

## SERVICE



## Creating an avenue for career exploration

Vibrant social connections and robust community involvement are part of what makes a strong America. Yet, among our nation's young people, there are relatively low levels of community engagement. While acts of service that elementary schoolers take part in will look different than service among young adults, there is a way for all individuals, regardless of age, to engage in service, and individuals, regardless of age, can benefit from acts of service. For children and youth, service learning is an established method to bring youth closer to their communities while also promoting positive youth development outcomes. Among young adults, service, such as national service, enables them to make similar personal and professional gains when given the opportunity to participate. The afterschool field is a critical partner to expand access and availability of service in a multitude of forms for youth and young adults alike. Together with education and community leaders, afterschool and summer learning programs are working toward the healthy development of both the next generation and our democracy.

### Overview

*City Year*, an AmeriCorps program, is a national education organization that engages a diverse group of young adults (ages 17-26) in ten months of national service at high-need, urban public schools. Working in partnership with classroom teachers, corps members provide one-on-one tutoring and small group instruction in core subjects; plan whole school activities designed to enhance school culture and climate; and offer holistic afterschool programming for 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students across 28 U.S. cities.

### A typical day for City Year AmeriCorps Members

Members arrive at school each morning before the first bell rings and stay until the last student has been picked up from afterschool programming. Throughout the school day, members serve as a team of tutors, mentors, and near-peer role models to provide academic and social-emotional support to students who are struggling with one or more of three "early warning" indicators that can place them at increased risk for falling off track toward an on-time graduation: attendance, social emotional development/behavior, and course performance. After the bell, members facilitate afterschool programs structured to include a nutritious snack, homework assistance, physical activity, and STEAM enrichment activities differentiated by grade-level and customized by each local school community.

## City Year

**234,000**  
(whole school)

Average number of students served during the school year:

**87%**  
(FY17)

Students from low-income families

**2,675**  
(FY19)

AmeriCorps Members:

**29**  
(28 provide afterschool)

Number of City Year Sites:

### Main funding sources:

- ▶ Federal AmeriCorps
- ▶ Private sector donations
- ▶ School districts

## Outcomes

City Year members are a diverse representation of role models for students: 63 percent are people of color; 52 percent are Pell Grant eligible; 39 percent are fluent in a second language; and 38 percent are the first in their family to graduate from college. A 2018 alumni survey found that 94 percent of respondents agree that their City Year experience had a significantly positive impact on their lives. In a longitudinal study, alumni overwhelmingly report that City Year helped them explore career options (86 percent), prepared them for their current job (85 percent), and influenced their choice of work or career path (76 percent). Today, City Year's 30,000 alumni are engaged in a wide range of professions, with 47 percent reporting that they work in the education sector.

## Program characteristics

City Year AmeriCorps members serve on a team of 8-12 members per school site, making a shared commitment to improve whole school climate and educational outcomes for their students. Through an experiential learning model, corps members gain first-hand knowledge of what it takes to holistically support students in a school-based setting.

Before entering the classroom, members participate in a Basic Training Academy that covers topics such as state education policy, lesson planning, community needs assessment, creating positive learning environments, and human development. Corps members continue to receive professional training and coaching throughout their service year.

Every day after school, City Year members apply their instructional knowledge of the core curriculum and deepen their student relationships,

## AmeriCorps State and National

[AmeriCorps](#) is a national service program that engages adults of all ages in meaningful service opportunities. Young adults interested in direct service opportunities can participate in AmeriCorps State and National. These service members address critical community needs in focus areas such as education, by carrying out service projects that often involve face-to-face interactions with community members like mentoring, teaching, tutoring, or afterschool program implementation. All AmeriCorps members live at the poverty level as they learn about and address critical community needs.

Afterschool programs support the growth of service opportunities for young adults by hosting both AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members at their sites. Learn more about AmeriCorps and the AmeriCorps VISTA programs sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance [here](#).



## Challenges

Despite the positive impacts of service, the desire to be a positive force in the community is not translating into action.

***Service opportunities at school: for some, not all.*** While trends show an increasing number of community involvement opportunities offered by schools and universities—for instance, 68 percent of principals reported that their students participate in community activities that are recognized by the schools, and 69 percent of college seniors participated in a service-learning course in 2018—too many individuals are not accessing these opportunities.

***The type of service matters.*** A growing body of research shows the positive benefits associated with service. However, the majority of youth service opportunities are rooted in volunteering, rather than service learning, with the percentage of schools offering service learning declining from 32 percent in 1999 to 24 percent in 2008.

