

Mobilizing the Power of People

City of Flint Framework for National Service and Volunteerism Expansion

Purpose: To maximize national service and volunteerism resources locally to empower people to be a part of Flint's bright future, according to the City of Flint Master Plan and the priorities of the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Michigan Community Service Commission.



Executive Summary

In Flint and Genesee County, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, and other partners have recognized the critical role national service members and volunteers can play in addressing the many needs of an economically depressed city. To this end, the City of Flint committed to be a demonstration site to explore what 1 million national service positions nationally looks like at the local level. Over a five year time frame, Flint and Genesee County intend to expand their national service footprint to include 250 AmeriCorps members (a ten-fold increase from the 2014 baseline) and a comparable number of Senior Corps volunteers. This expansion will go alongside concerted efforts to engage more residents in meaningful volunteer opportunities and promote a culture of service in the community.

Flint's focus on national service and volunteerism as a tool to implement the City's Master Plan has attracted national attention, and has put Flint at the forefront of modeling a place-based approach to national and community service, led by the Flint National Service Accelerator. To support the on-going work, Flint has a Chief Service Officer and a Service Champions Workgroup.

The Workgroup has adopted this City of Flint Framework for National Service and Volunteerism Expansion, which is designed to guide the service expansion. The expansion will be aligned with the City's Master Plan and the focus areas of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC), in accord with the capacity of local nonprofit organizations. Flint is also embracing the notion inclusive of other year-long service endeavors, not just those formally endorsed by the CNCS. These are positions that would not be federally funded, but that would be locally supported, and could still be certified by a reliable source, like the Service Year Alliance, including service opportunities through faith-based organizations or locally-created service years.

In order to scale-up the number and impact of national service members and volunteers in Flint and Genesee County, a simultaneous five-pronged approach will guide the expansion. The approaches are: utilizing existing national service programs, creating new Flint-based positions or corps, developing a robust volunteer infrastructure, cultivating a culture of service, and encouraging service-learning. Other considerations include: prioritizing target groups, evaluation, advocacy, and sustainability.

Introduction

Imagine a city where all seniors in high school had the opportunity and expectation of serving their community, tackling local issues and building their résumés while earning money for post-secondary education. Imagine a college town where all graduates eagerly anticipated applying their knowledge at local non-profits, developing social enterprises and fostering civic engagement. Imagine a community where thousands of youth and adult residents contributed to improving their neighborhood and expanding opportunities.

Flint, Michigan is a city poised and ready for transformation, a city committed to reinventing itself by building upon its rich history, strong character, and enduring work ethic. Today, leaders are helping to reinvigorate community schools, neighborhood groups and residents are helping to eliminate blight lot by lot, churches are leading community gardening initiatives, local organizations are promoting change through community activities, and world-class cultural and education facilities are attracting new talent. In 2013, Flint residents came together to develop the City's first Master Plan in more than 50 years, and this Master Plan is explicit about the community's desires for civic engagement and resident empowerment strategies.

This City of Flint Framework for National Service and Volunteerism Expansion is a plan for realizing Flint's envisioned future by mobilizing the power of people.

Background

Current development in Flint is guided by the City Master Plan, "Imagine Flint", which was adopted in 2013 and promotes equity, livability, economic vitality, and sustainable development. The master planning process had widespread support from community stakeholder organizations and engaged over 5,000 community members. As the city had not had an approved Master Plan in place since 1960, the momentum of the planning process has evolved into dedicated commitment to the implementation currently underway. Knowing that the City of Flint as a local government entity in financial distress had limited resources, the comprehensive plan is explicit about the community's express desires for civic engagement and resident empowerment strategies to be prioritized.

