
SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSIONS

A. Justification

A1. Need for Information Collection

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) engages people of all ages from across the country in national service to “improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering” (2011-2015 Strategic Plan, http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/strategic_plan_web.pdf, pg. 8). The AmeriCorps suite of programs, comprised of AmeriCorps State and National (ACSN), VISTA, and the National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC), engage more than 75,000 Americans each year in national service placements in communities across the country. In addition to striving to improve communities and the lives of beneficiaries served through AmeriCorps programs, CNCS values the development of AmeriCorps members into empowered, engaged citizens. In the agency’s 2011-2015 strategic plan, a commitment is made to “strengthen national service so that participants engaged in CNCS-supported programs consistently find satisfaction, meaning, and opportunity” (2011-2015 Strategic Plan, pg. 8). To track progress towards achieving this strategic goal, it is necessary to annually assess AmeriCorps members’ service experience upon their exit from the program.

CNCS has redesigned its annual member exit survey to more accurately capture the member experience, and to map it against sociological constructs that can provide insight into member development as it occurs throughout the term of service. This redesign effort began with the construction of a member theory of change (Appendix A) to articulate what CNCS believes comprises the member service experience and desired outcomes. The process of creating this theory of change engaged AmeriCorps program staff and members of the Office of Research and Evaluation at CNCS in a working group to determine the key components of the service experience, and later, to agree on the best way to measure them. These components were then mapped to developmental or sociological constructs to explain potential “pathways”¹ of member development. These pathways were then matched to extant, validated survey instruments or scales² and included in a draft survey. Select items from the previous version of the member exit survey were included at the direction of the working group. (Additional information about the redesign process, including stakeholder engagement and pilot testing efforts, is included in Part B.)

¹ These four pathways were selected based on qualities the working group believes are essential in developing the empowerment and preparation necessary to be a change-oriented, active community member.

² A comprehensive literature search across social science, psychology, and education literatures yielded extant, validated instruments and scales. Scales or instruments considered by relevant fields to be the most respected, most used, and most frequently validated were prioritized for inclusion.

The member theory of change (Appendix A) is central to the redesigned survey. It posits that the member development goal of the AmeriCorps program is to “contribute to the creation of empowered and prepared citizens. These citizens will be more civically engaged, will work to strengthen their communities, and will be dedicated to improving the lives of those in their community.” We propose four “pathways,” or areas of development, that contribute to achieving this goal and that will be measured by the member exit survey: Cultural Competency, Getting Things Done, Civic Engagement, and Life and Career Skills. The member service placement (also referred to as the term of service) is the primary mechanism by which members develop along these pathways. As members personally experience the challenges and needs of a community, and as they engage in the service placement’s activities (whereby they become engaged in and develop solutions to address community problems), they develop greater cultural competency skills, enhanced self-efficacy, become more civically engaged, and enhance their ability to work productively and effectively.

Our theory of change operationalizes the Cultural Competency pathway as developing or enhancing members’ ability to work effectively with and within diverse groups (Martin and Vaughn, 2007). Cultural competence is essential for uniting different or disparate groups to achieve a common goal, which is frequently a task of AmeriCorps members during their service experience. Consistent with the Contact Hypothesis, we hypothesize that members gain cultural competency through interactions with supervisors and staff, fellow members, and clients.

Contact Hypothesis, a longstanding sociological hypothesis, contributes to explaining how members develop or enhance their ability to work successfully in diverse groups (Allport, 1954; Brown and Hewstone, 2005). The Contact Hypothesis holds that during interpersonal contact between majority and minority groups, given that certain conditions are met, members can effectively overcome prejudices, biases, and preconceived notions of the minority group. When, in the course of their service placement, AmeriCorps members interact with populations such as the homeless, impoverished, incarcerated, or socially marginalized, they learn how to work productively with these different groups. Members also learn to work productively with community members and other AmeriCorps members from different cultural, socioeconomic, or ethnic backgrounds. For the purposes of the member exit survey, we are drawing broad boundaries around what is meant by “background,” incorporating different races/ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, genders, religions, sexual orientations, national origins, and ages to represent the breadth of exposure most members will gain during their term of service.

