2011 request of \$1.4 billion will further expand this path of growth and impact.

Transparency and Public Input: A key goal of implementation has been public participation. After passage, agency leaders went on a lengthy "listening tour" and received thousands of comments through conference calls, emails, web postings, and grantee meetings. We have put major policies up for public comment, including rulemaking and competitions, and created working groups with stakeholders. The extensive public input has greatly enhanced implementation.

Rulemaking: The Corporation published an interim final rule on changes that went into law on Oct. 1 (Sept. 10, 2009) and published a comprehensive draft rule on Feb. 23, 2010 about the National Service Trust, Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps that will go into effect after public comments are reviewed.

Grant Competitions: The new grant competitions carried out under the Serve America Act have generated a high volume of applications across all our programs, reflecting growing recognition that national service is a valuable way to build capacity and address community challenges. More than 500 organizations applied for the AmeriCorps State/National competition, the Social Innovation Fund received more than 200 letters of intent; 217 groups applied for Learn and Serve America Summer of Service grants, and 300 concept papers were sent for the RSVP competition. Following are the new and expanded competitions under the Serve America Act:

AmeriCorps Competitive Grants (\$363M) - The largest of the competitions was released in September and grants are expected to be announced in May. The initiative will support new, recompeting, and continuation grants in all of the AmeriCorps State and National grant categories. Priority will be given to applicants that address compelling unmet needs in the areas of education, healthy futures, veterans, economic opportunity, and clean energy and environment.

Social Innovation Fund (\$50M) - Announced on February 16, this fund will help effective nonprofits replicate their services in low-income communities. Grants are expected to be announced in June.

Volunteer Generation Fund (\$4M) - Announced on March 25, this program provides funding to state service commissions to support nonprofits to recruit, retain and manage volunteers. Grants are expected to be announced in mid-August.

Nonprofit Capacity Building Program (\$1M) - Announced on March 30, the program is designed to increase the capacity of small nonprofits to expand their impact in communities facing resource hardships. Grants are expected in September.

RSVP (\$2.7M) - This competition, announced on January 26, will fund new service projects that recruit volunteers ages 55 and older in communities not currently served and to expand existing RSVP service programs. Grants are expected to be announced in August.

Learn and Serve America School-Based Grants to Indian Tribes and U.S. Territories (\$650,070) - The competition was announced on January 22, and grants are expected this summer. The initiative will involve school-age youth in service-learning projects that simultaneously support student development and meet community needs.

Learn and Serve America Summer of Service - In March, the Corporation announced \$2 million in grants to 17 nonprofits, universities, and schools to engage at-risk youth in grades 6 through 9 in innovative service projects that address environmental and disaster preparedness issues.

More Information

To learn more about the Serve America Act, visit the Corporation's **Serve America Act implementation** page. For general information, visit NationalService.gov or call 202-606-5000.

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