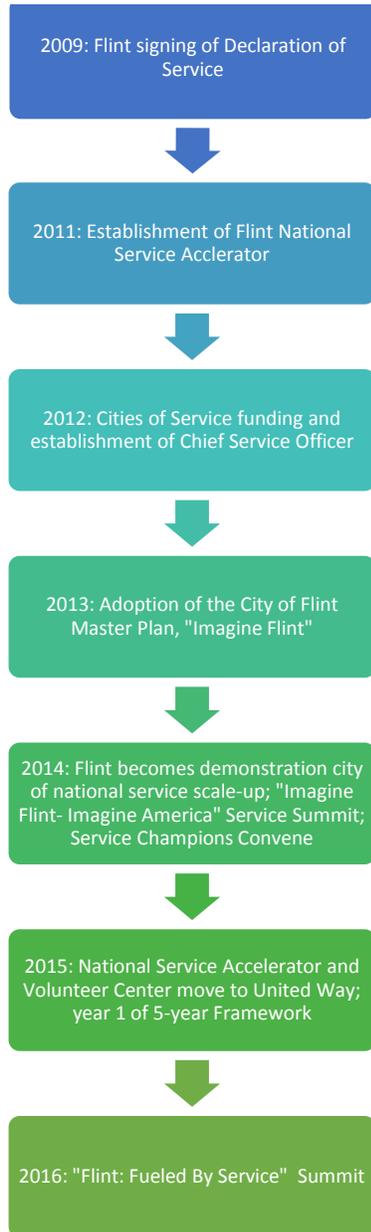
Aligned with this strategy, leaders from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Flint established the Flint National Service Accelerator in 2011. This initiative provides Genesee County nonprofit and community-based organizations with technical support, training, coordination, and funding necessary to leverage and utilize national service and volunteer resources. The funding support is available through the National Service Fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, which can help local organizations offset the costs of member match requirements, travel expenses and/or training expenses. The Flint National Service Accelerator also works to provide professional development and coordination of national service members, support recruitment efforts, recognize area service members and volunteers, organize days of service, and steward a city-wide culture of service.

In 2012, Flint was one of 18 U.S. cities to be awarded the first round of Impact Volunteering Fund grants, through Cities of Service and Bloomberg Philanthropies to support mayors who are harnessing the power of volunteers to address priority problems in their communities. At that time, Flint named a Chief Service Officer, and two-years of Cities of Service funding resulted in gains being made in neighborhood revitalization and disaster preparedness in the city.

The City's focus on national service and volunteerism as a tool to implement the City's Master Plan attracted national attention. Flint has also been enfolded into the national dialogue around expanding national service and volunteerism led by the Franklin Project at the Aspen Institute

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Flint's Service Commitment Timeline



(now the Service Year Alliance). The Service Year Alliance, is spearheading an effort to “make a year or more of full-time national service a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans.” The initiative envisions “at least one million full-time civilian national service opportunities for young adults ages 18-28 every year.” This is a more than ten-fold increase from the current opportunities, which stand at about annual 80,000 positions across the country.

As a result of participation in the 2014 Franklin Project Gettysburg Summit, Flint is now a demonstration site for scaling up AmeriCorps slots/service year positions. Flint’s ambition is to grow from 25 members in 2014-2015 to 250 members by 2019. The expansion, guided by this Framework, will be enhanced by an increased connectivity and coordination with Senior Corps and the volunteer center, which supports community-based volunteers and corporate volunteers. In 2015, the City of Flint’s Chief Service Officer was named a Franklin Project Ambassador to promote and expand service year opportunities.

In Flint and Genesee County, growth in service year positions will likely include members of AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, Summer Associates, faith-based programs, and nonprofit service positions that can be certified through an online platform, the Service Year Exchange. Coordination with and support of Senior Corps programs – Foster Grandparents, RSVP and Senior Companions – will be vital to making involvement in service available to residents at any stage of life. Further development of the culture of service will include promoting Employers of National Service and Higher Education for Service initiatives (including matching education awards) to create a talent pipeline where service year completion becomes a pathway to future education and career attainment.

In October 2014, service leaders in Flint convened a meeting of local, state and national leaders in the fields of service and volunteerism to explore various ways service could act as an effective strategy to revitalize the city and increase the educational and economic success of its low- and moderate-income youth. The “Imagine Flint - Imagine America” summit engaged over 80 participants representing a wide range of organizations including nonprofits, government representatives and businesses to identify barriers and opportunities that national service, service-learning, and volunteering initiatives can address.

Riding the momentum from this gathering, a Service Champions Workgroup began convening in 2014 to develop this 5-Year Service Plan for expanding national service and volunteerism in

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Flint. The Workgroup is situated to help guide the implementation of this City of Flint Framework for National Service and Volunteerism Expansion and ensure coordination with the Master Plan and emerging community priorities.

In 2015, the first year of this expansion, both the Flint National Service Accelerator and the volunteer center moved to the United Way of Genesee County. In 2016, a second convening, “Flint: Fueled By Service”, reengaged local, state and national partners in Flint’s service strategy.