Using Chen and Starosta’s established framework of cultural competency, we posit that members will develop intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural communication competence (see Chen and Starosta, 1996, 1998 for descriptions of those concepts). To assess these competencies in our members, we selected the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta, which measures the cognitive, behavioral, and affective components of cultural competency. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (24 items total) has undergone extensive psychometric testing and has been found to be valid and reliable, especially when administered to workplace

populations. Given space limitations in the member exit survey and the desire to reduce burden on members, we chose four items from the scale that assessed each component of cultural competency listed above, and that seemed most relevant to the member service experience.³ The cultural competency pathway is assessed by Final Question (FQ) 7 in the attached instrument.

The “Getting Things Done” pathway is defined as instilling motivation to solve problems and promoting the ability to take initiative in planning, preparing, executing, and assessing an endeavor. National service experiences provide a structured environment in which members can gain hands-on experience with this type of consequential and deliberate action, carrying much of the responsibility expected in the “real world.” Along this pathway, members develop a change and action orientation to the world, a positive self-orientation, and sense of self-efficacy. Theories of human development infrastructure, specifically positive youth development theory, point to the importance of the member service experience in that it provides several critical components needed for developing internal and external assets. Specifically, the member service placement provides an opportunity to develop empowerment assets (external), and positive values, social assets, and positive identity assets (internal).

Importantly, the member service experience occurs, for most members, during a critical period of life known as “emerging adulthood.” In industrialized nations, emerging adulthood occurs roughly between the ages of 18-25, and is “the age of identity explorations, especially in the areas of love and work; it is the age of instability; it is the most self-focused age of life; it is the age of feeling in-between, neither adolescent nor adult; and it is the age of possibilities, when optimism is high and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives” (Arnett, 2006). The member service placement offers exposure to new ideas and experiences at a highly unstable but receptive time in members’ lives, when they are actively seeking answers to the question of personal identity and beliefs. It also provides the opportunity for emerging adults to have their first consequential experiences with preparing, planning, executing, and assessing an endeavor (Heath, 1999, pg. 64), opportunities which anthropologists have noted are few and far between for American youth (Larson, 2000 citing Schlegel and Barry, 1991).

For the purpose of the member exit survey, the idea of “getting things done” encompasses the ability to self-start, to go beyond what is required, to be consistent in effort, and to persevere in the face of challenge. This is an essential set of skills future change-agents must possess because solving long-standing, systemic community problems of any size will require persistence, focus, an action orientation, and proactivity. We are defining “getting things done” broadly, to include the concepts of personal initiative, grit, and self-efficacy, to encompass the many traits needed to be successful in creating community change. We hypothesize that members develop or enhance these qualities through the hands-on experience of working with an organization doing community change work. Members experience similar challenges, roadblocks, and

³ Please see Part B for detailed information on psychometric testing on the newly developed survey, including results of factor analyses on individual pathways and corresponding scale items.

frustrations that they would experience in the course of work in the professional world and develop mechanisms to cope with these and move forward.

To assess the “getting things done” pathway, we will use select items from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Self-efficacy is defined as “the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals” (Ormrod 2006). Bandura (1977) identifies four factors that affect self-efficacy: experience, modeling, social persuasion, and physiological factors (all of which may present themselves during a member's term of service). Successful experiences generate higher self-efficacy, and a member's term of service offers many chances for successful experiences to build self-efficacy. The General Self-Efficacy Scale specifically measures one's ability to deal with daily hassles and adaptation after experiencing stress, which is particularly relevant for assessing the AmeriCorps service experience. The scale has been used extensively in research on young adults for over 20 years, and has been proven to be reliable and valid. Because the scale is relatively short, we incorporated all ten items from the scale into the survey; the Getting Things Done pathway is assessed by FQ.8 in the attached instrument.

