

South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service State Service Plan 2016-2018 and 2017 Addendum

South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service:

United Way Association of South Carolina is the governing authority of the South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service. The Commission provides grants to faith-based organizations, community non-profits, educational agencies, and governmental agencies. By the Governor's Executive Order, we are designated as the state's lead agency for volunteerism. We encourage volunteerism for everyone from youth to seniors to people with disabilities; promote community solutions for disaster preparedness and response; and we help to strengthen the impact of National Service Programs operating in the state through implementing a competitive review process, evidence based programming, strong data collection practices and ongoing evaluation.

Our mission is to improve South Carolina communities through volunteerism and national service programs. Our vision is to promote and increase: (1) an ethic of service and volunteerism in the state of South Carolina, (2) the capacity of faith-based and community organizations within the state to better compete for funding opportunities and (3) the collaboration among communities and organizations that are trying to meet the greatest needs of the Palmetto State.

State Service Plan Background:

Federal law provides that State Commissions, must prepare a national service plan for the State that: is developed through an open and public process; covers a three-year period; includes measurable goals and outcomes for the State national service programs in the State; ensures outreach to diverse community-based agencies that serve underrepresented populations; provides for effective coordination of funding applications submitted by the State and other organizations within the State under the national service laws; is updated annually; ensures outreach to, and coordination with, municipalities (including large cities) and county governments regarding the national service laws; and contains such information as the State Commission considers to be appropriate or as the Corporation may require. In addition, federal law provides that the State shall work with appropriate State agencies and private entities to develop a comprehensive State service plan for service by adults age 55 or older.

Strategic Service:

According to South Carolina Executive Order (*No. 2007-24*), the Commission is responsible for:

- Recruiting and mobilizing citizens for volunteer service by identifying service opportunities throughout the state and by recognizing citizens for the contributions they make as volunteers and participants in public service programs;
- Serving as the State's lead agency for community service and volunteerism, informing the public of the value of and need for greater community service and volunteerism in South Carolina, calling upon all South Carolinians to become involved in community service, and challenging public and private institutions to create and support community service and volunteer opportunities;
- Partnering with other public agencies at the state, county and local levels and with the private and not-for-profit sectors to leverage greater resources and create more opportunities for service and volunteerism; and complying with the duties outlined in 45 C.F.R. § 2250.00.

AmeriCorps South Carolina Grant Administration:

It is of the utmost importance that the process of awarding grants to operate National Service Programs includes checks and balances in order to remain fair. The Commission, to the best of its ability, selects programs that are suited to make the most impact for our state through a process described below. Several factors are taken into account when reviewing applications, such as: program location, program focus areas, cost effectiveness, strength of program model, and sustainability.

The SC Service Commission is committed to implementing programs of evidence-based and evidence-informed design. Each applicant submits an application that cites academic research supporting the model and proposes a theory of change which points to a larger goal. Each year the programs must identify goals for performance and report regularly on the progress to reach the goals. Each subsequent year, the program is encouraged to refine their processes and grow in their scope. In conjunction to being evidence-based, the Commission supports innovation and wants to grow new strategies of success. These strategies must be well researched, rooted in logic and strategic in approach.

Notice of Funding Opportunity for the AmeriCorps State Formula competition is announced to the public and all eligible organizations are encouraged to apply. All grants are reviewed by Commission staff and a grant review committee representing a variety of geographic locations, professional expertise, and knowledge of National Service Programming.

Programming Priorities:

South Carolina Service Commission embraces the six Focus Areas held by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) for funding and programmatic priorities of National Service Programs. For each Focus Area, the national service priority and relevancy to South Carolina have been addressed below. When considering grant proposals, the SC Service Commission will use the following priorities to guide funding decisions.

- **Education**
 - *National:* CNCS prioritizes programs that feature innovative education and supplemental instruction to help students learn. This includes strategies such as extended-day and school-year programs, tutoring, mentoring, family involvement, and teacher support. Strategies also involve service-learning opportunities that give students the chance to experience meaningful lessons that teach them about their world inside and outside the school's classrooms or campus. Implementing these practices allows students to master skills and develop a love of learning.¹
 - *South Carolina:* In Governor Haley's 2015 State of the State Address², the Governor highlighted key areas of need in South Carolina. Top among the needs were educational reform and greater investments in the needs of our students. Working in conjunction with the Governor's Office, the South Carolina Department of Education has made it a priority to graduate students with world class knowledge, skills and strong character traits. AmeriCorps funding is an excellent resource that can be leverage to assist the State's goal of not only improving academic achievement, but also to support the development of life skills and strong character traits.
 - *Suggestions:* AmeriCorps programs in South Carolina have been effective in meeting the national and statewide goals by bringing expanded interventions to underserved communities.