Types of National Service and Service Year Opportunities



- AmeriCorps State/National
- AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America)
- AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)
- Summer Associate VISTA



- Foster Grandparents
- RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)
- Senior Companions



- Certified service year positions
- Faith-based service programs

Direction for Service Expansion Activity

In order to scale-up the number and impact of AmeriCorps members in Flint and Genesee County to 250 members in five years, a simultaneous five-pronged approach will guide the expansion. These approaches will require intensive partnership and may be impacted by federal, state, and local funding.

Approach 1: Utilize existing national service programs state-wide and nationally to leverage more members and expand current Flint-based programs

Strategies:

- Develop and deepen relationships with the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC), Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and state-wide and national AmeriCorps programs
- Engage local, state, and national leaders in conversations around effective use of national service streams to address community needs

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- Align with the strategies of the Service Year Alliance to engage young people in service and utilize the Service Year Exchange online platform to create certifiable service year opportunities
- Facilitate relationships between local community groups/nonprofits and state-wide or national programs with aligning missions
- Build capacity of local organizations to take on new and/or additional members

Approach 2: Create new Flint-based programs and local service-year positions through partnerships with universities, schools, local government, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and for-profit entities

Strategies:

- Support local nonprofits in identifying ways that national and community service can deepen their efforts in community
- Provide training and technical assistance to individuals and nonprofits on the Service Year Exchange, the CNCS/MCSC application processes, and other national service-related topics to build capacity
- Capitalize on new and existing funding opportunities for national service, like Operation AmeriCorps
- Engage local funders in supporting national and community service opportunities that align with their priorities
- Partake in on-going outreach to universities, schools, local government, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and for-profit entities pertaining to information sharing, partnership development, and other engagement in the service strategy

Approach 3: Develop a robust volunteer infrastructure that meets the needs of community groups, community-based organizations, schools, corporations and individuals in recruiting, retaining, managing, and celebrating volunteers, as well as utilization of an online volunteer management system

Strategies:

- Develop the volunteer center at the United Way of Genesee County to be a hub for volunteerism in the County and connect national service members and programs to the resources of the volunteer center
- Train national service members and volunteer-utilizing organizations in the online volunteer management system to build sustainability and further the relationship with volunteers recruited by the members
- Help recognize and celebrate existing volunteers, whether through nonprofits, churches, Blue Badge Volunteer Corps, schools, neighborhoods or other opportunities, using those stories to help reach more potential volunteers
- Promote opportunities such as the President's Volunteer Service Award and the Governor's Service Awards
- Identify segments of the Flint-population that could most benefit from volunteerism, including youth (particularly opportunity youth), veterans, seniors, young professionals, and recent graduates, and develop strategies to engage these groups in service

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- Lift up the positive effect volunteerism can have on future employment opportunities
- Support the infrastructure of Senior Corps programs to engage individuals 55+ in service
- Promote best practices in corporate engagement and corporate volunteer strategies
- Utilize the 211 system and other community communication tools to identify community needs that could be addressed with volunteerism
- Integrate the Flint National Service Accelerator, the Volunteer Center, and the 211 service to build infrastructure and sustainability for episodic and long-term volunteers, as well as identify potential candidates for national service.

Approach 4: Cultivate a culture of service among current national service members, alumni and future members, as well as citizen volunteers, and engage political leaders, higher education institutions, employers, and other thought leaders in championing national service

Strategies:

- Build bridges between various groups including AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, YouthBuild, Senior Corps, Summer Associates, faith-based service groups and national service alumni
- Host community conversations to bring together local, state, and national leaders on service, share successes, and outline future work in expanding national and community service
- Provide meaningful professional development opportunities for currently-serving members so that they may be best positioned for Life After AmeriCorps and ready to continue serving the community
- Engage national service alumni in mentoring currently-serving members, forging connections with each other, offering professional development and training, and highlighting the role of service in their careers
- Capitalize on media and social media opportunities to highlight national service and volunteerism in the community, telling the stories of people who serve and highlighting positive impact in Flint
- Take advantage of other community outreach opportunities to help raise the profile of national service and volunteerism and promote member recruitment
- Facilitate connections to higher education institutions and employers, promoting Segal Education Award Matching or service scholarships and Employers of National Service
- Plan and implement moments of service and recognition, including but not limited to 9/11 Day of Service, MLK Day of Service, Global Youth Service Day, Mayors Day of Recognition, AmeriCorps Week, and AmeriCorps Opening Day
- Convene supervisors and the Member Leadership Council to ensure the boots-on-the-ground perspective is prioritized and dialog happens across organizations

