



Anthony R. Sarmiento  
*President and Executive Director*

June 17, 2009

Ms. Amy Borgstrom, Docket Manager  
Corporation for National and Community Service  
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525

Dear Ms. Borgstrom:

I am writing to provide context to the comments that I submitted online about the implementation of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The comments below were submitted online, but I thought it might be helpful for Corporation staff to have our comments in a single document as well as some background information about our organization.

**Background on Senior Service America Inc.**

Senior Service America Inc. (SSAI), headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a non-profit organization that provides community service and employment opportunities for low-income adults over the age of 55 who want to re-enter the workforce. SSAI is one of 18 national sponsors of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act and administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. SCSEP participants are paid minimum wage for working part-time serving their community in non-profit and public organizations. (We also serve as one of six national sponsors of the Senior Environmental Employment Program for the Environmental Protection Agency.) Each year, SSAI provides funding to 80 local subgrantee agencies to operate SCSEP in 16 states: AL, CA, IA, IL, IN, MA, MD, MN, MS, NC, NY, OH, PA, TN, TX and WI. For more background on SSAI and its programs (including the history of SCSEP which began during the War on Poverty), go to [www.seniorserviceamerica.org](http://www.seniorserviceamerica.org)

**1. Expanding Opportunities to Serve under the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act**

**Subject:** *The Corporation should enhance its collaboration with the aging network at the national, state, and local level.*

Stronger collaboration would support the new effort to allocate not less than 10% of AmeriCorps State and National funds and approved national service positions to organizations proposing to involve a significant number of participants age 55 and older.

State and local area agencies on aging comprise the backbone of the aging network. In addition, the national organizations funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to operate the Senior Community Service Employment Program (under Title V of the Older Americans Act) have significant experience in providing community service employment to low-income older adults 55 and over.

The Corporation should encourage and assist State Commissions and AmeriCorps National Direct grantees to develop partnerships with these agencies, who also may be interested in applying for National Direct grants.

**Subject:** *Plan and implement targeted strategies to ensure that less-advantaged Baby Boomers are included in all Corporation programs besides FGP and SCP.*

The decline in traditional defined benefit pensions is likely to prompt more Baby Boomers to supplement their income. While this trend may support the Corporation's effort to recruit more older adults with professional credentials, it may also lead to underrepresentation among other segments of older adults, including those with less education and income. The Corporation should develop and implement strategies specifically aimed to reach out to less-advantaged older adults, especially from racial or language minority communities.

## **2. Combining Assets for Greater Impact**

**Subject:** *Promote stronger linkages between CNCS programs and the Senior Community Service Employment Program.*

Through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), nearly 100,000 older adults are paid 20 hours a week throughout the year to provide community services at local nonprofit and public agencies. Stronger collaboration between all CNCS programs and SCSEP agencies and grantees would magnify the impact of both CNCS and SCSEP networks on meeting unmet community needs. In particular, linking AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America with SCSEP could create new synergies that could increase the capacity of local efforts related to education, health, clean energy, veterans, and economic opportunity. A first step might be a dialogue between CNCS and the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.

## **3. Demonstrating Impact**

**Subject:** *Include impact measures related to increasing the capacity of a participating local agency to provide services to their community.*

As required by the Older Americans Act, the US Department of Labor has conducted three annual independent surveys of local nonprofit and public agencies that "host" participants in its Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). A national sample of over 10,000 agencies was asked, "How has your agency's ability to provide services to the community been affected by its participation in the Older Worker Program?" The most recent survey of data collected through February 2009 indicated that 44% of the agencies reported that their ability had been "significantly increased" and another 31% reported "somewhat increased. The Corporation may wish to explore possible lessons for its own impact studies. An interagency agreement between the Corporation and the USDOL could facilitate sharing of methodologies for measuring impact and other joint efforts.

#### **4. Spurring Innovation and Supporting the Non-profit Sector**

**Subject:** *Tap aging organizations as intermediaries to certify the non-profits that will host Serve America and Encore Fellows and recruit and match the Fellows to those agencies.*

Outreach to the large nationwide aging network as intermediaries for Serve America and Encore Fellows will yield innovation and non-traditional partners for national service. Using intermediaries will reduce the burden on State Commissions and provide an organized and predictable process for the Fellows. Aging organizations are in an ideal position to identify service opportunities for young and old in community agencies that serve low-income elderly.

**Subject:** *Consider giving preference to Summer of Service applicants that include an intergenerational component to their projects.*

Summer of Service programs are an ideal opportunity for intergenerational activities involving youth and older adults. For instance, the Corporation could promote collaboration among Corporation programs and three major programs of the U.S. Department of Labor: its summer youth programs under the Workforce Investment Act, YouthBuild, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

**Subject:** *Develop partnerships with aging organizations that have large-scale national and state networks supported by the Social Innovation and the Volunteer Generation Funds.*

National and state aging networks have the capacity and experience to operationalize innovative approaches to programming in the environment and green jobs, education, healthy futures, services to veterans and their families and economic opportunity.

I would be pleased to assist the Corporation in its outreach to national aging organizations and participate in any focus group or other meetings you may have regarding the implementation of the Serve America Act. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I can be reached at 301-578-8947 or [tsarmiento@ssa-i.org](mailto:tsarmiento@ssa-i.org)

Sincerely,



Anthony R. Sarmiento  
President and Executive Director

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