¹ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/education>

² <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article13941134.html>

In addition to the above goals, the SC Service Commission will rely heavily upon educational research to determine funding priorities within this programming area and strive for innovation consistent with leading academic research. Three bodies of research support programming with the following foci: reading on grade level by third grade, implementing mentoring and tutoring programs, and increasing after-school opportunities. The SC Service Commission references these studies in conjunction with data on school performance by district and poverty data by county to identify priority areas.

- Research by the Annie E Casey Foundation,^{3,4,5} originally published in 2011 and updated with increased evidence in 2012 and 2013, found that “students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. Poverty compounds the problem: Students who have lived in poverty are three times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate than their more affluent peers.”⁶ The study recommends implementing early-grade literacy programming which aligns the curriculum with grade-level standards, focuses on the developmental and health needs of young students, and provides work-training and other programs that will help lift families out of poverty. Based on this growing body of evidence-based research, the SC Service Commission intends to support programs that are focused on early grade reading, particularly in high-poverty areas.
- The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University supports Mentoring and Tutoring as an effective strategy in preventing dropouts.⁷ Mentoring breaks institutional boundaries within communities and allows mentee’s greater access to opportunities through relationship building. Most mentoring programs have a variety of concurrent goals: increasing student academic achievement, graduation rates, self-esteem, school attendance, community service and securing entry level jobs and decreasing disciplinary referrals. Although strategies and program models vary significantly, the National Mentoring Partnership has created evidence-based tools for designing, operating and evaluating effective programming.^{8,9} The SC Service Commission will work with grantees to ensure programming consistent with the aforementioned standards.

AmeriCorps Programs across the nation and in South Carolina frequently have a mentor/tutor relationship in their program design. The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) and CNCS, with support AT&T have recently launched *Aspire Mentor Corps*. This AmeriCorps program will utilize AmeriCorps VISTA members in six locations across the country to “close the mentor gap” by building infrastructure for Mentoring programs and recruiting volunteers as mentors¹⁰. The SC Service Commission intends to follow this highly-anticipated program to garner advice and trends found in their research. Reading Partners, an AmeriCorps program operating in South Carolina, employs a

³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Baltimore, MD: Donald Hernandez. Retrieved from URL <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. Baltimore, MD: Leila Fiester. Retrieved from URL http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf

⁵ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Early Warning Confirmed. Baltimore, MD: Leila Fiester. Retrieved from URL <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-EarlyWarningConfirmed-2013.pdf>

⁶ <http://gradelevelreading.net/uncategorized/study-links-3rd-grade-reading-poverty-and-hs-graduation>

⁷ <http://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/mentoring-tutoring/>

⁸ http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/elements_and_toolkits

⁹ http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.mentoring.org/latest_news/latest_general_news/aspire_mentoring_corps_to_launch_in_6_markets_strengthen_your_th_mentoring_pr

tutor/mentor approach proven to be effective based on research conducted by MDRC published in 2015.¹¹ The study found statistically significant evidence that the program produces growth in three areas of literacy. In addition, the program model is a cost-effective option for literacy intervention, as schools only bear about 20% of the operating costs- half of which are in-kind contributions. In light of the research findings, the SC Service Commission will prioritize tutoring and mentoring as an effective strategy for increasing academic achievement and increasing community engagement.

- Increasing the amount of educational opportunities available outside of the traditional school-day is supported by growing bodies of research. Among those opportunities are after-school programs, weekend and summer learning programming. Extended learning opportunities have been proven to help close the “achievement gap” between students from lower and higher socio-economic backgrounds.¹² Extended learning opportunities often take the place of unstructured, unsupervised time at home, which is associated with absenteeism, misconduct, lower academic performance and inconsistent work habits. Conversely, high participation in extended learning opportunities is associated with greater gains in academic and behavioral outcomes, increased attendance and pro-social behavior with peers. The National Dropout Prevention Center cites research conducted by Peterson and Fox¹³, which suggests four essential components to effective program design for extended learning opportunities: academic offerings (homework assistance, tutoring, hands-on-learning, etc.); enrichment and accelerated learning (field trips, character education, exposure to visual and performing arts, technology, foreign language, etc.); supervised recreation through organized sports; and community service. Transportation can often pose a barrier for extended learning opportunities, particularly within rural communities which lack a public transportation system. The Commission considers this when deciding on funding plans. Several programs within the Commission’s current portfolio include extended learning opportunities and these programs will continue to be a priority.