Approach 5: Encourage service-learning as a strategy for developing K-12 students, college students and others who understand their role and/or potential to be positive change makers in community and society

Strategies:

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- Promote and connect with existing volunteerism, service, and service-learning with K-12 students, families, and schools, as well as post-secondary institutions
- Engage in training, course support and outreach at education institutions
- Align with College Town Collaborative and Michigan Campus Compact to engage college students in volunteerism and highlight their contributions
- Encourage local youth to complete a year of national service through promotion at post-secondary fairs and similar events
- Support training for teachers and national service members in service and service-learning
- Evaluate the feasibility of a member and youth committee to enable youth voice
- Utilize service and volunteerisms as tools to develop skills, especially to promote youth employment and workforce transitions

In addition to these five overall approaches, other considerations cut across all of the approaches:

Target Groups: While national service and volunteerism are important for all Flint residents, some groups can particularly benefit from the experience. High priority groups include opportunity youth, veterans, seniors, and recent high school or college graduates transitioning to the workforce. In order to successfully engage these groups in service so that they may receive the connectedness, professional development, and opportunities that service affords, partnerships should be prioritized with youth-serving organizations, employers, educational institutions, entities in the judicial system and law enforcement, veterans-support organizations, and senior-serving organizations. At the end of 5 years, a successful implementation strategy would result in more 18-28 year olds, as well as veterans and seniors, in service, with individuals reporting that their experience helped them feel connected to the life of the community.

Evaluation: The services of an evaluator will be engaged to provide data for how the culture of service in Flint has evolved since 2014 and provide tools to assess impact over time with national service member and volunteer expansion. Data being measured will include financial and in-kind resources generated, as well as volunteer time, to establish a base-line value-add to the community. Through collaboration with CNCS and evaluation experts, the outcomes may evolve to better demonstrate impact on the community as a result of expanding national service and volunteerism. At the end of 5 years, a successful evaluation process would result in being able to demonstrate the impact of increased national service members and volunteers both on the community and the individuals themselves, and have in place tools for ongoing evaluation.

Advocacy: Consistently, threats to federal funding imperil the future of CNCS-supported national service. By partnering with CNCS, MCSC, the Service Year Alliance, and Voices for National Service, Flint can be connected to the larger dialogue around the value of national service and take advantage of resources that can aid in advocating for service with local elected officials. Because members and CNCS-supported staff are not able to engage in advocacy, this component would be led by the Flint National Service Accelerator and the Service Champions Workgroup. At the end of 5 years, a successful advocacy strategy would have Flint aligned with national supporters to shape and determine the future federal funding for national and community service.

Sustainability: The revitalization of Flint is a long and on-going process. Commitment to, and from, national and community service and volunteers must also be long-term. Sustainability in the utilization of national service members and community-based volunteers includes putting in place funding structures and processes that stand the test of time. For funding, this could include restructuring the granting guidelines for the National Service Fund and also diversifying funders to enable more organizations to take advantage of national service resources with local match support. Additionally, putting in place processes for data and information sharing among stakeholders, systemizing access to materials and technical assistance, and expanding the membership and support of the Service Champions Workgroup will aid in sustainability. At the end of 5 years, a successful sustainability strategy would result in national and community service and volunteerism being embedded in the fabric of Flint, with the right funding, systems and people in place to support the outcomes of this framework.



Focus Areas

The key focus areas for expanding national and community service in Flint align with the focus areas of the:

- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC)
- City of Flint Master Plan
- Emerging City of Flint needs

Each focus area is explained in turn below.

Education

CNCS, MCSC, and the Flint Master Plan all prioritize education as a focus area. Currently, over 50% of the CNCS portfolio funds education initiatives, and likewise, many of the national service members serving in Flint are focusing their efforts on improving educational outcomes for youth. CNCS and MCSC educational goals include:

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Out-of-school time
- School readiness
- Behavioral outcomes and attendance
- Post-secondary access and success
- My Brother's Keeper and Success Mentoring (*emerging*)

Objective #1 in Economic Development & Education in the Master Plan is to strengthen the educational attainment of youth; specifically, the Master Plans emphasizes the re-establishment Flint Community Schools as a leader in community education. Other areas of alignment are in literacy and integrating K-12 with higher education.

Economic Opportunity

Economic opportunity is critical for a community like Flint that is struggling with high rates of unemployment and poverty. CNCS and MCSC economic opportunity goals include:

- Financial literacy
- Affordable housing
- Employability
- Access to services and resources

In the Flint Master Plan, priorities indicate a desire for Flint to have “a growing and diverse economy that spurs innovation and small business development.” Objectives include increasing access to employment opportunities and workforce development.

