

An abstract graphic consisting of a network of white dots connected by thin white lines, set against a dark blue background. The dots and lines are scattered across the entire page, creating a sense of global connectivity and digital networks.

Peace Corps Connect to the Future

**A Community Report on How to Reimagine, Reshape, and Retool
the Peace Corps for a Changed World**

NOVEMBER 2020

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**A Community Report on How to
Reimagine, Reshape, and Retool
the Peace Corps for a Changed World**

Presented by a special advisory council to
National Peace Corps Association

with recommendations to Congress,
the Peace Corps Agency and Executive Branch,
and the Peace Corps community

NOVEMBER 2020

For a list of members of the advisory council, see page 24

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“Our increasingly interconnected world demands global solidarity, not charity, to solve global problems that transcend national borders like the specter of war, terrorism, racism, climate change, and pandemics like COVID-19. I sincerely believe that the Peace Corps can be a great organization dedicated to promote such global solidarity at the people-to-people level.”

—Kul Chandra Gautam

*Nepalese diplomat and former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF
at the Peace Corps Connect to the Future Global Ideas Summit, July 2020*

IN THE SPRING OF 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Peace Corps evacuated all of its roughly 7,300 Volunteers from service around the globe. For the first time in the nearly 60-year history of the agency, no Peace Corps Volunteers are currently serving overseas. This abrupt interruption of Peace Corps service has dramatically altered the lives of the Volunteers, and it has profoundly disrupted the work and relationships in communities where they were serving. The mission of the Peace Corps has motivated more than 240,000 Americans to volunteer in nearly every corner of the world. But that service has come to a halt.

This crisis is unprecedented. On a scale never seen before, the global evacuation of Volunteers brought to the fore some longstanding challenges for the agency and the broader Peace Corps community. All this called for an unparalleled response. Harnessing the experience, commitment, and innovative ideas of the Peace Corps community, National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) convened a series of national community discussions and a global ideas summit to ask some far-reaching questions about the future of Peace Corps in a changed world. **The conversations in the Peace Corps community tackled two key questions.** First, *whether the Peace Corps as an agency should continue to exist*; on that count, the response was a resounding “yes.” And second, *when the Peace Corps returns to the field, what should it look like?* The responses to this second question are contained in this report.

The report itself, *Peace Corps Connect to the Future*, was prepared by a special NPCA advisory council drawn from the broad Peace Corps community inside and outside the United States: including recently evacuated Volunteers and those who served in the 1960s, diplomats and educators, NGO leaders

and filmmakers, to name a few. The recommendations in the report are based upon NPCA’s extensive engagement with the Peace Corps community. NPCA hosted eight town hall discussions that crystallized an understanding of the urgent needs impacting Peace Corps Volunteers and their work. To ensure that views about the future Peace Corps are broad and deep, NPCA also built upon multiple community-driven efforts, such as those led by Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RPCV/W).

This report provides specific and actionable recommendations for multiple stakeholders: policymakers in the Peace Corps agency and the federal Executive Branch’s leadership; the United States Congress; and the Peace Corps community, particularly NPCA. In each chapter, recommendations are divided into three categories of sequential importance:

Big Ideas

Targeted Recommendations

Additional Ideas for Consideration

As a critical next step, we strongly recommend that a commission, jointly appointed by the Peace Corps agency and NPCA, be formed to monitor and address the recommendations in this report. In addition, NPCA and the Peace Corps agency should work closely with Congress and relevant stakeholders to pass new comprehensive authorizing legislation, along the lines of Rep. John Garamendi’s (D-CA) *Peace Corps Reauthorization Act of 2019* (H.R. 3456), which will address many of these systemic issues.

The question right now for both the United States and the Peace Corps agency isn't *whether* to engage the world after the coronavirus. We must. The question now is *how* to do it.

First and foremost, the basic mission of the Peace Corps—to promote world peace and friendship—must be reaffirmed, embraced, and incorporated with greater innovation and intentionality into operations and programs. The world has changed dramatically from the binary Cold War paradigm to a multipolar and complex environment. Yet the pursuit of peace remains paramount, and it requires responding to climate change, inequity, and injustice by empowering people. Bridges of friendship between people and communities are essential to foster broader mutual understanding across cultures and nations. The Peace Corps embodies and amplifies America's commitment to peace and goodwill.

Sargent Shriver's foundational report to President John F. Kennedy in February 1961 recommended U.S. deployment of a **full array of volunteer sector partners** in the original Peace Corps model—including universities, faith-based and other nonprofit institutions, and the private sector. This concept should be reinvigorated with bold initiatives in the re-envisioned Peace Corps of the 21st century. Arising from the common global suffering of this pandemic, Peace Corps and its counterpart American domestic service partners, such as AmeriCorps (formerly the Corporation for National and Community Service) and the robust nonprofit voluntary sector, are well poised to provide leadership for an American and global recovery together with nations that host volunteers. That is why we recommend the White House convene a summit to reinvigorate the nation's alliances with a more robust brand of service at home and abroad.

Over the last 60 years, the world as a whole has become far more peaceful, and poverty has declined. The Peace Corps, even as a small agency, has contributed to that progress both through the impact of Volunteer service and through lifelong contributions of returned Volunteers who continue to live and promote Peace Corps values throughout their communities and careers. Yet by some inescapable measures, the past decade has seen the world become less peaceful; the number of refugees has doubled in the past 10 years. Nearly 80 million people, or one percent of humanity, qualify as refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced. And for communities that have

been riven by conflict and are suffering increasing economic hardship from climate change and the pandemic, it's not global averages but their particular experiences that define reality. The need for—and the value of—the Peace Corps remains as compelling as ever.

While each chapter of this report can stand alone with its own unique set of recommendations, during the community conversations it was made clear that three primary themes cut across the entirety of the issues discussed in the report:

1. The Peace Corps community must be a leader in addressing systemic racism.

The Peace Corps agency, like American society as a whole, is grappling with how to evolve so that its work fulfills the promise of our ideals. This means tackling agency hiring and recruitment, and greater support for Volunteers who are people of color, to ensure an equitable Peace Corps experience. It also means ensuring that perceptions of a “white savior complex” and neocolonialism are not reinforced. These are criticisms leveled at much work in international development, where not all actors are bound by the kinds of ideals that are meant to guide the Peace Corps. Conversely, many in the U.S. bristle when hearing these terms; but it's important to both recognize the context and address them head-on to enable a more effective and welcome return for Volunteers. NPCA and its affiliate groups must also demonstrate leadership in this space.

2. The Peace Corps agency needs to stand by its community—and leverage it for impact.

The agency's work is only as good as the contributions of the people who make it run. This does not mean only staff but includes, in particular, the broader community of Volunteers and returned Volunteers. In programs around the world, it absolutely includes the colleagues and communities that host Volunteers. NPCA has demonstrated that it is both possible and beneficial to become community-driven to promote the goals of the Peace Corps. Community-driven programming will keep the work both current and relevant to the world around us, ensuring that the agency succeeds in its mission in a changed world.

3. Now is the moment for the Peace Corps agency to enact dramatic change.

The opportunity for a reimagined and re-booted Peace Corps now exists and it should be taken. This report shows the way.

The core issues highlighted in this report focus on the following topics and are divided into eight separate chapters:

1. Fostering racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Peace Corps
2. Recruiting the next generation of Peace Corps Volunteers
3. Supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers during readjustment at home
4. Funding for the Peace Corps and Capitol Hill mobilization
5. Recalibrating Peace Corps programs for the future
6. Reexamining the Peace Corps' Second and Third Goals
7. Reforming Peace Corps' management policies for a changed world
8. Communicating, internally and externally, with the Peace Corps community

Because there are themes that cut across multiple areas, you will see similar recommendations echoed across more than one chapter. As you read this report, we also urge you to view the Peace Corps as a critical part of American foreign policy, development goals, and public diplomacy. Individually, many returned Volunteers serve in federal roles. Collectively, the Peace Corps has built incalculable soft power influence throughout the world, doing good in partnership with others while doing good for the United States. The more effective the Peace Corps is, the more effective American foreign policy is as well.

When it was established in 1961, the Peace Corps was given the mission of promoting world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. **Help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women**
2. **Help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served**
3. **Help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.**

As one recommendation in this report makes clear, we should not take for granted that these are the only goals that should define the work of the Peace Corps going forward—or that these are the words in which the goals should be articulated. Language matters. Emphasis matters, especially in work that is meant to empower individuals and communities. And the context of the post-COVID world matters profoundly.

The question right now for both the United States and the Peace Corps agency isn't *whether* to engage the world after the coronavirus. We must. The question now is *how* to do it. This moment of international crisis and domestic change has provided us with a period of critical reflection to restructure, retool, renew commitment, and get things right. The Peace Corps must meet the challenge of this moment just as it did at the height of the Cold War in 1961.

It is in this spirit that the special NPCA advisory council affirms that the Peace Corps should reflect the fullness of America and provide the country's best and truest face to the world. It should return to the field better, bolder, more inclusive, and more effective. The Peace Corps agency has reported that partner nations have all asked for the return of Volunteers as soon as conditions permit. A small number of Volunteers are scheduled to return in early 2021. The act of their return—or arrival in countries for new programs—will signal that a country can engage internationally in a post-pandemic world.

Peace Corps' first general counsel, Bill Josephson, is co-author with Warren Wiggins of the 1961 report that laid out the scope of what founding the Peace Corps entailed. They called the report *A Towering Task*. Assessing the challenges of 2021, Josephson surmises that relaunching Peace Corps will be an even greater towering task, with the agency requiring extraordinary leadership to return it successfully to the field.

This means that the next Peace Corps director should be appointed quickly. They should be an individual of national stature, preferably a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, who is committed to transformational change at the agency by advancing the recommendations included in this report. They must have the gravitas to advance the Peace Corps' interests with both Congress and the White House while also making the case to the American people about the value of a renewed Peace Corps for the United States.