Along the Civic Engagement pathway, AmeriCorps seeks to develop members' civic attitudes and behaviors. When expressed, these attitudes and behaviors (such as volunteering or voting) help propel community change. This is supported by the positive youth development and emerging adulthood literature, detailed above.

For the purpose of the member exit survey, civic engagement is defined as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities, and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes” (Ehrlich, 2000). This is an essential skill for future change agents because in order to solve community problems, one needs to be involved in the community and aware of the challenges it faces. We define civic engagement broadly, to reflect the continuing academic dialogue around civic activities and outcomes, and to reflect their growing diversity. We hypothesize that members develop a civically minded orientation or enhance their penchant for civic activity through immersion in a community problem, and in taking responsibility for part of a project working to address that problem (see Kahne and Westheimer, 2002, for an excellent discussion and analysis).

To measure civic engagement, we will measure civic attitudes and civic efficacy. After examining the literature, we decided to incorporate items from several sources to cover the variety of ways civic engagement may be manifested in our member population. First, we selected relevant items from the Civic Engagement Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS, 2011) regarding trust and confidence in neighbors and various institutions. We also selected two questions from the Voting Supplement to the CPS (2013) to measure voting behaviors. Next, we incorporated items from the Competence for Civic Action scale (Flanagan, 2007) to look at action orientation and efficacy related to civic behaviors. We also incorporated items from the Civic Responsibility Scale (Furco, Muller, and Ammon, 1998) to further assess efficacy and attitudes. Finally, select

items from the old exit survey were incorporated. These questions are reflected in the final questionnaire as FQ.11-18.

The Life and Career Skills pathway holds that the service experience broadens or enhances members' ability to work productively and effectively, both in the workplace and in the community. This encompasses both hard skills, such as project management, and soft skills, such as strategic thinking. Enriching the employment prospects of members is important in creating a pipeline of new employees for the public and nonprofit sectors. Members seeking employment in public serving roles may be better positioned to influence community change from positions of relative power.

For the purpose of the member exit survey, career skills are defined as the capabilities needed to succeed in the workplace. Life and Career Skills also encompasses educational attainment, defined as the achievement of a higher level of education or training. While we explored the possibility of including scales or items specific to career self-efficacy or motivation, the scales described above, particularly the General Self-Efficacy scale, seemed to make these redundant. Therefore to avoid unnecessary duplication, we chose to focus on a human capital perspective aimed at lifelong learning and employability, encompassing such things as self-presentation, career control, and work exploration. We included items from the existing exit survey to measure hard and soft skills employed or developed during the term of service as FQ.4-6.

Educational attainment falls under the Life and Career Skills pathway, and posits that members' ability to obtain higher education and training are important in providing additional tools and resources necessary to address community problems, especially over time. Because most AmeriCorps programs do not have an explicit educational component, the incentive of an education award can encourage members to pursue further education and training. This education and training may provide them with more targeted strategies and solutions as they strive to create change in their communities. This pathway is supported by the positive youth development and emerging adulthood literatures described above. We modified items from the existing exit survey to measure plans to pursue different types of education FQ.26 and 27.

We propose that these four pathways lead to four short-term outcomes: (1) increased knowledge of one's own worldview; increased knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; increased positive attitude towards cultural differences; increased cross-cultural skills, and increased level of skill in cultural competence (in sum, increased awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills in dealing with people different from oneself) (Cultural Competency); (2) increased knowledge of strategies and skills needed to plan, prepare, execute, and assess an endeavor; increased attitude of action or change orientation to the world; increased positive self-orientation and sense of self-efficacy (Getting Things Done); (3) increased level of civic orientation and civic attitudes; increased belief in the ability to affect change through civic action; increased knowledge of civic opportunities and outlets (Civic Engagement); and (4) increased "hard" skills needed to succeed in the workplace (e.g. computer literacy, public speaking, industry certifications); increased "soft" skills needed to succeed in the workplace (e.g. leadership,

consensus building, fluent communication); increased desire to pursue higher education, advanced education, specialized training (Life and Career Skills).