- Veterans and Military Families

- *National:* CNCS is committed to increasing its focus and efforts for our veterans and military families. Not only is there increased focus on serving veterans and military families through programming, but also tapping into the vast skillsets that veterans possess as AmeriCorps members.¹⁴
- *South Carolina:* Research by the Department of Veterans Affairs indicates that between 350,001 – 500,000 veterans¹⁵ reside in South Carolina, representing 7-10 % of the State’s population for Fiscal Year 2015. This number rises when considering military families as a whole, rather than the individual veteran. Reports released in May of 2015 indicate that veteran poverty is rising and is highest among those between the ages of 18-34.¹⁶ Ensuring that

¹¹ http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ReadingPartners_2015_FR.pdf

¹² <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf>

¹³ Peterson, T. K. and Fox, B. (2004). After-school program experiences: A time and tool to reduce dropouts. In J. Smink & F. P. Schargel (Eds.), *Helping students graduate: A strategic approach to dropout prevention* (pp. 177-184). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

¹⁴ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/veterans-and-military-families>

¹⁵ Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Actuary, *Veteran Population Projection Model (VetPop)*, 2014 as of 9/30/2014

¹⁶ http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Veteran_Poverty_Trends.pdf

veterans and military families have support to build a robust life is a priority in communities across the state.

- *Suggestions:* As veterans return home in increasing volumes, the need for holistic supportive services is underscored. Reintegration issues, including employment readiness and training, education, legal assistance, housing, and health, are at the forefront of priorities of the SC Commission. In consideration of our high veteran population, we look to AmeriCorps programming which has a peer-to-peer model for veterans to serve alongside one another. Mark Fischer, Program Manager at the Department of veterans Affairs, says that “Mission and Unit” are the two elements of active service that returned veterans miss the most in civilian life.¹⁷ AmeriCorps programming which utilizes veterans as AmeriCorps members allows veterans to continue to serve their country, but in a different mission and with a new unit. Many veterans have shared that the continuity helped their integration process go smoothly. Vet Corps is a standout AmeriCorps program, which utilizes veterans as AmeriCorps members and also serves veterans as the beneficiaries. Some program successes include the following: establishing veteran resource centers, connecting veterans to emergency assistance, and reading partnerships with colleges and universities to support Student Veteran Centers.¹⁸ In South Carolina, The Sustainability Institute’s Energy Conservation Corps has been successful in providing veterans the opportunity to gain certifications and experience while serving, which helps secure jobs following their service. Although the veteran population has decreased nationwide by 17% between 2000 and 2015, South Carolina gained military veterans in that same time period.¹⁹ It is expected that the Post-9/11 veteran population will increase by 45% between the years of 2012 and 2017.²⁰ Demographics among Post-9/11 veterans are significantly different than their predecessors by comparison. They are the youngest cohort of veterans, the most likely to be non-white and non-Hispanic and Hispanic, single, live in poverty, and uninsured. However, in comparison to the general public, Post-9/11 veterans earned more on average than their non-veteran counterparts. Male v
- Veterans make about \$3,500 more for full-time, year round work and female veterans make about \$5,000 more for full-time, year round work.²¹ As more Post-9/11 veterans return home to South Carolina, it will be important for the SC Service Commission to modify programming goals and strategies to meet specific, related needs that arise.

- Economic Opportunity

- *National:* CNCS is dedicated to creating economic opportunity by using national service to improve the financial well-being and security of economically disadvantaged individuals. Community organizations across the country are learning about specific interventions to address the housing, financial literacy, and employment needs of low-income populations.²²
- *South Carolina:* In Governor Haley’s address during the State of the State 2015²³, she focused on growing the state’s economy through business. Her team continues to work hard to create a “world-renowned business climate” and help generate programs that will lead to jobs. She has challenged her entire cabinet to “get creative about how we put people back to work”. Research

¹⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLZ54wDoDIX7cAjIze5irZH_5C6oi80a-M&v=gZ8FJOYFWEY

¹⁸ <http://www.cadca.org/campaigns/vetcorps>

¹⁹ http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/QuickFacts/QuickFactsMaps_Slideshow.pdf

²⁰ http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Post_911_Veterans_Profile_2012_July2015.pdf

²¹ http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Post_911_Veterans_Profile_2012_July2015.pdf

²² <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/economic-opportunity>

²³ <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article13941134.html>

shows that volunteering is a proven pathway to employment.²⁴ For this reason, we know that AmeriCorps Service and volunteerism at-large can grow the skills and employability of our citizens. This goal of workforce development pairs perfectly with the goal of improved financial literacy. As we climb out of the economic recession, it is increasingly important that we prioritize programming that educates the public on financial management.

- *Suggestions:* According to statistics from the Department of Labor, as of June 2015, South Carolina has a seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate of 6.6%²⁵. As a result, South Carolina is tied with Mississippi as the fifth leading state for unemployment. However, the state has recently attracted large companies which are set to open their doors soon. Employees not only need the job skills, but also the soft skills to be effective in a working environment. Workforce development training is often a referral that AmeriCorps members give to clients depending on their career field. In addition, AmeriCorps members often teach soft skills classes, a key skill needed to secure jobs. In addition to surveying the shifts in hiring markets of South Carolina, the SC Service Commission encourages programs to use data provided from the Department of Labor indicating growing job markets²⁶. Aside from helping prepare citizens for careers, AmeriCorps members teach financial literacy classes to help individuals find the most efficient ways to use their money. One study, conducted a meta-analysis of all of the research concerning the efficacy of financial literacy classes²⁷. Although it is difficult to track long-term behavioral change with these programs, studies have indicated that they do positively affect short-term savings. Supporting economic growth in South Carolina will continue to be a priority of the Commission.