We, the members of the special NPCA advisory council, hope that as you read the report, you too will hear the voices of the Peace Corps community, just as we heard them throughout this process. America's place in the world depends on it.

—Members of the NPCA Advisory Council for the
Peace Corps Connect to the Future Report, November 2020

Fostering Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Peace Corps

Overview

The Peace Corps agency and community can and must do a better job fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging amongst its ranks. Discussions focusing on this crucial issue have been held against the backdrop of both the racial justice debate taking place across the nation and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately harmed communities of color. Intentionality matters. A continuous review of how the Peace Corps can support volunteers of color should be made a part of the agency's permanent operations.

Big Ideas for Consideration

1.1 Include unconscious bias training in core training for all Volunteers.

Unconscious bias in host countries impacts Volunteers of color in multiple ways; oftentimes, so does conscious or socially-accepted bias. These Volunteers and their cohorts should be proactively supported with training and strategies for how best to manage such biases.

Background: Diversity, inclusion, and setting expectations for what Volunteers should expect in a country will provide the type of support for Volunteers of color that is needed to help them feel empowered to continue to serve as Volunteers when such issues arise. Peace Corps should make an extra effort to ensure Volunteers of color are supported to reduce early attrition. Doing so will strengthen recruitment of Volunteers of color and strengthen the Peace Corps' ability to achieve all three goals.

1.2 Provide robust in-country anti-discrimination support.

Volunteers of color, American staff of color, and Host Country staff should expect enhanced support when they are victims of discrimination.

Background: Americans serving overseas may not typically view themselves as potential victims of discrimination, but they are. Recognizing this and providing remedies for it is crucial to maintain volunteer morale and protection.

1.3 Provide avenues for Volunteers of color to connect.

The Peace Corps agency and National Peace Corps Association need to create systematic processes by which Volunteers of color can connect with and support one another; that is good for the Volunteers and Peace Corps as a whole. More support for spaces where Volunteers from disenfranchised communities can connect will also empower Volunteers and make them more successful in their work.

Background: Volunteers of color need easier access to a community of people who can support and relate to their experiences. That currently does not formally exist. Currently that access is ad-hoc and uneven, and creates a dynamic that does not support these Volunteers in a systematic manner. Networks for volunteers of color and Black Volunteers and other Volunteers of color should be formalized.

1.4 The application process must be transformed.

The system of how the Peace Corps engages potential Volunteers of color, from recruitment through close of service, should be reviewed for systemic bias, and it should be updated and, where necessary, reformed to be inclusive of all potential applicants.

Background: In addition to recruitment, when it comes to training, medical services, networking, and other areas of support, the agency is centered on the needs of white Volunteers as "normal." Traditionally resources have not been geared in the same way to support Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and other people of color who serve as Volunteers.

1.5 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

1.5.1 Establish a Peace Corps National Advisory Council targeted to addressing systemic racism. Draw primarily from leadership within the Peace Corps community, particularly returned Volunteers of color, including those with Peace Corps agency experience, and leaders at agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and NGOs committed to ensuring equity in their institutions.

1.5.2 Enhance support programs created by and for Volunteers of color: The Peace Corps agency as well as the Peace Corps community need to promote and build on existing support systems for Volunteers of color, such as the RPCV-developed and community-supported Adopt a Black Peace Corps Volunteer program to provide messages of support and empathy from home as some Americans do for military serving overseas.

1.5.3 Increase resources for recruitment: The Peace Corps agency needs to proactively recruit Volunteers of color outside of just Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions, and it needs to target younger groups in high schools and even elementary schools. In addition, the Peace Corps agency should view national service as a partnership pipeline for Peace Corps service, potentially by partnering with other service organizations such as AmeriCorps.

1.5.4 Bolster outreach to lower income applicants: In recruitment efforts the Peace Corps agency needs to create meaningful and comprehensive plans and processes to intentionally reach out to families and communities of color, as well as lower income families of all ethnic backgrounds, to introduce them to the Peace Corps and its benefits.

1.5.5 Rethink messaging to communities of color: The Peace Corps agency needs to review and redouble its marketing strategies in order to package messaging that engages communities that are historically inequitably represented as Volunteers.

1.5.6 Provide financial assistance: The Peace Corps agency should strengthen benefits for communities of color or indi-

The Peace Corps agency should strengthen benefits for communities of color or individuals from lower socioeconomic levels to make Peace Corps service viable. This starts with providing financial assistance for them to be able to consider applying but should not stop there.

viduals from lower socioeconomic levels to make Peace Corps service viable. This starts with providing financial assistance for them to be able to consider applying but should not stop there. Work with universities, businesses, and foundations that are pro-service to help with financial support.

1.5.7 Relaunch the Peace Corps' Office of Minority and National Recruitment: The Peace Corps agency launched this initiative with great success in the past, but the office has been dismantled—as have programs that reflect this objective. It needs to be reconstituted permanently, so that there is a sustained effort made within the agency to recruit Volunteers of color as part of core efforts.

1.5.8 Promote stakeholders of color: The Peace Corps agency and NPCA need to engage and showcase major stakeholders of color—particularly veteran staff and returned Volunteers who are leaders in a broad range of fields in the United States. The community and the country can and should benefit more from their experience and knowledge, but the perception is that the agency and NPCA have not tapped their expertise or told their stories.

1.5.9 Give priority to hiring people of color: The Peace Corps agency and NPCA both need to prioritize hiring people of color, especially RPCVs, to increase representation and inclusivity in senior level leadership. This will make both the agency and NPCA stronger and more reflective of the values they aspire to represent.

Recruiting the Next Generation of Peace Corps Volunteers

Overview

Recruiting the next generation of Peace Corps Volunteers requires renewed focus on how to build a diverse pipeline of strong and committed applicants who can reflect America overseas—and address pressing global needs. Key issues to focus on are: “What is the central message that the Peace Corps needs to convey to attract Volunteers? Where and how does outreach need to happen? What will Volunteers of the future look like, in terms of skills, experience, diversity, and motivation? What is the role of the RPCV community?”

Big Ideas for Consideration

2.1 Initiate joint recruitment with other national service programs.

The Peace Corps should work with AmeriCorps, Teach for America, and Senior Corps to recruit participants.

Background: This is a recommendation of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. Potential volunteers are called to service for a variety of reasons. A joint recruitment process could help each person find the service program that works for them while increasing awareness about all programs. In addition to increasing visibility, this combined approach to recruitment might also be more cost-efficient.

2.2 The Peace Corps Agency should leverage the 180+ National Peace Corps Association Affiliate Groups to help recruit new Volunteers.

Each returned Volunteer has their own experience in service. The RPCV community is the best source of knowledge for a potential Volunteer.

Background: An opportunity exists to integrate RPCV affiliate groups into the recruitment process. National Peace Corps Association boasts more than 180 affiliate groups organized around countries of service; regions and cities in the United States; places of employment, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and causes, such as environmental action. The affiliate groups can give potential applicants a deeper understanding of what Peace Corps service is all about while

extending the Peace Corps agency’s recruitment arm, especially into underrepresented communities of potential applicants. By expanding access and awareness, this initiative will lead more and different potential applicants to consider joining the Peace Corps.

2.3 Expand recruitment efforts on and off campus.

Both the Peace Corps agency and NPCA would benefit from an increase in the number of university partnerships. The presence of Peace Corps on university campuses can and should have greater impact as well, by ensuring that partnership agreements include outreach to nearby communities—not only on campus. The agency should also look again at basing recruitment off campus.

Background: Peace Corps currently has campus recruiters and strategic recruiters on some university campuses, but there are more universities without a recruitment presence than universities with one. Focusing on universities and their surrounding communities could help increase applicant diversity.

2.4 Reexamine assumptions about what makes a good candidate.

Along with looking at concrete skills and experience, the Peace Corps agency should address questions such as: Do attitudes and personality traits make the most successful volunteers? And how can outreach efforts be improved to find that person? This may involve a new way of thinking about some of the selection criteria. For example, in community discussions a story was shared about a returned Volunteer who had a phenomenal

service but faced a very difficult application process due to a misdemeanor offense as a teenager. Selection criteria should be broadened to be more inclusive of diverse experiences shared by applicants, and it should build upon the consideration Peace Corps already gives to experienced applicants who may not possess a college degree.

2.5 Foster interagency collaboration on infrastructure that supports recruitment.

Significant federal resources exist that the Peace Corps agency can leverage to enhance recruitment, financial support for the pre-medical screening process, and other pre-service activities. For example, applicants currently pay out-of-pocket for medical assessments and/or procedures required by the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps agency should explore interagency partnerships with agencies that have the capacity to conduct medical examinations.

2.6 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

2.6.1 Refocus messaging: The storytelling aspect of our community is crucial to attracting new Volunteers. The agency should update the recruitment slogan to one that meets the current moment. Messaging and marketing for the Peace Corps starts from the moment a person learns about the Peace Corps. Letting people know what the work is about is crucial.

2.6.2 The Peace Corps agency must diversify: Not just racial diversity, but diversity that encompasses age, experience, socioeconomic background, and persons with disabilities will only strengthen the Peace Corps community. This goal should be central to recruitment efforts and is not directed only at outreach efforts, but also for the evaluation and selection processes. Policies, plans, and strategies need to be developed to help achieve this.

2.6.3 Budget for campus recruitment: Reexamine the budget allocation and partnership agreements for campus recruitment activities. Campus recruiters build awareness of the Peace Corps and increase the likelihood of a successful application. Additionally, if the partnerships with universities were expanded, campus recruiters could also work more effectively with off-campus community groups.