Safer Communities

In their 2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity, CNCS added a priority focusing on safer communities. Safer Communities goals are:

- Preventing and mitigating civil unrest
- Focusing on youth violence

The MCSC action step around safer communities prioritizes replicating successful AmeriCorps public safety programming, a reference to a replication of the Wayne State Urban Safety Corps Program. In Flint's Master Plan, the public safety emphasis is on safe and healthy places for all residents to live and thrive, and much attention is given to blight, resulting in the City developing a Blight Elimination Plan. Other relevant objectives include eliminating environmental contributions to crime, empowering citizens to contribute to the safety of their neighborhoods, and reducing gun violence, violent crime, and arson.

Healthy Futures

Healthy Futures as defined by CNCS and the MCSC includes the goals of:

- Addressing unmet health needs
- Access to health care, including connecting to Medicaid and Medicare

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- Physical activity and nutrition education
- Senior care

In Flint, the relevant Master Plan Objectives include ensuring universal access to quality healthcare services and facilities, developing a local food system, promoting exercise and active lifestyles, and providing youth with a safe and healthy upbringing. This focus area has taken on increased importance in the wake of Flint's water crisis.

Environmental Stewardship

The CNCS goals for environmental stewardship include:

- Energy and water efficiency
- Renewable energy
- At-risk ecosystems
- Behavioral change leading to increased efficiency

Environmental Stewardship is not currently a priority area for the MCSC, although they have supported environmental-focused programs around the state. For the Flint Master Plan, the focus is on creating a Flint that is “a proactive environmental leader with a clean, healthy, and equitable system of parks, waterways and open spaces.” Objectives include protecting, enhancing and promoting the Flint River and its watershed, providing parks, open spaces and recreation infrastructure and engaging the community in support, and reducing the city's Carbon footprint.

Disaster Services

The disaster services focus area for both CNCS and MCSC is concerned with preparing for, and mitigating the effects of, disaster events. This is not an objective identified in the Flint Master Plan, although it is mentioned that emergency preparedness, disaster planning, and hazard mitigation is critical for a community to be secure and resilient. The plan also highlights the need to encourage citizens to understand and prepare for emergency situations. This focus area has taken on increased importance in the wake of Flint's water crisis.

Veterans and Military Families

The veterans and military families focus area includes the goals of:

- Addressing the needs of veterans, members of the armed forces and the families of deployed military personnel.
- Providing access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of veterans and their families.

This is not a priority identified in the Flint Master Plan, although there is acknowledgement of the importance of addressing veterans' issues in housing and workforce development, and there is potential to provide more capacity in this area.

Action Overview for Five-Year Service Expansion

	Year 1	Years 2 and 3	Years 4 and 5
National Service and Volunteerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Focus Areas: education, safer communities, economic opportunity, healthy futures • Increase from 25 AmeriCorps members to 75 • Develop and/or maintain 3 Senior Corps programs • Make connections with all host sites and members • Successfully implement Operation AmeriCorps • Build a model for a Flint Urban Safety Corps • Register on the Service Year Exchange • Connect with national partners in the Service Year Alliance • Solidify relationships with staff at MCSC and CNCS to build sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Focus Areas: any unaddressed priority focuses from year 1, environmental stewardship, disaster services, veterans and military families • Increase from 75 AmeriCorps members to 150 • Conduct evaluation of National Service Accelerator • Survey of members' experiences • Secure 5 Employers of National Service • Secure at least one new corps • Make connections with non-CNCS service year programs • Build bridges between AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, and align with Master Plan and service plan • Tell the story of national service's impact locally and increase visibility • Ensure service members are connected to the volunteer center and coordinating volunteer engagement efforts • Develop Member Leadership Council • Develop and implement strategies around engaging opportunity youth and neighborhood residents • Empower corporate volunteers • Strengthen relationships with higher education institutions related to matching awards, recruitment, and service strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Focus Areas: any unaddressed priority focuses from years 1-3 • Increase from 150 AmeriCorps members to 250 and sustain • Secure 15 Employers of National Service • Secure at least one new corps and successfully implement • Build sustainability for expansion work, including in funding, member housing, and nonprofit capacity • Strengthen connections between national service members and community-based volunteers • Engage other communities in service expansion best practices