***The equity divide.*** Participation in opportunities for service varies across different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, based on the availability and access to surrounding institutions that facilitate and encourage service. For example, schools in low-income areas, often serving a larger percentage of minority students, are less likely to offer service learning when compared with other schools. For low-income young adults, in school and in the workforce, monetary and non-monetary costs of service act as a barrier to participation.

Read [Afterschool Supports Service Opportunities from Youth to Young Adulthood](#) to learn more.

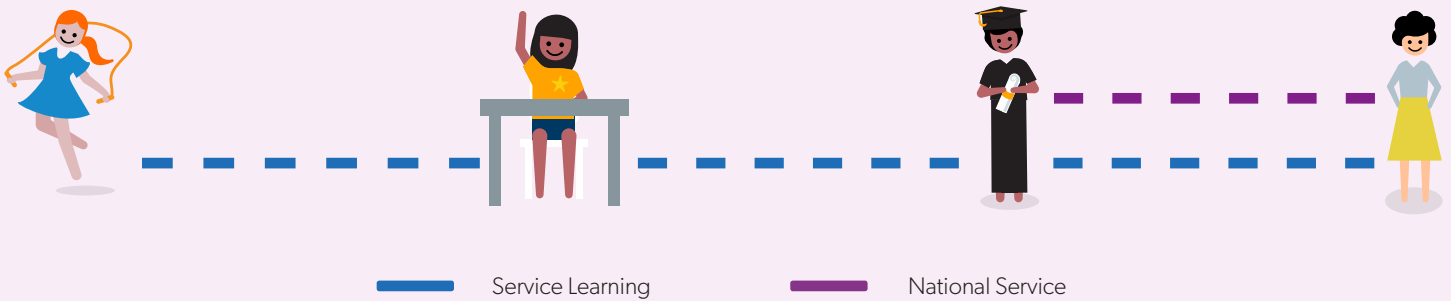
## Service Opportunities at Every Age

Everyone, regardless of age, can take part in service. The service opportunity may look different depending on one's age, but the positive benefits are a constant. In addition to meeting the needs of a community, acts of service can foster greater community engagement, trust, a better understanding of the community, and compassion for others.

### Service Learning

Through service learning, youth are active participants in thoughtfully organized community projects that advance a set of learning goals while meeting the needs of the community. For example, students in an afterschool program have environmental studies lessons where they study waste collection and recycling services in the city. Students then create and participate in a series of local cleanup projects as a way of applying what they've learned about accessibility and use of these services in various neighborhoods. The community benefits by receiving help with litter abatement and beautification efforts and informed recommendations on sustainable waste management.

Example adapted from [Loyola University](#).



### National Service

For young adults, service can also be a deeper form of experiential education when participating in service programs designed to equip participants with the tools to assess and address community needs over an extended period of time. The Corporation for National and Community Service offers a number of national service projects that provide young adults hands-on opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to help their community. For example, AmeriCorps State and National members placed at an afterschool program make a yearlong commitment to provide direct services to youth and their families. Members grow professionally by participating in orientation and trainings throughout the year to learn about the community they are serving and techniques to support student success. Students in afterschool programs benefit from the tutoring and mentoring relationships that AmeriCorps members provide. Afterschool programs also benefit by receiving help with child enrichment activities and overall program implementation.

while exercising their leadership and creativity by running enrichment programs tailored to students' specific needs. Members may design their own activities or draw from field-tested and vetted afterschool curricula. For example, City Year Memphis cultivates student interests by offering choreography, French lessons, drama, and outdoor play.

City Year AmeriCorps member experiences, particularly in afterschool programs, spark enhanced civic engagement and a passion to become a professional educator. Each year, more than 300 City Year alumni decide to become teachers, youth workers, or counselors after their year of service, creating a pipeline of diverse, talented, and skilled educators.

### Program history

City Year founders believed in the power of young people to make a difference in their communities and still see national service as a way to channel that potential. Since its inception in 1988, City Year has been promoting the idea that every young adult should have the opportunity to engage in a year of service and has been working towards this goal by engaging more than 30,000 AmeriCorps members overall in 29 cities nationwide.

### Recommendations

*for creating an avenue for career exploration:*

- ▶ Understanding how you fit into the community's culture and climate is the first step in determining how best to serve your community's needs.
- ▶ Attract young adults to service opportunities by highlighting the invaluable professional growth and transferable skills that accompany a service experience.



**Afterschool Alliance**

[afterschoolalliance.org](http://afterschoolalliance.org)