2.6.4 Involve National Peace Corps Association and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community in recruitment: The Peace Corps agency should leverage and empower NPCA to generate more RPCV involvement in recruitment. They have critical knowledge to share when recruiting Volunteers.

2.6.5 DACA recipients should be recruited to join the Peace Corps. A “Dreamer Corps” would resonate powerfully. Explore establishing a partner arrangement with the appropriate federal agency (Department of Labor, Homeland Security) to enable DACA recipients to serve as Peace Corps Volunteers in Latin America and elsewhere.

2.6.6 Leave no school behind: Early exposure to the Peace Corps, potentially in high schools, plants a seed for the idea of national service. The Peace Corps agency should commission NPCA, through its affiliate groups, to engage at least one RPCV to speak at every high school in America, at least once per year. Through a partnership with NPCA, the agency should also expand and reinvigorate the World Wise Schools program, established by Sen. Paul Coverdell in 1989 to teach Americans about the world by providing educational resources to promote global competence. It has been remarked that there is no reason the Peace Corps can’t be a part of the curriculum at a range of grade levels.

2.7 Additional Ideas for Consideration

2.7.1 Peace Corps should commission NPCA to survey its affiliate groups to help identify the gaps that exist in Peace Corps’ ability to recruit a more diverse group of Volunteers.

2.7.2 Employers of National Service (EONS) should encourage staff to join the Peace Corps for a two-year “sabbatical.” There are some 600 agencies and institutions already part of the EONS partnership. The EONS initiative was launched in 2014 by the Corporation for National and Community Service with the partnership of Peace Corps, AmeriCorps Alums, National Peace Corps Association, and The Franklin Project. It is meant to create a talent pipeline to connect returned Peace Corps Volunteers and AmeriCorps alumni with leading employers from private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

2.7.3 Partnering with AARP to recruit more older Volunteers should be considered, as there has been a sharp decline in aged 50+ Volunteers in recent years.

2.7.4 Form recruitment and outreach partnerships with national secular and faith-based NGOs to enhance the renewed Peace Corps mission, including but not limited to: Building Bridges Coalition, Volunteer Groups Alliance, International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), Service Year Alliance, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Repair the World (Jewish), and comparable Protestant, Muslim and other faith-based and major voluntary organizations.

Supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers During Readjustment at Home

Overview

The Peace Corps has long understood that there are tremendous challenges for Volunteers returning to the United States after service. Since the 1990s the agency has adopted the term “reentry,” borrowing the term from NASA; and the agency has had data for decades which shows that support for returning Volunteers is essential. Yet support for returning Volunteers has never been viewed as adequate, and it has diminished in recent years. The COVID-19 evacuation utterly overwhelmed the scaled-back system. There is a fundamental need to improve and expand programming.

Big Ideas for Consideration

3.1 Lengthen Returned Volunteers’ access to effective post-service health insurance.

The Peace Corps’ medical services should be revamped in order to increase the amount of time that a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer can stay on health insurance while adjusting to life back in the United States. In addition to the **one month of health insurance** provided by the Peace Corps, RPCVs should have access to this insurance extended, at their own expense, for up to six months. We also recommend increased access to mental health support post-service with no stigma or “red flag” as a consequence. Volunteers should be given access to at least 10 mental health appointments with the possibility of extension if deemed necessary.

Background: Given that the post-Peace Corps job search can easily take six months or more, the **current two-month access coverage** is inadequate and needs to be lengthened. Increased coverage of mental health services without stigma is also important and is fully in line with Peace Corps’ congressionally-mandated commitment to its three goals; it would also ensure that the country realizes the greatest return on investment possible in Volunteers’ experience.

3.2 Extend Returned Peace Corps Volunteers’ non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for federal employment.

Currently returned Peace Corps Volunteers are limited to non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for one year. Eligibility should be expanded to three years to mirror the three years of

NCE that Peace Corps staff currently receive when they leave the Peace Corps agency. This is consistent with recommendations from the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service for *all* national service agencies.

Background: Not all RPCVs return immediately to the United States after service, though they have gained experience that would benefit manifold federal agencies. For returning Volunteers, eligibility for hiring into federal service is currently just one year. This ends up excluding many RPCVs who do want to serve in the federal government. As a consequence, the American people miss out on leveraging their flexibility, skills at solving problems, commitment to hands-on work, and recognition of the value of service. Protection is also needed for returning Volunteers who are disabled and unable to work immediately after service to ensure that the clock on their NCE status does not begin until they are able to work.

3.3 Implement a “Reverse Staging” program to support returning Volunteers.

The standard Close of Service (COS) conference for Peace Corps Volunteers should be augmented with a “Reverse Staging” in the United States to better support the soon-to-be returned Volunteer by addressing reverse culture shock, employment challenges, and reintegration. The Peace Corps agency should commission National Peace Corps Association to provide this service through its Global Reentry Program, which was rapidly rolled out to support evacuated Volunteers in 2020. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers should be introduced to nationally and internationally oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), foundations, charitable organizations,

social entrepreneurs, and other organizations that share the ideals of the Peace Corps.

Background: Staging is a pre-service training program geared to prepare future Volunteers for service. A “Reverse Staging” would involve a greater focus on providing extended support for the RPCV, including making a clear connection for them to appropriate affiliate groups for additional support. Community discussions noted that just as NASA does not throw astronauts into space and expect them to get back home without a comprehensive plan for reentry, the Peace Corps should not end Volunteers’ service without meaningful support. The standard COS conference at posts is typically implemented three months before the scheduled departure by a group of Volunteers; it focuses largely on administrative close-out processes. The final act of completing service is generally anticlimactic, and it largely fails to prepare new RPCVs for engagement in the Peace Corps community following service. A “Reverse Staging” program delivered under a cooperative agreement by NPCA offers a clear solution. Returning Volunteers should have the option to participate in a quarterly week-long virtual or in-person readjustment training; RPCVs could take advantage of beneficial resources and build key connections. The benefit of doing so is clear, as RPCVs who feel well-supported in readjustment will undoubtedly become the Peace Corps community’s best ambassadors—and a pipeline for quality future Peace Corps candidates.

3.4 Review the financial incentive packages.

The Peace Corps agency should reform the entire financial incentive package to make the Peace Corps accessible to Volunteers of a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds. There should be a means test using FAFSA or IRS individual tax returns to help determine the level of readjustment support allocated to each Volunteer. This could include an expansion of loan forgiveness, readjustment allowance settlements, and award programs. National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps agency should also explore public-private partnerships to create a financial incentive package to complement existing programs such as the Coverdell Fellows Program, which is available to some pursuing postgraduate education after service. The minimum for readjustment allowance should be raised from the current \$125/month to at least \$417/month of service. A current provision in H.R. 3456 amending the Peace Corps Act to reflect that statutorily should become the new “floor” for Peace Corps Readjustment allowance.

Background: There are many barriers to Peace Corps service, and a major one is financial accessibility. The readjustment allowance has not kept pace with the cost of living in the U.S. over the years, and it should be evaluated to ensure that it meets current realities. Volunteers can and should come from a broad

“We are given three months of training to integrate into a community. At best we’re given a three-day Close of Service conference to readjust to the States, but then no real support from the agency.”

—Rok Locksley, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Global Ideas Summit, July 2020

range of socioeconomic backgrounds, and we need to ensure that all individuals who are interested in service see it as a viable option, regardless of their own financial means. This is important to leveling the playing field and enabling equitable practices to address the exclusion of disenfranchised communities.

3.5 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

3.5.1 Consolidate and streamline access to resources to support Returned Peace Corps Volunteers: The Peace Corps agency and NPCA need to closely coordinate a strategy to support Volunteers during reentry. There is a significant amount of information available that can support volunteer readjustment, but how it is made available—or must be sought out—is confusing to Volunteers finishing service. The Close of Service program should help to manage the critical information needed by returning Volunteers.

3.5.2 Provide more personalized RPCV career support upon reentry. The Peace Corps agency closed its RPCV Career Center and brought an end to individualized career counseling. National Peace Corps Association now does the lion’s share of this work through its Global Reentry Program, implemented nimbly to support evacuated Volunteers in 2020. The Peace Corps agency should empower and enable NPCA to enhance the Global Reentry Program for RPCVs more broadly.

3.5.3 Strengthen the Close of Service conference: The current COS system is too short at just two to three days total. The content is inconsistent from country to country. Some posts seek to provide a robust program addressing readjustment in their COS programming, while others provide little outside of standard paperwork and close-out processes—and utterly fail to address post-service job search. A one-week conference is recommended, to include more consistent training and

resources for RPCVs. Peace Corps Response Volunteers, who serve short-term assignments, are currently not invited to COS conferences. They should be.

3.5.4 Invite an NPCA representative to every Close of Service conference: The Peace Corps agency needs to ensure that Volunteers understand that NPCA and its 180+ affiliate groups are their Peace Corps community ready to welcome them back home. Whether by videoconference or in person (NPCA has in-country ambassadors), an NPCA representative should be scheduled to attend every COS conference to speak about RPCV life, readjustment, and the value of service in their communities and careers to come.

3.6 Additional Ideas for Consideration

3.6.1 Before, during, and after their service, Volunteers should be educated about National Peace Corps Association and affiliate group resources available to them.

3.6.2 Peace Corps should connect all Returned Peace Corps

Volunteers—particularly Volunteers evacuated in 2020—to NPCA to help them find appropriate country-of-service affiliate groups, regional groups in the U.S., and workplace-related groups.

3.6.3 Capture lessons learned from a Facebook group that was created in March 2020 to assist Volunteers who were being evacuated; implement these lessons into an evacuee strategic plan. The Facebook group was nimble and supportive in its responses to the immediate, urgent needs of evacuated Volunteers in transit and back in the United States.