Finally, the working group felt that certain items from the existing member exit survey were worth retaining in the revised version despite the fact that they did not necessarily map to one of the four pathways. These questions were important to retain because they generate useful information about training and supervision, overall satisfaction, and a member's general valuation of the utility of the AmeriCorps experience. These questions appear in the final questionnaire as FQ.1-3, 10, and 19-22, 24, 25, 28, and 29.

After considering the theoretical support documented above, the working group reviewed these pathways and provided changes, which were incorporated into the final version. Each selected scale was also reviewed by the group, and final determinations on item selection were made using a series of draft surveys.

While collecting member experience data upon exiting the term of service is critical to testing our member theory of change and for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the agency's strategic goals, it is also important for informing future research at CNCS. Examples of future research informed by the member exit survey include analyzing variation in member outcomes by program and by subpopulation, and possibly tracking members over time through longitudinal panels. Data on the member service experience is also crucial for improving programming at the agency and grantee levels, as well as for informing the broader national service field and external stakeholders.

A2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used.

As described in A1, the purpose of the member exit survey is to collect information about AmeriCorps members' experiences for the purpose of monitoring progress towards the agency's strategic goals around member development. The information obtained from the member exit survey is also critical to informing decision making around Strategic Goals 3 and 4⁴, particularly regarding policies and programming to enhance member development.

It is anticipated that the primary users of this data will be internal to CNCS. Stakeholders in the AmeriCorps program offices and in the CEO's office will be able to use this valuable data to make decisions about program and service experience improvement. Internal stakeholders will have access to the data through the Office of Research and Evaluation (R&E), though it is anticipated that R&E will likely compile customized reports as requested rather than provide the entire dataset to an internal client.

⁴ Goal 3 in the Strategic Plan states that CNCS will "Maximize the value we add to grantees, partners and participants." Goal 4 aims to "Fortify management operations and sustain a capable, responsive and accountable organization". 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, pgs. 21 and 23, respectively.

External stakeholders, such as grantee programs, state service commissions, external researchers, and practitioners will find value in the member exit survey data to improve the service experience, adjust trainings and professional development offerings, and to conduct more focused research on national service. These groups may be supplied with data reports as is relevant and necessary. R&E will strive to ensure appropriate use of results through explaining the strengths and limitations of the data and any analyses.

A3. Minimize Burden: Use of Improved Technology to Reduce Burden

CNCS will continue to administer the survey and collect exiting members' responses to these questions electronically through CNCS' secure online member portal. Since members must utilize the portal to conduct other administrative activities, situating the survey in this central location minimizes the number of different interfaces members must interact with as they complete the close out process at the end of their term of service. Pre-exit email notifications, as well as post-exit email reminders, will be sent electronically through the portal as well.

A4. Non-Duplication

There are no other sources of information by which CNCS can meet the purposes described in A2 (above).

A5. Minimizing for economic burden for small businesses or other small entities.

This collection of information does not impact small businesses because they are not eligible to be members.

A6. Consequences of the collection if not conducted, conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

If unable to collect data through the member exit survey, CNCS will not be able to assess, monitor, and subsequently improve the member experience. Our member theory of change will remain untested, and progress towards Strategic Goal 2 will be undetermined. Additionally, internal and external stakeholders will lack critical feedback necessary to learn about members' needs and experiences, and will be unable to make data-driven decisions about programming, training, member development, and activities that could assist members in transitioning from service to employment.

A7. Special circumstances that would cause information collection to be collected in a manner requiring respondents to report more often than quarterly; report in fewer than 30 days after receipt of the request; submit more than an original and two copies; retain records for more than three years; and other ways specified in the Instructions focused on statistical methods, confidentially, and proprietary trade secrets.

There are no special circumstances that would require the collection of information in these ways.