- Environmental Stewardship

- *National:* CNCS places funding priority on proactive and reactive environmental stewardship. Some of the programming activities include the following: improvements to energy and water performance, sustained recycling and waste treatment activities, improvements to at-risk lands and waterways, creating awareness of personal actions to benefit conservation and green job training. Priority is given to areas that serve economically disadvantaged people.²⁸
- *South Carolina:* The University of South Carolina Moore School of Business facilitated an extensive study in 2009, which produced findings that show well-managed natural resources are essential for economic development²⁹. The report highlights the need for balance when considering natural resources; they grow the state economies in tourism, recreation, forestry, mining, commercial fishing, and boat manufacturing, but must be protected in order to sustain this economic impact. Children and adults benefit immensely from contact with nature,³⁰ thus environmental stewardship should be a tactic for improving public health. Green jobs training

²⁴ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/research-and-reports/volunteering-pathway-employment-report>

²⁵ <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm>

²⁷ <http://wbro.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2015/05/04/wbro.lkv009.short>

²⁸ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/environmental-stewardship>

²⁹ <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/green/greenreport.pdf>

³⁰ See Taylor, Andrea Faber, Kuo F. and Sullivan WC., Coping with ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Settings.

Environment and Behavior, Vol. 33 No. 1, January 2001: 54-77; Taylor, Andrea Faber and Kuo F. Is Contact with Nature Important for healthy child development? State of the evidence. In C. Spencer & M. Blades (Eds.) Children and Their Environments. (pp. 124-140). Cambridge. UK: Cambridge University Press;

Howard and Louv R. The Powerful Link Between Conserving Land and Preserving Health. Land Trust Alliance Special Anniversary Report 2007, July 1. http://www.childrenandnature.org/news/detail_print/168/ ;

Wells, Nancy M. At Home With Nature: Effects of "Greenness" on Children's Cognitive Functioning. Environment and Behavior, Vol. 32 No. 6, November 2000 775-795.

increases the employability of South Carolinians, which aligns with the Governor's goals of workforce development.

- *Suggestions:* CNCS's strategic plan for NCCC released in 2014 highlights three key areas in which AmeriCorps members can positively affect environmental sustainability: strengthening energy efficiency, promoting environmental stewardship and helping communities respond to disasters.³¹ Although this was written specifically regarding the NCCC stream of service, we find these three areas to be important to AmeriCorps State services as well. Currently a program in South Carolina works to increase energy efficiency in homes of low-income residents in the North Charleston area. The state's leading utility company, SCANA, has partnered with this program in an effort to maximize impact³². Secondly, AmeriCorps members can be used to help maintain public land by providing invasive species management, trail maintenance, prescribed burns and public education. South Carolina has many state parks and protected lands that benefit from this service provided by AmeriCorps NCCC members and members of the Student Conservation Association AmeriCorps Program. Lastly, South Carolina is prone to disaster, particularly regarding hurricanes and ice storms. AmeriCorps members can be trained responders to help mitigate the harmful environmental impact of these storms.

- Healthy Futures

- *National:* Every day, millions of Americans face health problems that reduce their quality of life. Nearly half of U.S. adults don't get needed preventive health services, and many of our nation's children and youth have unhealthy eating habits and don't get enough exercise. CNCS provides much-needed services to underserved areas to help citizens improve their health through a three-pronged approach of assistance, prevention, and intervention. Successful programs increase the ability of individuals and communities to address their specific health concerns.
- *South Carolina:* The state is ranked 42 out of the 50 in overall public health. Obesity and diabetes are among the chief problems, paired with physical inactivity. South Carolina has a high prevalence of food insecurity and poor nutrition, and a high prevalence of babies who have low birthweight.³³ Physical health plays a role in a variety of economic outcomes for individuals and for communities. Placing an emphasis on health programming would allow for our economy to grow and for people to remain healthy longer.
- *Suggestions:* AmeriCorps programs have the potential to decrease the lifestyle-related illness noted above through education and interactive programming. AmeriCorps programs across the nation have educated people on nutrition, improved access to primary and preventative health care and engage youth in physical activity. Proper nutrition education is among the chief goals of AmeriCorps members service within this focus area. There are resources available which can meet any budget that can help people gain the nutrients necessary. FoodCorps is a standout AmeriCorps program which takes this one step further by teaching kids, building school gardens and connecting the farm to the school.³⁴ In South Carolina, much of our economy (\$41.7 billion/year) is reliant upon agriculture.³⁵ If the general public was better informed about their food consumption, there is potential to not only positively impact health, but also the local economy. CNCS has supported the First Lady's *Lets Read.Lets Move.* initiative, which