3.6.4 Expand graduate school support opportunities through the Paul D. Coverdell Fellowship program. More extensive outreach to graduate programs encouraging universities to expand offerings and graduate education financial assistance is needed.

3.6.5 Offer professional development in social justice so the Peace Corps community can be better leaders in our communities back home.

Funding for the Peace Corps and Capitol Hill Mobilization

Overview

The future of Peace Corps agency funding and budget priorities depends upon the support of the broader Peace Corps community, as the community plays a central role in securing resources for the future of the agency. What the nation imagines for and demands of the Peace Corps' future must be both realistic and inspiring. The Peace Corps community, through National Peace Corps Association, should seek to advance the community's views in the policymaking arena by being effective advocates. Congress and the White House must ensure that the agency has the resources to accomplish the towering task in front of it. Funding for the agency has been flat for five years at \$410.5 million. Adjusted for inflation, this has meant the effective purchasing power has dropped by nearly \$40 million. New initiatives post-COVID will be more costly. And aspirations to put 10,000 Volunteers in the field will need the funds to make that possible.

Big Ideas for Consideration

4.1 Report more effectively on the Peace Corps' impact.

There was a strong consensus among town hall participants that Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have powerful stories of accomplishment and transformation that should be more effectively shared with policymakers, thought leaders, and the American public. Advocates for Peace Corps need to provide regular, comprehensive data and storytelling to demonstrate the effectiveness, value, and return on investment—foreign and domestic—provided through Peace Corps service when it comes to fulfilling all three of Peace Corps' goals. The Peace Corps agency should commission NPCA as an independent entity to produce a survey to more adequately measure the impact of all three goals of the Peace Corps; an annual survey should be produced thereafter.

Background: The Peace Corps is seen as the gold standard for service. That is something the community needs to leverage in explaining the impact of the Peace Corps to all American audiences, including policymakers. By investing further in storytelling and messaging by the community, advocacy efforts will become more effective and consistent.

4.2 Expand advocacy.

National Peace Corps Association should grow and diversify its presence each year on Capitol Hill beyond the annual National

An achievable goal should be to raise the number of Volunteers to 10,000 by 2025, while at the same time achieving necessary structural and policy reforms.

Days of Action in March. Efforts could include: enhanced constituent engagement at the state and congressional district level; bolstered grass tops efforts; strengthened partnerships to expand mobilization on like-minded issues; integrated communications efforts, such as op-eds and letters to the editors, with lobbying strategy; and deeper engagement with host country nationals, diaspora communities, and other friends to express support for the Peace Corps. Messaging should link the Peace Corps' value to American national security. An achievable goal should be to raise the number of Volunteers to 10,000 by 2025, while at the same time achieving necessary structural and policy reforms.

Background: NPCA is in the process of rolling out a campaign to address the clear need to bring together the entire Peace Corps community. This campaign involves the full range of registered affiliate groups—country-of-service groups, regional groups, employer-based groups, cause-related groups—as well as individual returned Volunteers and former staff, the Peace Corps agency, and other community friends.

The next President of the United States should be enlisted to include a White House summit to reinvigorate the nation's alliances with a more robust brand of service at home and abroad.

4.3 Build a stronger domestic constituency.

The Peace Corps agency should partner with NPCA to create a strategy to capture and leverage the community for support of the Peace Corps' three goals. Increased data sharing between the agency and NPCA will enhance efforts to strengthen this diffuse constituency. Increased emphasis by the Peace Corps agency on domestic Third Goal activities will also strengthen these efforts.

Background: Returned Peace Corps Volunteers live in every corner of the United States and are a natural advocacy constituency for Peace Corps funding. However, of the 240,000+ RPCVs, more than half are not within the mobilization network of National Peace Corps Association.

4.4 Activate involvement of the White House to support service.

The next President of the United States should be enlisted to include a White House summit to reinvigorate the nation's alliances with a more robust brand of service at home and abroad. The diplomatic corps from around the world, both in Washington and via United Nations Missions in New York, should be engaged in this process, as should host country diaspora associations in the United States, in collaboration with the State Department, United States Agency for International Development, and the Peace Corps agency.

Background: Presidential leadership has been central to creating the Peace Corps and directing major international initiatives over the decades. Returning Volunteers to the field will require presidential leadership within the context of renewed American diplomatic and development initiatives.

4.5 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

4.5.1 Marshal and mobilize private sector funds for the Peace Corps: National Peace Corps Association should utilize its already-existing Peace Corps Foundation (currently doing

business as the Peace Corps Commemorative Fund) to raise supplemental funds for specific Peace Corps programs, as well as NPCA activities and Returned Peace Corps Volunteer programs. This would ensure greater flexibility, transparency, and accountability for private sector contributions to the Peace Corps. Models for such work include the CDC Foundation and the National Environmental Education Foundation.

4.5.2 Strengthen relationships with Congress: Through the foundation, NPCA should sponsor and lead congressional trips overseas to visit Peace Corps Volunteers in the field. In addition, work to integrate congressional delegations (CODEL) overseas visits to include Peace Corps site visits. National Peace Corps Association should consider establishing both political action committee (PAC) and 501(c)4 entities to strengthen congressional relationships. Explore creating a "Global Peace" Congressional Fellows Program on Capitol Hill. Congressional Member briefings by RPCVs can also be incorporated as a regular part of the Volunteer reentry process, which will have the dual effect of enhancing the understanding and support for the program by members of Congress, while providing added social capital for RPCVs in their next phases of career/service.

4.5.3 Prioritize and directly support the Third Goal of the Peace Corps: There is a forced tradeoff between support for Peace Corps Volunteers in the field and support for the Third Goal—work by returned Volunteers to leverage their experience in the United States. The tradeoff leaves little funding or staff resources for the critical Third Goal. Increased effort on the Third Goal could reap benefits for many other aspects of the Peace Corps outlined here and elsewhere over the long term. A dedicated funding line would ensure this goal gets the attention it deserves. National Peace Corps Association would be the logical partner through which the Peace Corps could more cost-effectively achieve greater impact in the area of the Third Goal, to help transform many American citizens into effective global citizens and leaders.

4.6 Additional Ideas for Consideration

4.6.1 The Peace Corps for a changed world may need more than three goals; establish a Committee on the Fourth Goal: During 2021, the 60th anniversary year for the Peace Corps, the agency and NPCA should establish a "Committee on the Fourth Goal," charged with considering a potential Fourth Goal for the Peace Corps. In various parts of the Peace Corps community, the term is already applied informally in different ways—from continuing to work with and to support communities where a Volunteer served to using Peace Corps skills to work on community-building at home.

4.6.2 The agency should enable and encourage Peace Corps

Volunteers to be in touch with NPCA during their service, including supporting efforts to help them directly engage their Members of Congress to understand the value and impact of their work.

4.6.3 National Peace Corps Association should expand and strengthen its partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Historically Hispanic-Serving Institutions, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, the Fulbright Association, and other NGOs focused on national service in support of the organization's advocacy objectives.

4.6.4 National Peace Corps Association should assist RPCVs to work with diaspora groups from their countries of service.

4.6.5 Private sector partners could be leveraged for special Third Goal events and activities with RPCVs, hosted by or with Members of Congress, universities, mayors of towns and cities, and governors where larger RPCV delegation opportunities

A dedicated funding line would ensure this goal gets the attention it deserves. National Peace Corps Association would be the logical partner through which the Peace Corps could more cost-effectively achieve greater impact.

warrant. These would be in coordination with NPCA.

4.6.6 With an eye toward funding, recommendations in this report on racial diversity, equity, and inclusion could receive timely philanthropic and corporate sponsorship and attention in conjunction with the current national conversation around racial justice solutions.

Recalibrating Peace Corps Programs for the Future

Overview

The Peace Corps agency should recalibrate its field programs to inspire more Americans to serve by joining the Peace Corps. Agency programming needs to reflect mutually reinforcing priorities of the host country, the U.S. Government, and the Peace Corps community—including Peace Corps Volunteers and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), as well as host communities. The goal should be to create a partnership of equals amongst these stakeholders, and should be aligned with the objectives of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Programmatic focus should also reflect the urgent global challenges facing the international community, such as climate change, pandemic response, and social and economic equity, with the Peace Corps agency having a primary seat at the U.S. Government's international affairs table. The United States will rebuild alliances hand-in-hand with a more robust and innovative Peace Corps, together with National Peace Corps Association, other key partners, and our broader community of RPCVs.

Sargent Shriver's foundational report to President John F. Kennedy in February 1961 recommended U.S. deployment of a full array of volunteer sector partners in the original Peace Corps model, including universities, faith-based and other nonprofit institutions, and the private sector. This model should be ramped up and more boldly empowered in the re-envisioned Peace Corps of the 21st century. Arising from the common global suffering of this pandemic, Peace Corps and its counterpart American domestic service partners, including AmeriCorps and the robust nonprofit voluntary sector, are well poised to provide leadership for an American and global recovery together with our hosting nations.

Big Ideas for Consideration

5.1 Focus on climate change as a cross-sector initiative.

Climate change response should be emphasized as the agency's highest programmatic priority, with training and field programs adjusted accordingly. Doing so will not only enhance Volunteer efforts in the field but will also generate excitement amongst future recruits and help to inspire a new generation of Volunteers.

Background: Current Peace Corps programs—agriculture, public health, education, environment, business—often intersect with climate change. Many host countries are already seeing impacts of climate change, from catastrophic storms to droughts and floods. Addressing climate change is a global priority, and virtually every country has a national strategy to combat climate change that Peace Corps Volunteers can support.