A8. Provide copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the Agency's notice. Summarize comments received and actions taken in response to comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

The 60 day *Notice* soliciting comments was published on Wednesday, September 17, 2014 on page 55760-55761. Two comments were received.

Public comment: The first individual suggested engaging state service commissions in the survey planning process to avoid duplicating efforts to collect member experience data. CNCS response: CNCS engages state service commissions on a regular basis.

The second individual who submitted a comment laid out the following suggestions for our survey, along with our responses to those questions:

Survey Question 3a: Public comment: "Recommend spelling out the acronyms PSO and CTI." CNCS response: This change was discussed with our working group and with pilot respondents participating in cognitive interviewing, but was found not to be needed. Respondents to whom the acronyms did not apply simply ignored them.

Survey Questions 5a, 5b, and 5c: Public comment: Is it truly the frequency that you're interested in or whether or not the program provided them with the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform those activities? CNCS response: Though we certainly are interested in whether programs are providing members with the training and opportunities needed to develop these skills, we chose to assess frequency of skill usage

Survey Question 6: Public comment: Item a, when referencing "co-worker" are you referring to a fellow AmeriCorps member or other employees at the service location? CNCS response: Co-worker could refer to any individual in a service or workplace setting.

Survey Question 7: Public comment: Do you want the respondent to answer this based on their AmeriCorps experience or in general? May want to have a lead-in clause similar to question 8. CNCS response: Answers to this survey should be based on the member's AmeriCorps experience.

Question 11: Public comment: Although the question specifically references discussions with "friends and family," a member may believe some of the selections within this question are leading them to answer about potential involvement in prohibited activities. If trying to assess whether or not AmeriCorps has led them to be more civically engaged in the last 12 months, might want to rephrase the introduction statement/question. CNCS response: We have eliminated all questions referencing potentially prohibited activities.

Question 18: Public comment: Item c, may want to add a few examples or a national nonprofit (e.g., Red Cross, City Year, etc.) or change language to ask about affiliation

with the legal applicant as not all program operators are nonprofits. CNCS response: Since we did not uncover confusion in our cognitive interviews or qualitative analysis, we decided not to add examples.

Question 19: Public comment: Is it beneficial to add a selection for VISTA members that elect to receive the cash stipend in lieu of an education award? CNCS response: Based on feedback from our cognitive interviews, this response option has been added.

Public comment: The commenter also wondered if CNCS was interested in knowing about how members' benefits (e.g. childcare or healthcare coverage) impacted the service experience or satisfaction. CNCS response: This was not indicated as an area of interest by the working group or other internal stakeholders, so no questions related to benefits will be included in this survey. It is possible that future projects or survey supplements could ask about the impact of member benefits.

Public comment: The commenter also suggested that we include a question that could identify the specific states where members served, for use in reporting findings for state offices and commissions. CNCS response: Rather than include another question in the survey, we are exploring mechanisms to connect exit survey data to existing data on member service locations.

A9. Payment to Respondents

There are no payments or gifts to respondents

A10. Assurance of Confidentiality and its basis in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Members' responses to this information collection will remain private to the extent permitted by law.

We will make clear that we intend to keep information private and not share individual responses; the basis for the assurance of privacy is from the privacy statement in the survey invitation and instructions (see attached survey instrument). Measures will be taken by R&E to remove key identifiers prior to data analysis, so that individual responses cannot be linked to a specific individual. Additionally, all analyses, summaries, or briefings will be presented at the aggregate level and it will not be possible to identify individual respondents in any material that is presented.

The survey data will be stored on CNCS' secure server, which is protected by a firewall that monitors and evaluates all attempted connections from the Internet. Access to any data with identifying information will be limited only to CNCS staff directly working on the survey.

A11. Sensitive Questions

The information collection does not include questions of a sensitive nature.

A12. Hour burden of the collection

We expect approximately 80,000 respondents per year to take the survey. The frequency of response will not be greater than annually, and should amount to approximately 15 minutes of effort per respondent. The estimated total burden hours equals 20,000 hours per year.