³¹ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2014-CNCS-Strategic-Sustainability-Performance-Plan.pdf>

³² <https://www.sceg.com/about-us/newsroom/2015/06/09/new-home-energy-savings-program-to-benefit-low-to-moderate-and-fixed-income-residents-in-the-charleston-area>

³³ <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/SC>

³⁴ <https://foodcorps.org/>

³⁵ <http://www.nasda.org/9383/States/SC.aspx>

addresses summer reading loss and childhood obesity by engaging youth in summer reading and physical activities.³⁶ In addition to these three focus areas, part of CNCS's strategic plan supports programming that increases a senior's ability to remain in their own homes.³⁷ In South Carolina this is extremely important, as the population continues to age although there are a limited number of spaces in assisted care and end-of-life care facilities.

- Disaster Response

- *National:* CNCS programs have provided critical support to millions of Americans affected by disaster since 1994. Reflecting the agency's growing expertise and commitment in disaster services, the CNCS board of directors made disaster services one of the agency's focus areas for its 2011-2015 strategic plan. Volunteers can be used to tremendously expedite the recovery of a community and provide a significant economic impact while doing so.³⁸
- *South Carolina:* According to the SC Emergency Management Division (SCEMD), the state of disasters including hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires, thunderstorms, wildfires, dam failure, earthquakes, terrorism, hazardous materials, droughts, nuclear power plants, severe winter weather and extreme heat. In order to best react to such events, we must plan and prepare.³⁹ Plans are developed at the state and local levels to help mitigate preventable disasters and effectively respond once a disaster occurs. Within the field of emergency response, there is a commonly used expression about the nature of disasters, 'All disasters are local until they aren't.' The local municipality and citizens are the first to respond to any disaster. Community organizations work in conjunction with governmental agencies to expedite recovery. Organizations that are active during disasters rely upon volunteers to provide services to the community. Depending on the scope of a disaster, the local municipalities and organizations may need additional support to effectively address the situation. If that is the case, the SCEMD will aid the community upon request. Similarly, if the disaster affects a significant region of the state, SCEMD will activate support systems as necessary. If SCEMD is activated following a state-wide disaster or to support a local disaster, the Commission is responsible for connecting spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers to volunteer opportunities. This is a function of Emergency Support Function 18 (ESF 18), which is comprised of a team of community organizations active during disaster that manage volunteers and donations. The Commission's role is to connect the volunteers to the organizations operating during a disaster who are accepting volunteers and let the organization take control from that point.

UWASC is also responsible for operating the South Carolina 2-1-1 Contact Center 24/7, regardless of events, holidays or natural disasters. It is expected that call volume will escalate during and following a disaster and the Contact Center is staffed appropriately. In addition to this role of managing the 2-1-1 phone line, the Contact Center team will also work in conjunction with SCEMD to provide support for the Public Information Phone System (PIPS).

The Commission's Memorandum of Agreement with each AmeriCorps State program gives the Commission the flexibility of utilizing AmeriCorps members to assist in facilitating its emergency response functions.

³⁶ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/healthy-futures/lets-read-lets-move>

³⁷ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/healthy-futures>

³⁸ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/disaster-services>

³⁹ <http://www.scemd.org/planandprepare/disasters>

- *Suggestions:* Following disasters, other states have utilized AmeriCorps members as volunteers in a variety of ways depending on their branch of service and typical service activity. Traditionally, VISTA volunteers have served at the Volunteer Reception Center and guided the volunteers through the process. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps NCCC members have been used to remove debris, perform manual labor, or continue with their regularly scheduled service activities. FEMA Corps is specifically trained to help manage recovery. If performing a related duty during peacetime, some AmeriCorps programs have all of their members serve as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members. It is a priority of the SC Service Commission to identify the most appropriate ways for each branch of service to volunteer following a disaster and determine a coordination strategy, using guidance from the CNCS

Following a disaster, the SC Service Commission will prioritize the coordination and strategy of how to best use AmeriCorps members' services. The Commission will also assist CNCS's Disaster Response Unit and NCCC Regional Office in coordinating outside teams of AmeriCorps members trained in disaster response that deploy to the state.

Measurable Goals and Outcomes:

While carrying out the duties described in the "Strategic Service" section, the Commission will be responsible for the meeting goals outlined below.

1. Stewardship of Funding

- a. Facilitate a competitive grants process, with Commissioners reviewing and scoring applications. This process is designed to critically review proposals and award subgrantees to host AmeriCorps Programs where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact.