5.2 Partner with local NGOs and international organizations in the field.

Expand partnerships where they already exist, and establish them where they do not. The Peace Corps should be actively working to strengthen local organizations in order to create sustainable impacts. This should be a global requirement for all Volunteer assignments where feasible. National Peace Corps Association and the agency should partner in efforts to bring U.S. NGO resources to the field, and seek to collaborate with reputable INGOs and United Nations agencies. A Peace Corps Office of Global Partnerships should carefully vet partner NGOs to ensure that they are not affiliated with local political parties or ethnic and religious groups, or with self-professed human rights organizations that promote parochial interests rather than broader human rights issues.

Background: Local NGOs provide Volunteers integration into the community, and they potentially offer sustainability for

projects. Volunteers should work with and/or assist NGO staff with capacity building and sustainability. Meanwhile, international organizations can expand volunteer resources and reach.

5.3 Professionalize the Volunteer experience.

Obtaining a fuller inventory of the skills that prospective Volunteers bring will ensure that Volunteers can maximize their experience, that their work is effective, and that prospective Volunteers see opportunities for personal success. By using these skill sets to customize assignments, the Peace Corps could attract more experts and mid-career Volunteers. This would increase the diversity of Volunteers, allow for a wider variety of assignments, and provide opportunities for greater impact. It would also make the Peace Corps a more community-driven organization. For Peace Corps posts with existing Peace Corps Response programs, Peace Corps could adopt an approach where applicants propose their own project assignments, sites, and even counterparts—within post-defined priority programming parameters—directly to programming staff at post.

Background: Current assignments match the broad skills of incoming Volunteers with the requested host country needs, providing a generalized match for Volunteers within specific program areas. This focus on specific skills should happen earlier in the process to help shape and create assignment opportunities.

5.4 Confront “white saviorism” by reconsidering Peace Corps’ First Goal.

The first waves of Peace Corps Volunteers were called upon to “help” nations and communities with technical skills and development needs. This perception of the role of the Peace Corps is based on relationships between nations 60 years ago; it should be updated to reflect the roles of current and future Volunteers with stepped-up focus on in-country capacity and Volunteer empowerment. In addition, consider working with “reverse Peace Corps” models, such as Atlas Corps, and multilateral impact consortia. Revising the First Goal’s language will be a step toward addressing this gap.

Background: Multiple countries may not want “help” on the old Peace Corps model, but they *do* want the Peace Corps in their country, as communities benefit from people who wish to work side-by-side in “service” to each other. Kul Chandra Gautam, a diplomat from Nepal and former deputy executive director of UNICEF whose education benefited from Peace Corps Volunteers, put it so: “Our increasingly interconnected world demands global *solidarity*, not *charity*, to solve global problems that transcend national borders like the specter of

war, terrorism, racism, climate change, and pandemics like COVID-19.” Those words provide part of the epigraph for this report, but they merit repeating here.

5.5 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

5.5.1 Make diversity and inclusion a priority for field programs: Recruitment of and support for more diverse Volunteers and staff is needed, and program training and support should continually address the challenges faced by Black Volunteers and other people of color. Training on implicit bias and racism should be integrated into technical training and support for Volunteers.

5.5.2 Improve monitoring and evaluation of programs: Program sustainability is central to Peace Corps activities in the field, and the method of evaluation must be strengthened. Efforts should focus on the impact of Peace Corps Volunteers, and evaluations should place shared value on qualitative as well as quantitative measures. Consider deploying assessment indices of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals as a common, collective impact framework already agreed to by host countries. Such evaluation should help plan for program sustainability long after the individual Peace Corps Volunteer’s work on a project has finished.

5.5.3 Leverage the expertise developed by Volunteers to achieve the Third Goal: The experience Peace Corps Volunteers gain is an investment in U.S. citizens. They bring newly acquired knowledge, technical skills, and language skills back to U.S. communities. More robust focus on the Third Goal will both enhance the return on investment in Volunteers and help more Americans understand the value of service.

5.5.4 Collaborate closely with volunteer services of other countries: Volunteers from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Japan, United Nations programs, and others would be ideal partners for field programs. The Peace Corps should engage them and emulate some of their best practices.

5.5.5 Scale up Peace Corps Response as a vital tool of engagement and support: Peace Corps Response members can collaborate with RPCV affiliate groups, together with NPCA, to leverage in-kind project support and potential small grant assistance for sector capacity-building and Volunteer alliances.

Reexamining the Peace Corps' Second and Third Goals

Overview

The Peace Corps agency should reexamine its use of the Second and Third Goals. In the agency's originating legislation, the Second Goal is: "Help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served." The Third Goal is: "Help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans." It is generally understood that goals two and three put the "peace" into "Peace Corps," yet these are often overlooked when compared to the agency's First Goal: "Help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women." That goal is the one most typically associated with the work of Peace Corps service. The Second and Third Goals need enhanced emphasis so that the agency can more fully achieve its mission.

Big Ideas for Consideration

6.1 Measure the outcomes of the Second and Third Goals.

The definition of Peace Corps success should explicitly address goal two and three efforts. These goals are central to the agency's originating legislation and serve a purpose in achieving the agency's mission. Their inclusion strengthens the cumulative impact of the Peace Corps; their exclusion unnecessarily weakens the recognition of that impact. Resources should be dedicated to understanding and bolstering their specific impacts.

Background: The First Goal is measured tangibly, and it is the commonly used metric for evaluating Peace Corps' effectiveness. However, the Second Goal and Third Goal are equally relevant for measuring the agency's success and should be treated as such. These goals form a core part of the agency's budget justification, yet how they are measured does not effectively convey their value to policymakers.

6.2 Establish a Peace Corps Agency–National Peace Corps Association Third Goal partnership.

There is a need for multi-year, sustained agency commitments to Third Goal implementation and evaluation, to ensure programmatic success. To better capitalize on their comparative advantages and maximize impact on the Third Goal, the Peace Corps agency should formalize and fund a strategic partnership with NPCA to more effectively harness the grassroots power and potential of NPCA's 180+ affiliate groups encompassing over 200,000 individuals across the United States. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers should be incentivized to conduct Third Goal activities. There must be a structured and fluid data

pipeline between the agency and NPCA to optimize effective and continued engagement of RPCVs on the Third Goal.

Background: The Peace Corps agency is expert at deploying and supporting Volunteers in the field. National Peace Corps Association is expert at supporting and engaging RPCVs in the United States. The overlap of missions and duplicity of efforts, coupled with the Peace Corps agency's inconsistent budget allocations for Third Goal activities, lessens Third Goal impact by both organizations. Yet Congress measures the Peace Corps, in part, on its Third Goal success. NPCA can enhance Third Goal impact more cost effectively than the Peace Corps agency can. NPCA is also uniquely positioned to advance global social justice issues as part of its Third Goal activities.

6.3 Promote ethical storytelling.

Train and create opportunities for Peace Corps Volunteers to facilitate storytelling that empowers the communities and counterparts they serve, and that is anti-racist and anti-colonialist.

Background: During the first 60 years of the Peace Corps, realization of the Third Goal has largely been interpreted and accomplished as RPCVs talking about their experiences living in a new culture and telling stories on behalf of the people they interacted with. The goal in this isn't to tell happy stories about American saviors but to promote honest dialogue through ethical storytelling, including on issues such as racial justice and diversity. Indeed, much of the town hall discussions focused on the need for Goals Two and Three to be reinterpreted to directly address these kinds of issues. The Peace Corps should also pursue more direct coordination with university programs,

State Department exchange programs, and other programs, and expand opportunities for host country partners to share their own stories.

6.4 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

6.4.1 Foster a two-way exchange with host countries: Volunteerism should be a two-way street. Americans as individuals, and the United States as a country, could benefit greatly from partnerships with volunteers from countries where the Peace Corps is currently operating. Explore a “reverse Peace Corps,” in partnership with domestic U.S. government programs such as AmeriCorps, various Fulbright programs, and other federal agencies, as well as with private and nonprofit sector organizations such as Atlas Corps (which brings young leaders to the United States), CorpsAfrica (which enlists volunteers from countries in Africa to serve in Africa), Brookings-Building Bridges Coalition, Harris Wofford Fellows, and Girls Leading Our World. By way of background: it’s helpful to recognize that the late Senator Harris Wofford, a founding architect of the Peace Corps, along with Sargent Shriver, often shared with the Peace Corps community what he envisioned as a modern “quantum leap” for the Peace Corps through multi-sector as well as multilateral and in-country empowerment. This recommendation takes that to heart.

6.4.2 Strengthen the Second and Third Goals to include a focus on racial justice, diversity, and inclusion: These goals should be updated to focus on racial justice and celebrate diversity for host country audiences. The goals are written too broadly to effectively address the pressing racial justice issues of our times. Fostering a more inclusive understanding of the American people and “other peoples” in host countries will ensure that these goals meet the current moment and the future.

6.4.3 More effectively integrate Goals Two and Three into performance evaluations: Program success is often measured only by First Goal results. Yet the Second Goal and Third Goal matter to the success of the Peace Corps’ mission. The priority of these goals can be raised through evaluating programs and staff on their work on these goals. Additional staff, training, and program resources may be needed.

6.4.4 Prioritize Second Goal activities for the Country Director: Peace Corps missions should work with host-country partners, through formalized agreements and proactive activities, to advance the Second Goal in-country. While the Peace Corps Country Directors engage the host country to advance people-to-people objectives that increase understanding of the American people by the host country, the results of these engagements are unclear and can vary from post to post.

“That’s the main aim of the Peace Corps: to empower the people.”

—Mohamud Sheikh Nurein Said,
Governor of the Red Cross in Kenya

6.4.5 Strengthen Volunteer and staff training on issues of racism and racial inequities: Training should be more culturally current, while including accurate history, including specific efforts to train Volunteers who are people of color. The Peace Corps needs to expand its training for Volunteers and staff on the history of a host-country’s issues related to racism and intercultural relations. Training for Volunteers and staff should also focus on how to communicate American diversity. Local community counterparts and hosts should also receive training on diversity and racial equality, drawing on universal values of human rights as well as unique indigenous cultural contributions to tolerance and acceptance. Concerns about discrimination and racism felt by Volunteers of color should be addressed so that they are supported by their fellow Volunteers and U.S. staff.

