Service members make tremendous sacrifices and learn invaluable skills while protecting and serving our nation — they build a stronger America. Yet many veterans face challenges in translating those skills into meaningful community engagement, and too often, our industry leaders fail to make strong connections to one of America’s greatest assets. When service members are deployed, they leave behind families who must try to maintain life as usual. Frequent moves can make it difficult for military families to feel a part of their new community, and there are veterans who return home struggling with both visible and invisible wounds of war as they transition to civilian life. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is not only here to support our heroes, but to engage and learn from them for the betterment of all Americans through innovative initiatives, grants, and volunteer programs that span the nation.

Service Is a Strategic Imperative

Supporting and engaging veterans and military families is a strategic priority for CNCS. Volunteer service can help address the challenges military communities face, while providing opportunities for every American to give back to our veterans and military families. Our goal is not only to increase the number of veterans and military families who are served by CNCS-supported programs and initiatives, but we must also improve our programs by leveraging the unique and valuable skills of our veterans.

Engaging Our Military Community in Service

At CNCS, we are utilizing the talent and leadership of veterans to solve problems at home by engaging veterans in service through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other programs.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:
Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Corps

In 2009, the Washington Commission for National and Community Service partnered with the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs to launch the first CNCS-funded Vet Corps program in the nation to engage veterans in AmeriCorps national service positions.

Veterans’ mission continues through their civilian national service experience, which enables them to make a positive difference in communities across Washington State while aiding their reintegration back into the community following their military service.
Serving Military Families and Veterans

Volunteers and national service participants provide critical support to veterans by connecting them to jobs, housing, health care, and other benefits. Volunteers support our troops here and abroad by writing letters, sending care packages, and donating calling cards. We are also increasing economic opportunities for military spouses and providing educational support for military children. Now, as part of the expanded mandate of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and our new Strategic Plan, we are increasing our support of programs that serve veterans and military families and engage veterans in service. Through grants, special initiatives, days of service, and other efforts, we are committed to assisting those who have bravely served our nation.

EACH OF CNCS’ PROGRAMS ADDRESS THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES MILITARY FAMILIES AND VETERANS FACE:

- **AmeriCorps programs** — Vets helping Vets. More than 16,000 veterans have served in AmeriCorps since its inception, helping other veterans and military families access benefits and services; obtain job training and conduct job searching; provide safe and affordable housing; and mentor and tutor children of service members.

- More than 500 **Senior Corps** projects and 8,000 volunteers serve at more than 700 Veterans Affairs facilities every year, assisting elderly and disabled veterans, helping military retirees acclimate to life after service, and providing transportation to those in need of medical treatment.

- **AmeriCorps NCCC** has supported more than 50,000 veterans through special service projects, special events and disaster relief/recovery. More than 2,000 veterans received the support of relief services in the Gulf after hurricane Katrina.

Our Strategic Objective: Increase the number of veterans and military families served by and engaged in CNCS supported programs in order to strengthen and improve the services we provide for the betterment of all Americans.

WE BELIEVE:

- Supporting our nation’s troops, veterans, and military families is critical to our national security.

- Meaningful connections to our veterans and military families strengthen our communities.

- Veterans are valuable assets and will improve volunteerism and service to the benefit of all Americans.

- Volunteer service improves meaningful transitions to life after service for our nation’s veterans and their families.

- It is our duty to recognize the service and sacrifice of our military community by volunteering in their honor.

National Service in Action:

» **AmeriCorps members** — mostly veterans — supporting the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs host support groups for veterans and military families, connect them to vital services available, and promote education and employment opportunities.

» **Senior Corps volunteers** at the Salt Lake County on Aging Services help veterans and military families continue to live independently in their own homes by connecting them to primary care and caregiver support.

» **Equal Justice Works** AmeriCorps Legal Fellows assist veterans and their families by helping to stabilize their living situations, secure financial and medical benefits, and provide legal representation.