



Federal Policies and Local Realities: The Case of Appalachian Senior Programs

Authors:

Bradley Nash Jr. & Dana Burr Bradley

Abstract

National senior service programs have had a long and relatively success-ful history. Emerging at the intersection of federal aging and poverty policy initiatives in the early 1960s, projects such as the Foster Grand-parent Program (FGP) and the Senior Companion Program (SCP) have expanded in size and scope over the last several decades. These two pro-grams were first introduced into northwestern North Carolina in the 1980s. While the experiences of FGP and SCP in the region have broadly mirrored the successes of programs located elsewhere, they have also con-fronted difficulties unique to their local realities that federal policy guidelines are often not sensitive to.

FEDERAL POLICIES AND LOCAL REALITIES: THE CASE OF APPALACHIAN SENIOR PROGRAMS

Bradley Nash, Jr.

Department of Sociology and Social Work, Appalachian State University,
Boone, North Carolina, USA

Dana Burr Bradley

Gerontology Center, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green
Kentucky, USA

National senior service programs have had a long and relatively successful history. Emerging at the intersection of federal aging and poverty policy initiatives in the early 1960s, projects such as the Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and the Senior Companion Program (SCP) have expanded in size and scope over the last several decades. These two programs were first introduced into northwestern North Carolina in the 1980s. While the experiences of FGP and SCP in the region have broadly mirrored the successes of programs located elsewhere, they have also confronted difficulties unique to their local realities that federal policy guidelines are often not sensitive to.

Information for the section of this article with the heading 'The Historical Evolution of Appalachian Senior Programs' comes primarily from the project progress reports (PPRs) that all Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion projects must send to the federal government twice each year. Along with standard information specifically requested by the Corporation for National Service, PPRs typically include a wide array of other documentary material on project operations. In addition to the PPRs, information was also obtained from a personal interview conducted in July 2004 with the directors of the two programs.

Address correspondence to Bradley Nash, Jr., Department of Sociology and Social Work, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608. E-mail: nashb@appstate.edu

FEDERAL POLICY, OLDER AMERICANS, AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Though labeled as volunteers, older adults who serve in the Foster Grandparent (FGP) and Senior Companion (SCP) programs are actually compensated for their efforts. Indeed, the two programs are embedded in a seemingly contradictory gray area between pure employment and pure voluntarism (Morris & Caro, 1997, p. 98). This peculiarity, the “stipended volunteer,” stems in part from the particular way in which national service, especially “senior service,” has been historically conceptualized by the federal government. As described by Freedman (1994, p. 5):

Unlike most of what is called voluntarism, national service entails a major commitment. Although this kind of commitment generally commands a modest stipend, the defining element of service is not compensation, but a belief in or benefit from the civic content of the enterprise.

In the case of FGP and SCP, part of the original civic objective was to also provide monetary support for low-income older Americans. Thus, the issue of compensation has long been of greater salience to these two programs. This dual character of voluntarism and employment is more easily understood by looking at the political and legislative context from which FGP and SCP emanate.

The original impetus for getting older adults more systematically involved in volunteer efforts can be traced to the early 1960s and the Kennedy administration’s proposal to create a National Service Corps (NSC) (Freedman, 1994, pp. 21–22; Wacker, Roberto, & Piper, 1998, p. 74). Though the NSC was to also draw on younger Americans, the aged were explicitly targeted as an underutilized and valuable resource. The government’s intention of relying heavily on older Americans for the NSC “constituted a radical departure” from previous proposals in this area, for this group had not previously been seriously considered for the “intensive and challenging assignments” that typically characterized national service (Freedman, 1994, p. 21). Ultimately, however, the Kennedy administration’s ambitious proposal did not pass Congress.

The failure to create the NSC did not, however, result in the federal government abandoning the idea of national senior service. Later efforts in this area were nevertheless on a smaller scale and took place, often haphazardly, at the intersection of two different

legislative frameworks (Torres-Gil, 1992, p. 38). One framework was established by the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, which established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and represented part of the Johnson administration's broader "War on Poverty." This legislation succeeded where the previous administration had fallen short, and a federal national service program, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), was ultimately created. In contrast to Kennedy's NSC, however, VISTA focused primarily on mobilizing younger, rather than older, Americans (Freedman, 1994, p. 22). Older adults did however make up a small percentage of VISTA volunteers, and they constituted an even larger percentage of the population served by the program's various community service projects (Rich & Baum, 1984, p. 190). More importantly, VISTA and the legislation that engendered it helped to provide a key foundation for later iterations of federal volunteer programs.