6.4.6 Refine the First Goal: It should reflect the spirit of solidarity and mutual learning in order to avoid what is sometimes seen as “white saviorism.” The phrasing of the First Goal currently is: “Help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.” But in the 21st century, the Peace Corps community recognizes that the work is meant to empower people—communities and Volunteers alike. That point was underscored at the NPCA Global Ideas Summit by Mohamud Sheikh Nurein Said, currently governor of the Red Cross in Kenya, whose life and work have benefited from Peace Corps: “That’s the main aim of the Peace Corps,” he said, “to empower the people.”

6.5 Additional Ideas for Consideration

6.5.1 Create a Second and Third Goal Country Coordinator at each post or at least in each region. This will provide a focused, measurable, and coordinated effort to ensure that both goals are being met.

6.5.2 The transfer of contact information for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Peace Corps service to National Peace Corps Association should be strengthened. Enable simple opt-in membership in NPCA. Facilitate the transition from Volunteer to Returned Volunteer in a way that RPCVs are plugged in to NPCA and they can seamlessly continue service at home—such as COVID-19 response efforts, community-sponsored projects, or the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program.

Reforming Peace Corps' Management Policies for a Changing World

Overview

Multiple policies guide the Peace Corps experience and directly affect Volunteers' health, safety and security, diversity, benefits, and post-service support. The current suspension of Peace Corps programs serves as an inflection point at which to address and reform shortcomings in these areas, and tackling how systemic racism affects the agency. This moment is an opportunity to break the traditional barriers to Peace Corps service, such as socioeconomic hurdles that Volunteers of color and other recruits face when applying for Peace Corps service. Reforms should be aligned with both the law and the agency's recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommendations.

Big Ideas for Consideration

7.1 Strengthen mental health services and Peace Corps Volunteer / Returned Peace Corps Volunteer health care.

There is a need for ongoing reform efforts to strengthen in-country and post-service health care, including reinforcing resources, and placing psychologist resources at each post to aid staff and Volunteers. We must ensure that U.S. health laws and the Peace Corps' OIG health recommendations are fully implemented.

Background: Pending legislation—such as the Menstrual Equity in the Peace Corps Act (H.R. 6118), which ensures feminine hygiene products are affordable and accessible at all Peace Corps posts, and the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3456)—contain multiple provisions to strengthen volunteer health care. These include critical and overdue support for RPCVs who are disabled from service-related illness or injury, and non-competitive eligibility protections so that this benefit does not expire while Returned Volunteers are recovering from illness or injury. Mental health care is limited in many countries of service, and many Volunteers feel uncomfortable and/or unable to address mental health concerns both during and after service.

7.2 Establish a Peace Corps agency-NPCA Joint Management Task Force.

Whether by internal policy or congressional mandate, a working group of stakeholders and experts should be established to combat all forms of systemic racism, and to address health, safety, recruitment, and training challenges within the agency.

This should become a permanent entity, which may require legislative authorization.

Background: While Peace Corps reform legislation has been passed, and the Peace Corps Inspector General regularly issues reports calling for policy changes, implementation of these proposals has been unclear at best. The agency often cites staffing, finances, and legal issues as impediments. The agency has established multiple internal task forces, but an external entity would be charged with ensuring that the recommendations are followed in a transparent and public manner.

7.3 Reform Peace Corps recruitment.

Peace Corps recruitment must be fully reevaluated and reformed, with a greater emphasis placed on attracting more recruits who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Recruiting in diverse schools should be considered—with outreach down to high schools, middle schools, and beyond, to plant the idea of service early on. More community-based recruitment beyond college campuses is needed, particularly in lower income and Indigenous communities. College recruitment must greatly expand beyond the current and historical top-producing Peace Corps institutions to broaden and diversify opportunities for service. The Peace Corps should absorb all Peace Corps-invitee related costs—particularly medical—to eliminate financial barriers to service. Medical costs might be addressed through partnerships with other agencies. Means testing and/or a maximum cap on out-of-pocket expenses and increased readjustment allowances for low-income Volunteers should be considered. Enhanced post-service support is needed, including increased readjustment allowance, college loan forgiveness, and improved mental and general health care.

The Peace Corps currently has the highest rate of political appointees of any federal agency, and the increased rate of their hire at the agency creates a perception of political influence that may damage the Peace Corps brand abroad.

Background: For the Peace Corps to expand capacity, recruitment may be an issue. National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps community at large can play a major role in a reformed recruitment process.

7.4 Targeted Recommendations for Consideration

7.4.1 Facilitate expanded Peace Corps community engagement in recruitment: While Chapter 2 (“Recruiting the Next Generation of Peace Corps Volunteers”) delved into more detail, the need to recruit skilled, diverse Volunteers in the aftermath of a global pandemic will require support from the entirety of the Peace Corps community, not just work by the agency. National Peace Corps Association and other community leaders should be more deeply and actively engaged by the agency to collaborate on this expanded effort.

7.4.2 Pass loan forgiveness reform legislation to benefit Peace Corps Volunteers/Returned Peace Corps Volunteers: Congress needs to pass Peace Corps legislation focused on student loan forgiveness and enhanced post-service health care.

7.4.3 Enhance Congressional oversight: Beyond the reporting requirements included in Peace Corps reform legislation, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and/or House Foreign Affairs Committee should hold more robust Peace Corps oversight hearings. Progress on specific mandates passed in recent reform legislation and recommendations for improvements made by the Peace Corps Inspector General need a more

thorough public airing. This was underscored in the recent IG report on the tragic 2018 death of 24-year-old Volunteer Bernice Heiderman, who died from undiagnosed malaria.

7.4.4 Limit the number of Peace Corps agency political appointees to no more than 10 to 12: Appointees should include Director, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, White House Liaison, Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs, and Communications leads, plus no more than several aides. The Peace Corps currently has the highest rate of political appointees of any federal agency, and the increased rate of their hire at the agency creates a perception of political influence that may damage the Peace Corps brand abroad.

7.4.5 Review the “five-year” rule mandate: There are concerns that the five-year mandate is too short a timeline for employees to create sustainable institutional change. While the agency has made an extensive review of the effects of the rule in the past, this period provides a time to revisit those insights as part of bolder structural reform. Examine whether this timeline is functional, and if there is a demand to lengthen or create flexibility with this mandate. This could include highlighting certain positions that will serve as an institutional memory, along with five-year rotations for positions that require quicker rotations.

7.5 Additional Ideas for Consideration

7.5.1 Continue training throughout and beyond service, to help volunteers thrive during their service and during readjustment back home. (See “Reverse Staging” in Chapter 3.)

7.5.2 Recruit more qualified older Volunteers. Increase support for language learning and health issues for older Volunteers.

7.5.3 Engage Returned Peace Corps Volunteers with psychology or social work backgrounds for post-service support.

7.5.4 The Peace Corps agency and NPCA should promote the idea of high schools starting “Peace Corps Clubs,” just as many schools have a Model United Nations Club, foreign language clubs, Amnesty International Club, etc.

Communicating, Internally and Externally, with the Peace Corps Community

Overview

Communicating to the Peace Corps community, within the Peace Corps community, and to the wider world about the Peace Corps is indispensable to the overall success of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps agency and National Peace Corps Association, including affiliate groups, can better serve Returned Peace Corps Volunteers when it comes to the content, timeliness, and effectiveness of communications. The Peace Corps is one of the best ideas the United States has ever had. How the Peace Corps community tells our story to Congress and the American people—especially during an unprecedented worldwide evacuation of Volunteers, a global pandemic, and racial justice reckoning at home—is critical to ensuring that the importance of Peace Corps' work is understood.

Big Ideas for Consideration

8.1 *To the Peace Corps Community*—Focus on the issues that matter right now: Be upfront and honest in talking about systemic racism and racial justice.

It is critical for the Peace Corps and National Peace Corps Association to lean into discussions about the issues animating U.S. society right now, and to provide a connection between those issues and the value of Peace Corps service.

Background: The Peace Corps community is politically engaged and informed about current events at home and around the world. The issues that define our time of crisis are much bigger than the Peace Corps community, but they affect the institution—and larger societal discussions have brought to the fore concerns raised by Black Volunteers in particular. What is more, these are issues that young people are talking about now; how the community addresses them will directly affect future applications and interest in the Peace Corps. How the United States grapples with racial justice is also part of the context in which Peace Corps Volunteers will be working when they return to service, so the agency and the community need to lead in this area. It is often said that Peace Corps Volunteers represent what is best about this country, so the Peace Corps community needs to ensure that they can say their community is honestly talking about where it can and must do better.

8.2 *Within the Peace Corps Community*—The Peace Corps agency and National Peace Corps Association should maintain the communications continuum before, during, and post-service.

This disconnect is a tremendous missed opportunity for maximizing U.S. investment in the Peace Corps program, which can and should yield a lifetime of dividends. It shortchanges Volunteers as well—preventing them from having a seamless transition to reentry in the United States.

The Peace Corps agency should share contact information—of Volunteers who give permission—with NPCA to maintain the relationship between RPCVs and the Peace Corps community.

Background: The Peace Corps provided data on returning Volunteers to NPCA for decades, until 2012. This data enabled returning Volunteers to be connected with the wider Peace Corps community through NPCA support. Doing so maximized the Peace Corps agency's return on investment and enabled the Third Goal to be accomplished more successfully. Not doing so, as is now the case, weakens the Peace Corps' ability to achieve its mandated mission and breaks the continuum of service. This disconnect is a tremendous missed opportunity for maximizing U.S. investment in the Peace Corps program, which can and should yield a lifetime of dividends. It shortchanges Volunteers as well—preventing them from having a seamless transition to reentry in the United States.