A13. Cost burden to the respondent

There is no cost to the respondent beyond the time needed to complete the survey.

A14. Cost to Government

This survey involves a one-time cost to the Federal Government to design and construct the survey interface in CNCS' web portal, totaling \$704,871. This includes revising the survey, making modifications to the administration process, developing an administrator platform that will allow the survey to be configurable for future changes to questions and response options, and developing a Member Completion Certificate that will serve as an incentive for survey completion. See Exhibit 1 for a detailed breakdown of these costs. After this development year, the annual cost to the Federal Government to administer the exit survey will be approximately \$3000 and includes any necessary updates to the IT platform used for survey administration.

Exhibit 1. Breakdown of Costs by Project Tasks

Activity	Approximate cost	Percentage of total cost
Administrative Activities	\$317,192.03	45%
Survey Software Revisions	\$211,461.35	30%
Data and Reports	\$70,487.12	10%
Member Certificates of Completion	\$105,730.68	15%

A15. Reasons for program changes or adjustments in burden or cost.

This survey will be conducted annually, and costs may be adjusted year to year depending upon improvements required to IT systems that support the survey's administration and reporting.

A16. Publication of results

The results of the member exit survey will be tabulated and analyzed by staff in the Office of Research and Evaluation; individual respondents will not be identified by their responses in analyses.

The data will be used primarily to learn about members' service experiences and their development along the four pathways defined in our member theory of change. Reporting and dissemination of results will be mainly in the form of written memos and reports with supporting graphs and tables on key data points. For internal stakeholders, these will be focused on information relevant to program improvement and enhancement, or on topics relevant to the particular stakeholder group. For external stakeholders, these results will be tailored to the specific request; an emphasis will be made on the strengths and limitations of the data and corresponding analyses to ensure appropriate use of results. The data gathered in this survey may be utilized in analysis and planning work for other program evaluations and research projects conducted by CNCS as applicable.

A17. Explain the reason for seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection.

Not applicable.

A18. Exceptions to the certification statement

There are no exceptions to the certification statement in the submitted ROCIS form.

References

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Appendix A: AmeriCorps Member Theory of Change

Vision: Ultimately, AmeriCorps seeks to contribute to the creation of empowered and prepared citizens. These citizens will be more civically engaged, will work to strengthen their communities, and will be dedicated to improving the lives of those in their community.

Four Pathways to Achieving Vision: Program participants develop along four pathways that we believe are essential in developing the empowerment and preparation necessary to be a change-oriented, active community member. These pathways are: (1) Cultural Competency; (2) “Getting Things Done” (problem solving, self-efficacy); (3) Civic Engagement; and (4) Life and Career Skills.

Foundation of Pathways: The roots of each pathway lie in the member service placement. The service placement enables members to personally experience the challenges and needs of the community, and provides opportunities to develop and engage in solutions to address these problems.

- *Cultural Competency Pathway:* Developing or enhancing members’ ability to work effectively with and within diverse groups (Martin and Vaughn, 2007). Cultural competence is essential for uniting different or disparate groups to achieve a common goal.
 - *Theoretical support:* Contact hypothesis, a longstanding sociological hypothesis, contributes to explaining how members develop or enhance their ability to work successfully in diverse groups (Allport, 1954; Brown and Hewstone, 2005). Contact hypothesis holds that during interpersonal contact between majority and minority group, given certain conditions are met⁵, members can effectively overcome prejudices, biases, and preconceived notions of the minority group. When, in the course of their placement, members interact with populations such as the homeless, impoverished, incarcerated, or socially marginalized, they are forced to learn how to work productively with these different groups. Members also learn to work productively with community members and other AmeriCorps members from different cultural, socioeconomic, or ethnic backgrounds.
- *Getting Things Done Pathway:* Instilling motivation to solve problems, and promoting the ability to take initiative in planning, preparing, executing, and assessing an endeavor. National service experiences provide a structured environment in which members can gain hands on experience with this type of