A second legislative framework integral to the development of national senior service was established by the 1965 Older Americans Act (OAA). Deriving impetus from the 1961 White House Conference on Aging, the OAA had both the symbolic effect of placing aging-related issues squarely on the federal government's agenda, and the more practical effect of bringing "together a fragmented and uncoordinated public and private service delivery system to meet the basic needs of elders at the community level" (Wacker et al., 1998, p. 18). The Administration on Aging (AoA), spawned by the legislation and housed in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, served as the central organizational node within this new "aging network." Articulating and administering federal policy objectives from the top-down to other organizational entities such as state and area units on aging, the AoA also operated as a bottom-up conduit to the national level for local service providers, interest groups, and activists representing the aged (Koff & Park, 1999, p. 77).

It was at the legislative crossroads of the EOA and OAA that one of the first national senior-service programs, FGP, was developed. The product of a "cooperative effort" between the OEO and the AoA, (Rich & Baum, 1984, p. 187), FGP helped in the realization of broader policy objectives pursued by both federal agencies. Initially funded by the OEO, and specifically established as an employment program for low-income elders, FGP served as a small strike in the Johnson administration's "war on poverty." From the perspective of the AoA, which administered the program, FGP not only provided older Americans with supplemental income but also with added social and psychological benefits typically integral to the service experience. Overall, this "happy combination" of

employment and voluntarism “was, and is, the heart of the Foster Grandparent Program” (Nash, 1968, p. 272).

FGP was launched in August 1965 as a national experimental program involving 21 local projects that utilized approximately 800 older volunteers across 45 different institutions. The original population served by FGP was limited to institutionalized children under the age of 5 who were defined as having “special needs.” Specific examples included “young children in . . . pediatric hospital wards and public homes for children with mental retardation, orphans, and other children without families” (Wacker et al., 1998, p. 80). Each volunteer was assigned two children with whom they were to interact for 4 hours a day. The interaction was to be relatively unstructured and wide-ranging in nature, covering the gambit from simple socializing to intense emotional nurturing. The only restrictions on these intergenerational relationships were “that the Foster Grandparents were *not* to be used to relieve permanent institution staff of routine maintenance of the children” (Nash, 1968, p. 273; emphasis in original).

Eligibility to be a Foster Grandparent rested on two criteria. One was a 60 or older age limit, a threshold purportedly set by President Johnson, who was 57 at the time and “wasn’t about to be considered a senior citizen himself” (Freedman, 1994, p. 24). Another was that applicants could no longer be in the labor force and were defined as low income according to OEO guidelines. Older adults meeting these requirements would receive medical examinations and 2 weeks of training before being placed in institutional settings with children. For their 20-hour-a-week commitment, Foster Grandparents were paid \$1.75 an hour, reimbursement for travel expenses, and, typically, a meal from the institutional site (Freedman, 1994, p. 24; Nash, 1968, p. 273; Wacker et al., 1998, p. 81).

Over the next few years FGP experienced some significant changes. Most noteworthy was the marked increase in the program’s size. Within 3 years the number of FGP projects more than tripled, to 68, and the amount of senior volunteers employed expanded five-fold to just over 4,000 (Senior Corps, 2005; Nash 1968, p. 273). The population served by FGP expanded as well. Amendments to the OAA in 1969 raised the age limit of children involved in the program to 17. Later legislative changes in 1976 raised the definition of “child” to those under 21; and, in some cases, Foster Grandparents were allowed to continue relationships with individuals well beyond that chronological boundary (Senior Corps, 2005).

It was during this same time period that the federal government gave renewed attention to national service in general, and senior service in particular. The 1969 amendments to Title VI of the Older American’s

Act (OAA), for example, transferred funding authority for FGP to AoA, a move that also involved a redefinition of FGP as a “stipended volunteer program,” rather than an “employment program,” for low-income elders (Senior Corps, 2005). This same legislation also created the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), a more genuine volunteer program in that “participation involved no stipend” and any older American could participate regardless of income (Freedman, 1994, p. 25). Both RSVP and FGP were shortly thereafter transferred to the umbrella agency ACTION, created in 1971, which also housed a wide array of other national service organizations (Wacker et al., 1998, p. 75).