8.3 **About the Peace Corps Community—Convey to domestic and international audiences that Peace Corps ideals and programs are relevant to their lives today.**

The motivations that lead diverse communities to volunteer for Peace Corps service should be amplified and shared to help inspire Americans to support the Peace Corps. Investments should be made by the Peace Corps agency and NPCA to support the concept of national service more broadly.

Background: There is broad bipartisan support for the idea of national service, and particularly at a time of crisis people cite the Peace Corps as a model for how to work in communities. It is often said that “We need a Peace Corps for ... COVID testing, literacy, elder care.” The overarching mission of the Peace Corps is to build world peace and friendship. Volunteers do that work through the technical skills they bring, empowering communities, breaking bread together, and bridging differences through mutual respect. Volunteers learn flexibility and resilience—traits that American society needs. By bolstering support for the network of returned Volunteers, the Peace Corps community can help communicate this value at home.

8.4 **Targeted Recommendations for Consideration**

8.4.1 Connect Volunteers with National Peace Corps Association at the beginning, middle, and close of Peace Corps service: Starting at the end, NPCA should present at each of the Close of Service conferences for departing Volunteers. This should be universal to ensure that soon-to-be RPCVs have access to NPCA resources when they return home, and so NPCA can build a relationship with them. More strategic—and following the model that university alumni associations across the United States have followed for years: Emphasize the value of the Peace Corps network upfront during recruiting; connect Volunteers with NPCA as they enter service, keep them connected, and solidify the connection at close of service.

8.4.2 Diversify Peace Corps’ publicity: The language used matters, as does diverse (gender, ethnic, age) representation of Volunteers’ work. More diverse voices and perspectives need to be included in the telling of Peace Corps stories by the agency and community members. All RPCVs should be able to place themselves within the work that is done and understand the motives and rewards of joining the Peace Corps.

8.4.3 Formalize an anti-racism/anti-discrimination structure: There needs to be an office and/or agency officer dedicated to serving Volunteers and RPCVs addressing racism and discrimination in the Peace Corps. This office or officer should

be focused on communication from and within the Peace Corps community.

8.4.4 Strengthen the Peace Corps brand through an advisory committee on public communications: The Peace Corps agency needs to be in sync with the RPCV community and tap into understanding a broader community: from which potential Volunteers might be drawn, and from which support for Peace Corps needs to come. A joint advisory committee should be established between the agency and NPCA to tackle public communications on behalf of both Peace Corps service and the broader concept of public service. Frequently we hear Americans ask: “Is the Peace Corps still around?” More diverse voices and perspectives need to be included in the telling of Peace Corps stories by the agency and community members. We need to have a conversation with the country and elevate visibility where we’ve lost those points of contact.

8.5 **Additional Ideas for Consideration**

8.5.1 Early exposure to the Peace Corps, potentially in middle and high schools, can be very helpful—not only to benefit the Peace Corps, but to strengthen our national fabric and to bolster support for national service.

8.5.2 Time sensitive and politically uncomfortable issues must be dealt with by the agency; the RPCV community demands it. National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps agency must embrace this discomfort and take public positions on timely topics. The Peace Corps requires that Volunteers go into communities where they need to embrace discomfort in order to succeed. Similarly, the agency and NPCA should lean into challenging issues.

8.5.3 National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps agency should share formal networks—and make it easier to access emerging networks, such as those on WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms—that will better support Peace Corps Volunteers, especially those from underrepresented communities.

8.5.4 Understand that Gen Z and future generations live online; recently returned Volunteers will create their own narrative if what they hear coming from the agency or NPCA does not reflect reality.

Bold Ideas for an Unprecedented Time

THE PEACE CORPS HAS INSPIRED MILLIONS OF AMERICANS and people around the world for six decades. It sets the gold standard for service, and its brand is a cultural icon with near universal recognition. It symbolizes American values at their finest, with ordinary people departing the United States to engage with everyday people in every corner of the world. It inspires Americans to dream big and to challenge themselves to shape the world in ways that benefit all of humanity—through hands-on work in a community. It is, in a nutshell, American leadership.

We find ourselves in an unprecedented time. It is because of a global pandemic and a global evacuation of Peace Corps Volunteers that the Peace Corps community has tackled far-reaching questions about the future of Peace Corps and its mission. The broad and deep conversations have underscored the fact that this mission is more critical than it has ever been. But those conversations have also underscored that the Peace Corps will neither succeed nor remain relevant through returning to the pre-pandemic status quo. The Peace Corps has done great good. It can and must do far more.

Without question, those of us who have worked on this report are motivated by a commitment to Peace Corps ideals. We have also undertaken this work as a fundamentally pragmatic endeavor: Give the agency and the community the tools and guidance to succeed.

The United States is at an inflection point, where our role in the world is up for redefinition. Yet the question of how we engage the world is not a political one. It is a societal question. And we believe that American society needs to reach out to the world, and that the Peace Corps is one of the finest ways that our country does it. As we noted at the outset of this report, for nations that welcome Peace Corps Volunteers in 2021 and beyond, it is an important signal that they are open to the rest of the world.

In presenting the Big Ideas and a range of Targeted Recommendations, we have asked that you keep in mind that the goal of these recommendations is to make a better, stronger, more successful Peace Corps that meets the needs of a changed world. These recommendations are intended to strengthen the

Peace Corps for the future by ensuring that past weaknesses and new opportunities are clearly identified and properly addressed. Many issues explored in this report have been raised within the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community for years. But until this time, there has never truly been an opportunity to pause, reflect, and help chart a new path for the agency and community. Now there is. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to seize this moment.

We therefore aim, with this report, to promote a more inclusive Peace Corps that better serves both the Volunteers and the communities in which they serve. And we seek, through this report, to ensure that all Americans have an equal opportunity to invest themselves in Peace Corps service—and that when they do, they are treated equally, with the dignity, support, and respect that they deserve. Our nation will be all the richer for it. And we aspire, with this report, to ensure that all three of the Peace Corps' goals are maximized—from working alongside people in communities to provide know-how where appropriate, to building relationships and helping global communities better understand the United States, and deepening our country's understanding of nations around the world. That way the original mission of the agency—to do the hard work of building peace and friendship—is fully realized for the benefit of both the American people and the individuals, communities, and nations we partner with overseas. Understanding where the Peace Corps fits into the needs of nations around the world is critical.

As we said at the outset of this report, we have provided specific and actionable recommendations for Congress, the Executive Branch, and the agency. In the Peace Corps community, these institutions have partners willing and eager to assist with the heavy lift—and who are committed to the future success of the Peace Corps. There are also clear recommendations where the burden is upon the Peace Corps community itself to lead the way. This is the time to put ideas into action.

In making these recommendations, this report builds on the conversations of recent months—which themselves are shaped by 60 years of experience and lessons learned. So here is the vision: Ensure that the positive impact of the Peace Corps at home and abroad is even broader and more profound in the decades to come.

Advisory Council

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President Emeritus, National Peace Corps Association
Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia 1967–69

Jack Allison, M.D.

Chair Emeritus, Western North Carolina Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi 1966–69

J. Henry (Hank) Ambrose

Board Emeritus and Board Chair Emeritus, National Peace Corps Association
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Luis Argueta | Guatemala

Film Director, including *The Silence of Neto*
2019 Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award Winner

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Advocacy coordinator for evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers
Peace Corps Volunteer in Georgia 2019–20

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AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps 2007–08, 2011–12
Peace Corps Volunteer in Zambia 2018–20

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Peace Corps Volunteer in Peru 1964–66

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Steering Committee

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Nonprofit director and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
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National Peace Corps Association
Peace Corps Volunteer in Benin 2018–20

Appendix A

Actions to be taken by Peace Corps Agency/ Executive Branch

The main body of the report contains a broad range of recommendations. Here are recommendations specifically for the Peace Corps Agency and the Executive Branch. Recommendations in red are also for Congress and/or National Peace Corps Association and the wider Peace Corps community.

(1)

- Include unconscious bias training in core training for all Volunteers (1.1)
- Provide robust in-country anti-discrimination support (1.2)
- Provide avenues for Volunteers of color to connect (1.3)
- The application process must be transformed (1.4)
- Establish a Peace Corps National Advisory Council (1.5.1)
- Enhance support programs created by and for Volunteers of color (1.5.2)
- Increase resources for recruitment (1.5.3)
- Bolster outreach to lower income applicants (1.5.4)
- Rethink messaging to communities of color (1.5.5)
- Relaunch the Peace Corps' Office of Minority and National Recruitment (1.5.7)
- Promote stakeholders of color (1.5.8)
- Give priority to hiring people of color (1.5.9)

(2)

- Initiate joint recruitment with other national service programs (2.1)
- The Peace Corps Agency should leverage the 180+ National Peace Corps Association Affiliate Groups to help recruit new Volunteers (2.2)
- Expand recruitment efforts on and off campus (2.3)
- Reexamine assumptions about what makes a good [Volunteer] candidate (2.4)

Foster interagency collaboration on infrastructure that supports recruitment (2.5)

Refocus [recruitment] messaging (2.6.1)

The Peace Corps agency must diversify (2.6.2)

Budget for campus recruitment (2.6.3)

Involve National Peace Corps Association and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community in recruitment (2.6.4)

Leave no school behind [in connecting with high school students about Peace Corps] (2.6.6)

(3)

- Lengthen access to effective post-service health insurance (3.1)
- Implement a "Reverse Staging" program to support returning Volunteers (3.3)
- Review the financial incentive packages (3.4)
- Consolidate and streamline access to resources to support Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (3.5.1)
- Provide more personalized RPCV career support upon reentry (3.5.2)
- Strengthen the Close of Service conference (3.5.3)
- Invite an NPCA representative to every Close of Service conference (3.5.4)