2. Ensure Effective Programming

- a. Lead applicants through training to ensure high-quality applications
- b. Provide in-person training for new program directors and new programs
- c. Host monthly conference calls for all Program Directors to provide updates, build community and distribute programmatic best practices
- d. Monitor program sites for operational compliance in relation to:
 - i. Member eligibility
 - ii. Data collection and performance measures
 - iii. Reporting
 - iv. Fiscal regulations
- e. Hold programs to high standards of performance by requiring and facilitating an AmeriCorps Program evaluation every three years of funding
 - i. Evaluations will include community forums to ensure programs are effectively addressing a critical community need
 - ii. Outside reviewers will provide commentary and suggestions on improving the strength of the program
 - iii. Programs will include three year goals in re-compete applications for continuous improvement

3. Leverage Additional Resources

- a. Develop programs to operational excellence, then submit top programs to the National Competitive competition
- b. Maintain step-up schedule for grantees' to increase their share of the operating budget as their grant matures.

4. Increase Awareness of National Service and the value of Volunteerism
 - a. Marketing Plan
 - i. Distribute marketing material to institutions of higher education, including technical colleges, community colleges, universities, and trade schools highlighting the AmeriCorps programs in South Carolina. Materials will cover an overview of AmeriCorps service, benefits, and how to apply.
 - ii. Distribute print material to employment centers highlighting the value of volunteerism as a pathway to employment.
 - iii. Attend job fairs to highlight the opportunity of AmeriCorps to give back to the community, build job skills.
 - iv. Increase social media presence to improve the widespread knowledge of AmeriCorps.
 1. Publish “Stories of Service” on a quarterly basis.
 2. Increase number of followers on social media platforms.
 - a. Reach out to current AmeriCorps members, alums and Corps members in other streams of service.
5. Commissioner Education
 - a. Provide initial in-depth training to Commissioners upon appointment as a Commissioner. This will include information about the history of AmeriCorps and CNCS, current programs operating in South Carolina, and the value of volunteerism.
 - b. Provide annual refresher-training to ensure Commissioners to review core concepts and to provide training on updates in regulations or programming
 - c. Distribute annual pocket-guides to Commissioners with speaking points for each of the programs
6. Recognizing Volunteers
 - a. Highlight member experiences through publishing their “Stories of Service”
 - b. Host “Lanneau Seigling Member of the Year” Competition and honor recipient at Commission meeting and Governor’s Service Awards
7. Disaster Response
 - a. Commission staff will collaborate with other UWASC departments to update the Emergency Operations plan. This plan will encompass all responsibilities of UWASC following a disaster, define roles for staff members, establish procedures, provide statewide contacts and clearly state contingency plans.
 - b. Safety and wellbeing of all AmeriCorps members will be the top priority of the SC Service Commission. Commission Staff and Program Directors will communicate to ensure all members are accounted for and in a safe environment. This procedure will be outline in the Emergency Operations Plan.
 - c. To fulfill duties of maintaining 2-1-1 functionality and providing support for the Public Information Phone System, Commission staff will work with other departments of UWASC to establish clear plans and roles in the event of a disaster. The formal plans will be contained in the document referenced in section A.
 - d. If activated, the Commission will be responsible for coordinating spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers following a disaster. This will be facilitated through the use of the online system, Get Connected Disaster Response Module, which is specifically engineered to handle this situation. In addition, our 2-1-1 Contact Center will provide information and referrals to those who want to give or receive help.
 - e. Commission Staff will attend regional and state Voluntary Organizations Active during Disaster (VOAD) meetings to develop relationships and facilitate trainings on using the system.

- f. Commission Staff will continue to work with staff from Get Connected and the 211 Team System to ensure all information is kept current and the systems will maintain high-functionality.
- g. Commission Staff will attend relevant trainings hosted by South Carolina Emergency Management Department on volunteers following a disaster.
- h. Commission staff will maintain relationships with CNCS Staff responsible for deploying the Disaster Response unit and NCCC teams. Staff will discuss scenarios for utilizing AmeriCorps teams following various disasters as a preparation tactic.
- i. Following a disaster, Commission Staff will prepare messages informing all AmeriCorps SC members of specific updates pertaining to their role and functionality to be sent via the Program Directors.

55+ Plan:

In conjunction with the State Service Plan, the South Carolina Service Commission has a special emphasis on involving South Carolinians who are age 55 and above in service. This emphasis is based in national research and consistent with the priorities of the SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging.

National research conducted by CNCS indicates numerous benefits to volunteering for older adults.⁴⁰

A study of adults age 65 and older found that the positive effect of volunteering on physical and mental health is due to the personal sense of accomplishment that an individual gains from his or her volunteer activities.⁴¹

Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, as found in a study of older adults; according to this study, formal volunteering moderated the loss of a sense of purpose among older adults who had experienced the loss of major role identities, such as wage-earner and parent.⁴²

A study of older adults found that participation in community service was more strongly correlated with life satisfaction for retirees than for those individuals who continued to work for pay.⁴³

The Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging develops a four-year plan regarding South Carolina's aging population. Included in the plan is a section on volunteerism and employment for seniors. The most recent plan covers the years of 2013-2017 and an excerpt from which has been included below.