The year 1973 saw a further reorganization of national service programs with the Domestic Service Volunteer Act (DSVA). DSVA became the enabling legislation for ACTION, replacing Title VI of the OAA, and along with authorizing FGP and RSVP, created a new program, Senior Companion (SCP) (Senior Corps, 2005). SCP was for the most part structurally similar to FGP in that it too was a “stipended volunteer program” open to low-income adults over the age of 60. The two programs also converged with respect to various organizational guidelines, such as those pertaining to the number of volunteer hours served, compensation levels, reimbursement practices, and sponsorship requirements (Wacker et al., 1998, p. 75).

Despite these similarities, there were significant differences between the two senior service programs. One point of divergence between FGP and SCP was in terms of their target populations. The Senior Companion program was to help older adults, not children, with special needs. The original notion of a national service program specifically centered on older Americans helping other older Americans emerged in Congress in the late 1960s. This idea received further impetus from the Nixon administration in the early 1970s, which specifically wanted to expand service opportunities available to low-income elders (Senior Corps, 2005). Another way in which SCP differed from FGP was that the former was designed to primarily serve clients in their own homes rather than in institutional settings. Indeed, one key objective of SCP was to have volunteers help older adults who were in danger of institutionalization if they did not receive some type of assistance (Freedman, 1994: 27). To this end;

Senior Companions help their clients with the tasks of daily living. They may buy groceries, prepare meals, do light chores, provide transportation, or do errands of various kinds. Most importantly, they provide vital human contact and companionship for the clients, some of whom have few other links to the outside world (Corporation for National Service, 2001, p. 1).

Overall, though the efforts of most Senior Companions were located in the private homes of frail and isolated elders, program volunteers did provide assistance in other settings as well, such as in adult-day-care centers, hospices, health-care facilities, and the like (Corporation for National Service, 2001, p. 1; Koff & Park, 1999, p. 265).

SCP was formally launched in August 1974 with 18 different projects utilizing approximately 1,000 senior volunteers. As was the case with FGP, the program expanded relatively rapidly early on. Within 3 years the number of SCP projects more than doubled to 46, and the number of Senior Companions involved in the program tripled to 3,000. Program growth continued throughout the 1980s, with nearly 150 ACTION-funded projects making use of over 7,000 Senior Companions by decade's end (Senior Corps, 2005).

Another legislative reorganization of national service programs, and the most recent to date, occurred in the early 1990s. Attempting to reconcile the divide between increasingly "limited government" and mounting social problems, the newly elected Clinton administration had stressed the need "to strengthen the voluntary sector and unleash citizen power" as a means to close the gap (Wofford, 1998–99, p. 88). The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 created the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a broad federal umbrella organization that would encompass ACTION and create new programs such as Americorps (Wacker et al., 1998, p. 75). Importantly, also established within CNCS was the National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps), a new administrative unit specifically comprised of three programs: FGP, SCP, and RSVP.

The Corporation for National and Community Service's wider agenda is to use volunteer efforts to help attenuate social problems that the federal government increasingly could not or would not deal with. Senior Corps programs have been "increasingly broadening their focus" over the past 10 years or so (Senior Corps, 2005). Foster Grandparents, for example, not only continue to serve their original constituency of institutionalized children with special needs, but now also spend time with adolescents in correctional facilities, counsel at-risk youth, provide support to neglected children, and teach parenting skills to young mothers (Koff & Park, 1999, p. 266; Wofford, 1998–98, pp. 89–90). Senior Companions have expanded their roles as well. In particular, more and more volunteers spend increasing amounts of time providing respite and aid to adults of all ages who are the primary caregivers for elderly household members demanding high-levels of attention and care (Corporation for National Service, 2001, p. 14).

Overall, the establishment of Senior Corps and its continued operation into the 21st century represents at least a partial fulfillment of the Kennedy administration's original vision of getting older Americans more systematically involved in national service efforts. There are now, for example, well over 30,000 Foster Grandparents volunteering in over 300 different projects across the country. SCP has also continued to expand, presently encompassing over 200 projects and utilizing the efforts of nearly 16,000 volunteers. And RSVP, clearly the largest of the three Senior Corps programs given its wider scope in terms of both participants and clients, involves the efforts of nearly 500,000 older Americans in over 750 different projects (Senior Corps, 2005).