(4)

- Report more effectively on the Peace Corps' impact (4.1)
- Expand advocacy (4.2)
- Build a stronger domestic constituency (4.3)
- Activate involvement of the White House to support service (4.4)
- Marshal and mobilize private sector funds for the Peace Corps (4.5.1)
- Strengthen relationships with Congress (4.5.2)
- Prioritize and directly support the Third Goal of the Peace Corps (4.5.3)

(5)

- Focus on climate change as a cross-sector initiative (5.1)
- Partner with local NGOs and international organizations in the field (5.2)
- Professionalize the Volunteer experience (5.3)
- Confront “white saviorism” by reconsidering Peace Corps’ First Goal (5.4 & 6.4.6)
- Make diversity and inclusion a priority for field programs (5.5.1)
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of programs (5.5.2)
- Leverage the expertise developed by Volunteers to achieve the Third Goal (5.5.3)
- Collaborate closely with volunteer services of other countries (5.5.4)
- Scale up Peace Corps Response as a vital tool of engagement and support (5.5.5)

(6)

- Measure the outcomes of the Second and Third Goals (6.1)
- Establish a Peace Corps Agency–National Peace Corps Association Third Goal partnership (6.2)
- Promote ethical storytelling (6.3)
- Foster a two-way exchange with host countries (6.4.1)
- Strengthen the Second and Third Goals to include a focus on racial justice, diversity, and inclusion (6.4.2)
- More effectively integrate Goals Two and Three into performance evaluations (6.4.3)
- Prioritize Second Goal activities for the Country Director (6.4.4)
- Strengthen Volunteer and staff training on issues of racism and racial inequities (6.4.5)
- Refine the First Goal (6.4.6)

(7)

- Strengthen mental health services and Peace Corps Volunteer / Returned Peace Corps Volunteer health care (7.1)
- Establish a Peace Corps agency–NPCA Joint Management Task Force (7.2)
- Reform Peace Corps recruitment (7.3)
- Facilitate expanded Peace Corps community engagement in recruitment (7.4.1)
- Limit the number of Peace Corps agency political appointees to no more than 10 to 12 (7.4.4)
- Review the “five-year” rule mandate (7.4.5)

(8)

- Communications to the Peace Corps Community—Focus on the issues that matter right now: Be upfront and honest in talking about systemic racism and racial justice (8.1)
- Communications Within the Peace Corps Community—The Peace Corps agency and National Peace Corps Association should maintain the communications continuum before, during, and post-service (8.2)
- Communications About the Peace Corps Community—Convey to domestic and international audiences that Peace Corps ideals and programs are relevant to their lives today (8.3)
- Connect Volunteers with National Peace Corps Association at the beginning, middle, and close of Peace Corps service (8.4.1)
- Diversify Peace Corps’ publicity (8.4.2)
- Formalize an anti-racism / anti-discrimination structure (8.4.3)
- Strengthen the Peace Corps brand through an advisory committee on public communications (8.4.4)

Appendix B

Actions to be taken by Congress

The main body of the report contains a broad range of recommendations. [Here are recommendations specifically for the United States Congress.](#) [Recommendations in red are also for the Peace Corps agency and Executive Branch and/or National Peace Corps Association and the wider Peace Corps community.](#)

(1)

[Establish a Peace Corps National Advisory Council \(1.5.1\)](#)

[Provide financial assistance \[for communities of color or low income individuals to serve\] \(1.5.6\)](#)

[Relaunch the Peace Corps' Office of Minority and National Recruitment \(1.5.7\)](#)

(2)

[DACA recipients should be recruited to join the Peace Corps \(2.6.5\)](#)

(3)

[Lengthen access to effective post-service health insurance \(3.1\)](#)

[Extend Returned Peace Corps Volunteers' non-competitive eligibility \(NCE\) for federal employment \(3.2\)](#)

(6)

[Establish a Peace Corps Agency-National Peace Corps Association Third Goal partnership \(6.2\)](#)

(7)

[Strengthen mental health services and Peace Corps Volunteer / Returned Peace Corps Volunteer health care. \(7.1\)](#)

[Establish a Peace Corps-NPCA Joint Management Task Force \(7.2\)](#)

[Reform Peace Corps recruitment \(7.3\)](#)

[Pass loan forgiveness reform legislation to benefit Peace Corps Volunteers / Returned Peace Corps Volunteers \(7.4.2\)](#)

[Enhance Congressional Oversight \(7.4.3\)](#)

[Limit the number of Peace Corps agency political appointees to no more than 10 to 12 \(7.4.4\)](#)

[Review the "five-year" rule mandate \(7.4.5\)](#)

Appendix C

Actions to be taken by National Peace Corps Association and the Peace Corps community

The main body of the report contains a broad range of recommendations. [Here are recommendations specifically for National Peace Corps Association and the wider Peace Corps community.](#) **Recommendations in red are also for the Peace Corps agency and Executive Branch and/or Congress.**

(1)

Provide avenues for Volunteers of color to connect (1.3)
Enhance support programs created by and for Volunteers of color (1.5.2)
Bolster outreach to lower income applicants (1.5.4)

(2)

Initiate joint recruitment with other national service programs (2.1)
The Peace Corps Agency should leverage the 180+ National Peace Corps Association Affiliate Groups to help recruit new Volunteers (2.2)
Expand recruitment efforts on and off campus (2.3)
Involve National Peace Corps Association and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community in recruitment (2.6.4)
Leave no school behind [in connecting with high school students about Peace Corps] (2.6.6)

(3)

Implement a “Reverse Staging” program to support returning Volunteers (3.3)
Consolidate and streamline access to resources to support Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (3.5.1)
Provide more personalized RPCV career support upon reentry (3.5.2)

(4)

Report more effectively on the Peace Corps’ impact (4.1)
Expand advocacy (4.2)
Build a stronger domestic constituency (4.3)

Marshal and mobilize private sector funds for the Peace Corps (4.5.1)

Strengthen relationships with Congress (4.5.2)

Prioritize and directly support the Third Goal of the Peace Corps (4.5.3)

(5)

Leverage the expertise developed by the Volunteer for the Third Goal (5.5.3)

(6)

Measure the outcomes of the Second and Third Goals (6.1)
Establish a Peace Corps Agency–National Peace Corps Association Third Goal partnership (6.2)
Promote ethical storytelling (6.3)
Strengthen the Second and Third Goals to include a focus on racial justice, diversity, and inclusion (6.4.2)

(7)

Establish a Peace Corps agency–NPCA Joint Management Task Force (7.2)
Facilitate Expanded Peace Corps Community Engagement in Recruitment (7.4.1)

(8)

Communications to the Peace Corps Community—Focus on the issues that matter right now: Be upfront and honest in talking about systemic racism and racial justice. (8.1)
Communications Within the Peace Corps Community—The Peace Corps agency and National Peace Corps Association should maintain the communications continuum before, during, and post-service. (8.2)
Communications about the Peace Corps Community—Convey to domestic and international audiences that Peace Corps ideals and programs are relevant to their lives today. (8.3)
Connect Volunteers with National Peace Corps Association at the beginning, middle, and close of Peace Corps service (8.4.1)
Strengthen the Peace Corps brand through an Advisory Committee on Public Communications (8.4.4)

U.S. Peace Corps

Peace Corps is a U.S. government agency created on March 1, 1961 via Executive Order 10924 issued by President John F. Kennedy. Peace Corps promotes world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. Help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
2. Help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. Help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

At the beginning of 2020, Peace Corps had about 7,300 Volunteers and trainees spread across 61 countries and an annual budget of \$410.5 million. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Volunteers were evacuated from their communities by March 2020: In January from China, in February from Mongolia, and in March from all other countries where Volunteers were serving.

National Peace Corps Association

National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) is a mission-driven social impact organization that encourages and celebrates life-long commitment to Peace Corps ideals. NPCA supports a united and vibrant Peace Corps community, including current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, current and former staff, host country nationals, family and friends in efforts to create a better world. NPCA exists to fulfill three specific goals:

1. Help the Peace Corps be the best it can be
2. Empower members and affiliate groups to thrive
3. Amplify the Peace Corps community's global social impact

In 2019 NPCA marked its 40th anniversary with a vibrant community of over 230,000 individuals and more than 180 affiliate groups. The affiliate groups are organized by city and region, country of service, places of employment, and around causes such as environmental action and work with refugees.

NPCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves the entire Peace Corps community, encouraging and celebrating their lifelong commitment to Peace Corps ideals and building their capacity to make a profound difference in the world. By design, Peace Corps and NPCA have a close and cordial relationship that fosters mutual respect and understanding. Yet, at appropriate times and when compelled by the community, NPCA exercises its independence and challenges the Peace Corps, publicly and privately, to reform its policies and procedures. This dynamic fosters a spirit of healthy debate and democratic disruption that betters Peace Corps, NPCA, and the community at large.

Everyone in the Peace Corps community, including currently serving and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, current and former Peace Corps staff, host country nationals, family and friends, and anyone who shares the Peace Corps ideals, can join for free. Joining NPCA assures voting rights, access to myriad benefits and resources, communication on important issues and events, and pride in being a part of a growing movement.

National Peace Corps Association

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PeaceCorpsConnect.org

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facebook.com/PeaceCorpsConnect/
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Peace Corps Connect to the Future

A Community Report on
How to Reimagine, Reshape, and Retool
the Peace Corps for a Changed World

with recommendations to Congress,
the Peace Corps Agency and Executive Branch,
and the Peace Corps community

Peace Corps agency was not involved
with the preparation of this report.

This report is available online at:
bit.ly/peace-corps-connect-report

For questions and interviews about this report,
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