An excerpt of this plan is below:

As South Carolina's population ages dramatically, future, available resources will continue to be a major concern for policymakers, providers of services, families, and individuals needing care and assistance. Funding will be stretched, and federal, state and local governments will not be able to provide for all needs of the aging population. Seniors currently living in South Carolina and seniors moving to South Carolina offer a wealth of knowledge, skills and abilities. Through volunteerism and employment, these older adults contribute to quality of life for other seniors and to their communities. Early retirement had been a major trend among seniors but the economic downturn of the past four

⁴⁰ http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf

⁴¹ Herzog, A.R., Franks, M.M., Markus, H.R. and Holmberg, D. (1998) "Activities and Well-Being in Older Age: Effects of Self-Concept and Educational Attainment." *Psychology and Aging*, 13(2): 179-185.

⁴² Greenfield, E.A. and Marks, N.F. (2004) "Formal Volunteering as a Protective Factor for Older Adults' Psychological Well-Being." *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B*, 59(5): S258-S264.

⁴³ Harlow, R. and Cantor, N. (1996) "Still participating after all these years: A Study of Life Task Participation in Later Life." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(6): 1235-1249.

years has created new and critical challenges for South Carolina’s elderly population. Many of South Carolina’s lifelong residents have lived in rural communities with below-the-national-average income levels. Many native South Carolina seniors are ineligible for federal financial assistance, and with skyrocketing health care costs, must continue to work in order to afford the basics. Thus the goals of our state’s senior population are reflected in both a greater need for additional income for many, while others look for volunteer services for a type of enrichment and satisfaction that previous employment may not have permitted. The SUA and the Aging Network are committed to both assisting seniors needing additional income and utilizing the skills and abilities of those who wish to volunteer. The State of South Carolina currently uses senior volunteers and Title V workers in many activities throughout the state. With limited resources, the SUA must continue to utilize seniors in these activities, and seek ways to further utilize seniors’ assets. Many of these opportunities have been presented through Federal funding made available through a partnership of local aging services providers, Area Agencies on Aging, and the State Unit on Aging.⁴⁴

Consistent with national research and South Carolina demographic changes, promoting volunteerism among individuals 55 and older is a high priority of the South Carolina Service Commission. National service can provide a unique blend of volunteerism and slight compensation that allows seniors to benefit in numerous ways. In addition, it is our mission to help organizations using senior volunteers help understand the full potential that this demographic can provide. Their experience and commitment can be utilized to grow an organization substantially. While seniors are steadfast in their responsibilities, it is important to provide flexible opportunities to allow time for other commitments. Providing skill-building opportunities is critical as some seniors may use volunteerism as a pathway to employment. Personal fulfillment and increased social connections are very important aspects of mental health among seniors and organizations should keep this in mind when designing volunteer opportunities.

Development of Plan:

This plan has been developed through an open and public process that provided for maximum participation and input from local non-profit organizations, national service programs, businesses, elected officials, communities of faith, state agencies, foundations and other interested members of the public.

The South Carolina Service Commission will be responsible for updating the progress of this plan on an annual basis.

⁴⁴ <http://aging.sc.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/S/STATE%20PLAN%202013-2016%20FINAL%20REVISED.pdf>

2016 Addendum:

The South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service (the Commission) is guided by its State Service Plan, which was developed through an open and public process, covers a three-year period. It includes measurable goals and outcomes for National Service Programs, ensures outreach to municipalities and county governments, and is updated annually. The current State Service Plan has been implemented as the guiding document of the Commission from 2016 to 2019. 2016 was an active year for the Commission. It was able to address many of the measurable goals and outcomes set forth by the current State Service Plan.

In 2016, the Commission augmented efforts to brand and market AmeriCorps South Carolina (AmeriCorps SC) throughout the state. Commission staff met with career services departments at ten colleges and universities around the state to disseminate information about the opportunities AmeriCorps can bring to their students and to build relationships with the universities. AmeriCorps SC also developed new print media to distribute. Further, the Commission has worked with current AmeriCorps members to develop unique social media content through its new Brand Ambassador program. AmeriCorps SC Brand Ambassadors provide photographs and captions for the Commission to post on its social media pages to highlight all AmeriCorps SC programs, build members' positive social media presence, and leverage members' creativity and leadership skills. Post engagement has increased significantly since the program's inception.

The Commission has secured additional funding in 2016 through two major grants; the Commission Investment Fund grant and the Safer Communities grant, which were made available by The Corporation for National and Community Service. With new funding, the Commission hired two new full-time employees. The Commission Investment Funding grant focuses on providing additional training and technical assistance to AmeriCorps Program Directors. With this funding, the Commission has hosted more informative and engaging monthly meetings as well as co-hosted its first ever Mini Regional Training with the North Carolina Service Commission. The two-day conference provided training sessions and networking opportunities to Program Directors from both states. The Safer Communities Grant will help fund a Commission employee who will identify current organizations working on initiatives in the state that aim to improve relationships between SC citizens and law enforcement officers that would have the capacity to leverage national AmeriCorps funding. The Commission employee will then guide identified candidates through the AmeriCorps application process. If these applications are successful at the national level, they will bring additional resources into our state because funding them will not come from our state's budget.