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF APPALACHIAN SENIOR PROGRAMS

As noted above, the first FGP projects were launched in 1965, and the program expanded fairly rapidly across the nation soon thereafter. It would be a decade and half, however, before FGP established a presence in the rural mountains of northwestern North Carolina. While the remoteness of the sparsely populated region certainly played a role, perhaps the most pivotal reason for the lag was that a local community organization had not immediately emerged to sponsor an FGP project. Federal law requires that FGP be administered at the local level by third-party sponsoring agencies. These agencies can be public or nonprofit private entities, but cannot themselves be the direct beneficiaries of FGP volunteers. Sponsors are typically area government or volunteer service organizations, and they apply for federal grants to develop an FGP project within their particular community. Project grants usually cover around 90% of the expenses incurred, including volunteer stipends, salaries for project personnel, the costs of medical examinations, and the like. Approximately 10% of the project budget is to come from nonfederal sources. Overall, the sponsor plays a mediating role between the federal government and a specific local FGP project by providing fiscal and administrative oversight (Rich & Baum, 1984, p. 187; Wacker et al., 1998, p. 81).

A local mental health organization was the original sponsor of FGP in northwestern North Carolina. This organization applied for and received a grant from ACTION in 1980. The original grant was for \$135,000, and provided funding for 60 "volunteer service years" (VSYs), or 60 full-time Foster Grandparents. At the time, full-time FGP volunteers worked 20 hours a week and received

\$2 an hour for their efforts. The grant also covered the salaries of a full-time director and a full-time administrative assistant, as well as expenses related to training, travel reimbursement, and so on. Initially encompassing two rural counties in northwestern North Carolina, the geographic boundaries of the project were expanded in 1981 to include three additional counties.

In the early years of the program, the sites, or “volunteer stations,” served reflected both the unique circumstances of the local area and the expansion of FGP services that had occurred at the national level. In line with the principal mission of FGP as initially conceived in 1965, many Foster Grandparents in the area worked with very young children who had special needs stemming from a wide array of mental and physical disabilities. Yet, unlike other FGP projects that dealt primarily with institutionalized children, this project worked primarily with noninstitutionalized children located in county-funded day care or child development centers. This variation, in part, reflected the geographic isolation of the area and the relative lack of formal institutional facilities. The number of these relatively distinctive county-funded organizations diminished over time, and the program slowly increased its presence in local school systems. It was in the schools that the federally-enlarged focus of FGP that had occurred throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s became most manifest. There, FGP volunteers were also helping older children and providing support in additional areas such as drop out prevention, drug and alcohol abuse, and child abuse and neglect.

The early success of FGP encouraged the sponsoring mental health organization to explore the possibility of adding a SCP. As a result, an ACTION grant of nearly \$80,000 was awarded for fiscal year 1988–89, providing funding for a full-time program director, a full-time administrative assistant, and 25 VSYS. By this point in time the federal hourly stipend for Senior Companions, as well as for Foster Grandparents, had risen to \$2.20 an hour. The 25 full-time SCP volunteers provided a wide array of services to regional elders, including those recently discharged from hospitals, those home-bound with mental and physical limitations, and those with terminal illnesses. The Senior Companion Program also provided respite for the primary caregivers of older adults in the service region.

Throughout the 1990s and into the early 21st century, the two programs expanded slowly but consistently. For example, by 2001 the federal grants awarded to the sponsor nearly quadrupled to almost \$500,000 for the FGP project and over \$300,000 for the SCP. A full-time volunteer services director was needed to oversee six staff members, three full-time and three part-time, and to

coordinate the activities of a growing number of senior volunteers. The FGP and SCP projects were now funded for 90 VSYs and 58 VSYs, respectively. This translated into an even greater number of seniors on the programs' active rosters, since additional volunteers were needed to serve as substitutes in cases of illness or other absence. Overall, at the start of the new century, more than 600 children and older adults were receiving assistance from area Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions.

It was during this same time period that North Carolina's mental health system experienced a series of organizational changes that directly threatened the existence of FGP and SCP in northwestern North Carolina. Large state budget shortfalls and the resulting budget rescissions—combined with a legislatively mandated restructuring of the mental health system's activities—effectively precluded involvement in services not directly related to mental health care. Thus, in May 2001, the sponsoring organization notified directors of the FGP and SCP that it was likely the existing relationship would have to be terminated. In response, a sustainability committee was established by the FGP and SCP consisting of key project personnel and community members. The committee considered several different options for organizational maintenance. Initially, the focus of the group was on finding ways to retain the existing sponsor relationship. This included a focused effort to use local sources to help the mental health organization meet the matching funds requirements for the two programs. While progress was being made, the state announced a cut in the local mental health organization's budget of over \$1 million. In an effort to preserve the programs, the mileage reimbursement rates for volunteer travel were reduced, meal reimbursements for volunteers were eliminated, and the position of recruitment specialist was eliminated. By mid-2002, it became apparent that the existing relationship between the mental health organization and the FGP and SCP could not continue.