⁵ The scenario for successful intergroup contact necessitates creating “equal status” conditions between both groups. Specifically, the contact situation should: occur in circumstances that give equal social status to both groups; encourage or require a mutually interdependent relationship (cooperative achievement of a joint goal); the groups must disconfirm stereotypes about themselves; promote exchange of details about group members that encourages exploration into those members as individuals rather than as stereotypes; and promote group equality and egalitarian intergroup association (Cook, 1978, and Miller and Brewer, 1984, in Plank, 2000).

consequential and deliberate action, carrying much of the responsibility expected in the “real world”. Along this pathway, members develop a change and action orientation to the world, and a positive self-orientation and sense of self-efficacy.

o *Theoretical support:*

- Theories of human development infrastructure, specifically positive youth development theory, point to the importance of the member service experience in that it provides several critical components needed for developing internal and external assets. Specifically, the member service placement provides an opportunity to develop empowerment assets (external), and positive values, social, and positive identity assets (internal).
- Importantly, the member service experience occurs, for most members, during a critical period of life known as “emerging adulthood”. In industrialized nations, emerging adulthood occurs roughly between the ages of 18-25, and is “the age of identity explorations, especially in the areas of love and work; it is the age of instability; it is the most self-focused age of life; it is the age of feeling in-between, neither adolescent nor adult; and it is the age of possibilities, when optimism is high and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives” (Arnett, 2006). The member service placement offers exposure to a new ideas and experiences at a highly unstable but receptive time in members’ lives, when they are actively seeking answers to the question of personal identify and beliefs. It also provides the opportunity for emerging adults to have their first consequential experiences with preparing, planning, executing, and assessing an endeavor (Heath, 1999, pg. 64), opportunities which anthropologists have noted are few and far between for American youth (Larson, 2000 citing Schlegel and Barry, 1991).
- *Civic Engagement Pathway:* AmeriCorps seeks to develop members’ civic attitudes and behaviors. When expressed, these attitudes and behaviors (such as volunteering or voting) help propel community change.
 - o *Theoretical support:* Positive youth development and emerging adulthood (detailed above).
- *Life and Career Skills Pathway:* Broadening or enhancing the ability to work productively and effectively, both in the workplace and in the community. This encompasses both hard skills, such as project management, and soft skills, such as strategic thinking. Enriching the employment prospects of members is important in creating a “pipeline” of new employees for the public and nonprofit sectors. Members seeking employment in public serving roles may be better positioned to influence community change from positions of relative power.
 - o *Educational Attainment Pathway:* Enhancing members’ ability to obtain higher education and training are important in providing additional tools and resources necessary to address community problems, especially over time. Because most AmeriCorps programs do not have an explicit educational component, the incentive of an education award can

encourage members to pursue further education and training. This education and training may provide them with more targeted strategies and solutions as they strive to create change in their communities.

- *Theoretical support:* Positive youth development and emerging adulthood (detailed above).

Outcomes: These pathways lead to four short-term outcomes: (1) increased knowledge of one's own worldview; increased knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; increased positive attitude towards cultural differences; increased cross-cultural skills, and increased level of skill in cultural competence (in sum, increased awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills in dealing with people different from oneself) (Cultural Competency); (2) increased knowledge of strategies and skills needed to plan, prepare, execute, and assess an endeavor; increased attitude of action or change orientation to the world; increased positive self-orientation and sense of self-efficacy ("Getting Things Done"); (3) increased level of civic orientation and civic attitudes; increased belief in the ability to affect change through civic action; increased knowledge of civic opportunities and outlets (Civic Engagement); and (4) increased "hard" skills needed to succeed in the workplace (e.g. computer literacy, public speaking, industry certifications); increased "soft" skills needed to succeed in the workplace (e.g. leadership, consensus building, fluent communication); increased desire to pursue higher education, advanced education, specialized training (Life and Career Skills).