The Commission responded to two natural disasters within one year. The unprecedented rainfall, which caused historic flooding throughout SC and Hurricane Matthew, whose path went along the coast both impacted many citizens. Commission staff collaborated with the Communications Department at the United Way Association of South Carolina to connect spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers to meaningful causes throughout the state for both incidences. The *Get Connected* online system was updated in 2016 to enhance its usability for visitors to the site, and the Commission utilized social media to advertise the platform to interested volunteers and organizations that had the capacity to host volunteers following the floods and the storm. The Commission staff participated in all VOAD calls following both catastrophes to further relationships with disaster response organizations around the state to streamline response efforts. The Commission also ensured that all AmeriCorps members were able to evacuate areas that were deemed unsafe during flooding and when Hurricane Matthew touched down off shore. Following the floods, the Commission began funding a new AmeriCorps program focused on disaster recovery. They have been invaluable during Hurricane Matthew response efforts and ongoing recovery efforts from the floods. Following Hurricane Matthew, two AmeriCorps

**The 2016-2018 State Service Plan is an excerpt of the UWASC Strategic Plan.*



SC programs deployed members to Horry County, one of the hardest hit areas of the state, to work with partner organizations to muck, gut, and tarp homes in the area. Disaster response efforts from the Commission following Hurricane Matthew lacked the tumult that the historic floods of 2015 caused, and staff was more confident in their ability to assist in helping communities bounce back from natural disaster with more firm guiding documents and relationships in place.

Moving forward, the Commission will revise its competitive grant application process. Interested parties will now partake in a two-part application process. In the first round of the revised process, organizations will respond to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) by submitting Concept Papers to summarize and outline their intentions for seeking funding. If a Concept Paper is successful in the preliminary review process, organizations will be coached through the full AmeriCorps State funding application to ensure effective programming and opportunity to a more diverse audience. Further, the Commission has restricted the points system of their application process to score applicants more fairly and to attract more topical and geographical diversity among applicants.

2017 Addendum:

The South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service (the Commission) is guided by its State Service Plan, which was developed through an open and public process, covers a three-year period. It includes measurable goals and outcomes for National Service Programs, ensures outreach to municipalities and county governments, and is updated annually. The current State Service Plan has been implemented as the guiding document of the Commission from 2016 to 2018. 2017 was an active year for the Commission. It was able to address many of the measurable goals and outcomes set forth by the current State Service Plan.

In 2017, the Commission built upon its efforts from 2016 to improve marketing and brand recognition of AmeriCorps South Carolina (AmeriCorps SC) throughout the state. Commission staff continued to meet with career services departments at colleges and universities around the state to disseminate information about the opportunities AmeriCorps can bring to their students and to strengthen relationships with the schools. Further, the Commission attended two service-related panels and is planning to host a panel at Clemson University early in 2018. Staff has built upon the AmeriCorps SC Brand Ambassador program in 2017, and new trainings have been developed to improve member-generated Social Media content. AmeriCorps SC post engagement continues to thrive, especially on weeks of Brand Ambassadors' Social Media Takeovers.

The Commission has secured additional funding in 2017 through three major grants; the Commission Investment Fund (CIF) grant (extended to an 18 month lifecycle), a grant focused on increasing Commission capacity in the disaster response field, and a grant which focuses on leveraging an AmeriCorps program to improve the status of South Carolina's infrastructure. The CIF grant continues to support staff capacity to improve programmatic training and technical assistance to assure that each sub-grantee is an excellent steward of federal funds. Similar to the 2016 Safer Communities grant, the new infrastructure grant will have a Commission employee guide identified organizations through the AmeriCorps application process and what the grant entails. The goal is to get an organization to earn a planning grant for FY-2019 to prepare to host AmeriCorps members in FY-2020. If these applications are successful at the national level, they will bring additional resources into our state because funding them will not come from our state's budget. All of the aforementioned grants were made available by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). With new funding, the Commission hired one new full-time employee and plans to hire two additional full-time employees in early 2018.

In 2017, the Commission revised its competitive grant application process to be a two-step process. In the first round of the revised process, organizations responded to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) by submitting Concept Papers to summarize and outline their intentions for seeking funding. Nine organizations were moved to the second round to be coached through the full AmeriCorps State funding. We were able to fund three new programs, which started their three-year grant cycle in 2017.

The Commission continues to think about its long-term impact on the state of South Carolina. In order to improve policies and procedures and, in turn, maximize efficiency of the small team, the Commission hired the national organization, America's Service Commission (ASC), to act as consultants. ASC staff will visit with Commission staff to review all guiding documents, policies, and procedures and work together to improve overall Commission functioning.