In September, the North Carolina Director for the Corporation for National and Community Service conducted a federally-mandated compliance review of the area programs. Noting that several other FGP and SCP projects in North Carolina were also experiencing similar problems due to state budget cuts, the state director expressed concerns that the financial situation of the programs was especially dire. While not advocating a change in sponsorship, the state director did inform those involved about the procedures involved in such a switch. In particular, the state office of the Corporation for National and Community Service would solicit applications and would then, on a competitive basis, decide which agency would take on sponsorship.

In January 2003 the bidding process for a new sponsor began; and in May of 2003 the Corporation for National and Community Service announced that it had chosen the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Appalachian State University.

The department was awarded a 1 year grant of almost \$620,000 to operate the FGP and SCP projects. On July 1, 2003 the programs were renamed Appalachian Senior Programs, with the two senior-service programs it encompasses officially renamed the Appalachian Foster Grandparents Program and the Appalachian Senior Companions Program.

For the most part, the transition to a new sponsor was seamless, and both the university and the programs quickly adapted to differences in administrative requirements and other organizational issues. More importantly, existing project staff and volunteers were retained and there was no interruption of FGP=SCP operations. After almost 2 full years, Appalachian Senior Programs continues to utilize a large number of area seniors as volunteers, over 160 in 2005, who assist almost 700 individuals, young and old alike, throughout the region.

CONCLUSION: FEDERAL POLICIES AND LOCAL REALITIES

Broader political contingencies often have dramatic repercussions at the local level. This fact is clearly evidenced by the recent history of the two senior-service projects constituting Appalachian Senior Programs. As described above, state-level budget issues and legislative reforms significantly impacted the organizational operations and, ultimately, the formal identity of these two long-standing community programs in northwestern North Carolina.

As an analytical tool, the template laid out by Robert Hudson for aging policy—age-based and age-related (Hudson, 1995, 1997)—is especially useful. Age-based policies use chronological age as the primary eligibility criterion, i.e., the universal policies of Social Security, Medicare and the Older Americans Act. Social Security and Medicare are highly visible to the American public as aging policy due to their widespread impact and because the media have heightened awareness of their costs to society (Samuleson, 1990). Age-related policies, by contrast, may use age as one criterion among many, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, housing and veterans' health benefits. Compared to Social Security and Medicare, these programs are generally less visible due to the populations they serve.

Hudson's (1978) prescience about how a growing percentage of the federal budget for aging programs might affect aging policy

was picked up by other gerontologists in the 1990s who wrote about the “new” aging policy (Torres-Gil, 1992; Steckenrider & Parrott, 1996). They describe a far harsher reality for aging policy compared to the 1935–1985 period. However, not all researchers agreed (Binstock & Quadagno, 2001). In general, an era of “compassionate ageism” for older adults as the “deserving poor” (Binstock, 1983) turned into one of “greedy geezers,” doing “too much for the elderly,” and “entitlement politics” (Moon & Mulvey, 1996; Smith, 2002), with the aged blamed for economic problems in the larger society (Minkler & Estes, 1991). This reconsideration of aging policy was part of a much larger debate about the legitimate role of both federal and state government in the lives of its citizens (Hudson, 1997; Smith, 2002). Aging policy became the focus of something more fundamental in American political values: the size and scope of government, and individual versus collective action (Cutler, 1977; Burke, Kingson, & Reinhardt, 2000). Caught in the middle of this policy maelstrom were programs such as FGP and SCP. Though both are historically linked to aging policy, neither was strongly identified with the politically more viable age-related policies.

Central to the viability of senior-service programs is the enlistment of older Americans to support these programs. In general, political socialization and lifespan civic involvement of today’s elder cohorts during their formative years have been identified as major factors in their participation in society (Cutler, 1977; Putnam, 1995). The result is higher levels of civic participation by older rather than younger cohorts (Campbell, 2003). Although formal education and adult household incomes are lowest among today’s seniors, older adults have a huge stake in government programs—thereby increasing their interest and activity (Day, 1990). And despite conventional wisdom that the poor are less politically active, this is refuted by high participation rates of poorer elders reported by Campbell (2003). With federal, state, and local government retrenchments in a wide array of social and welfare programs over the past few decades, there is certainly no lack of demand from populations in need of the services provided by FGP and SCP. However, a lack of visible political support for these programs has often hindered the regional and local administrative growth necessary to see these programs adapt during the 21st century.

Within this context, recruiting sufficient older volunteers to meet area demands has long been a problem for Appalachian Senior Programs. While seniors volunteer for diverse reasons (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Bradley, 2000), some of the recruiting difficulty stems from the nature of the older population in several of the counties covered by these regional projects. For example, two of the counties

served by Appalachian Senior Programs are important tourist and seasonal destinations marked by large transient populations. While a large proportion of residents are older adults, many reside in the area part-time and are, thus, less apt to make lengthy commitments to more formalized volunteer work. Significantly, these same two counties are generally marked by higher income levels that also preclude many older residents from participating in FGP and SCP.

Age-based federal policy guidelines also hamper the recruitment of senior service participants in northwestern North Carolina. Perhaps most significant is the criterion that senior volunteers for FGP and SCP must be 60 years of age or older. Recall from our earlier discussion that this threshold was set, somewhat arbitrarily, by president Johnson when FGP was created in 1965. Lowering this age to 55 would significantly increase the pool of potential volunteers in the area. While the federal government lowered the age limit for one Senior Corps program, RSVP, several years ago, it has yet to do so for FGP and SCP.

Competition from other federal programs also impacts negatively on the recruitment efforts of Appalachian Senior Programs. Beginning in the late 1990s, many senior volunteers began leaving their FGP and SCP positions to work for a local Green Thumb project. Created as part of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, and now formally labeled the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Green Thumb offers community-oriented service employment to low income older adults over the age of 55. Significantly, participants are paid the current minimum wage, almost double what FGP and SCP volunteers get. Not surprisingly, as the Green Thumb program expanded in the region, the pool of both potential and existing volunteers available to serve in the local FGP and SCP projects was slowly drained.

The intersection of federal policies and local contingencies often produces problematic outcomes in areas besides recruitment. For example, compared to many other FGP and SCP projects, Appalachian Senior Programs encompasses a fairly expansive geographic area. When the local SCP was established in the late 1980s, transporting Senior Companions to their widely dispersed volunteer stations was a significant problem in an area with few public transportation options. The project director sent numerous requests over the next few years to ACTION to fund a van for the program. Eventually SCP came to rely on FGP vans to meet its transportation needs. Another issue pertaining to the uniqueness of the geographic area covered by the local programs is the weather. The severe winters in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina result in numerous school closings, making it difficult

for Foster Grandparents, in particular, to fulfill all of their required volunteer hours for the fiscal year. Such a shortfall in completed volunteer hours leads to difficulties when applying for the next federal grant at the same or increased levels of funding.

One final issue regarding the interplay of federal policy and local realities deserves mention. In the late 1990s, the Corporation for National and Community Service instituted new accountability measures for evaluating the performance of local FGP and SCP projects. One significant change included a greater focus on the impact that these programs had on recipients of senior-service programs. Measuring such effects obviously necessitates that project staff must obtain more information on clients, much of which is *qualitative* in nature. This information must then be translated into *quantitative* data for federal performance reports. This requirement, resulting in more work for already overburdened project staff, has made administration of the project less attractive to many host agencies.

After over 4 decades, the Kennedy administration's goal of systematically engaging elderly Americans in national service has been only slowly and partially realized. Existing senior-service programs may not have taken the centralized form or achieved the expansiveness of the initial vision of the early 1960s. Yet, they have certainly achieved the substantive objective of engaging many older adults in a wide array of volunteer efforts that produce meaningful rewards for the aged and the people they serve. The broad success of federal efforts to promote senior-service is most clearly evident in the achievements of local senior-service projects such as those embodied by Appalachian Senior Programs in rural northwestern North Carolina. Nevertheless, problems do remain. Some of these problems are outside federal control, but many are within its reach. In particular, policy makers and administrators need to be more attuned to the lessons that can be learned from the local realities of federally mandated programs.

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