What is AmeriCorps?

Section 1
AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country.

Since the program’s founding in 1994, more than 1,000,000 AmeriCorps members have contributed more than 1.4 billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve.

AmeriCorps Programs

AmeriCorps programs do more than move communities forward; they serve their members by creating jobs and providing pathways to opportunity for young people entering the workforce. AmeriCorps places thousands of young adults into intensive service positions where they learn valuable work skills, earn money for educational expenses, and develop an appreciation for active engagement as citizens.

AmeriCorps State and National

This is the broadest network of AmeriCorps programs. These groups recruit, train, and place AmeriCorps members to meet critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

AmeriCorps VISTA

VISTA provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps NCCC and FEMA Corps

AmeriCorps NCCC and FEMA Corps are full-time, team-based, residential programs for men and women ages 18-24. NCCC’s mission is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service, while FEMA Corps focuses on Disaster Relief.
Wondering what to expect from AmeriCorps service?

AmeriCorps is an Opportunity

AmeriCorps is a way to put idealism into action. AmeriCorps members can help make the world a better place: help children learn, protect the environment, or bring needed services to a low-income community. There are opportunities in AmeriCorps for anyone who is willing to do something unique and exciting.

AmeriCorps is an Experience

AmeriCorps is a real-life education and work experience wrapped into one. Members will learn teamwork, leadership, responsibility and other essential skills that will help them for the rest of their life. They will gain the personal satisfaction that comes with taking on challenges and seeing the results of their efforts.

AmeriCorps Offers Tangible Benefits

Most AmeriCorps members receive student loan forbearance, training, and may receive a living allowance and health insurance. After completing their term of service, they will also receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to help pay for college, graduate school, or vocational training or to repay student loans.

The AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America -
    to make our people safer,
    smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together
    to strengthen our communities.

    Faced with apathy,
    I will take action.

    Faced with conflict,
    I will seek common ground.

    Faced with adversity,
    I will persevere.

    I will carry this commitment
    with me this year and beyond.
Getting Things Done for America

AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 men and women in intensive service each year at more than 21,000 locations including nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. AmeriCorps members help communities tackle pressing problems while mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve. Members gain valuable professional, educational, and life benefits, and the experience has a lasting impact on the members and the communities they serve.

AmeriCorps consists of three main programs: the state and national AmeriCorps program, whose members serve with nonprofit and community groups across the country; AmeriCorps VISTA, through which members serve full-time addressing poverty and building the capacity of nonprofit organizations; and AmeriCorps NCCC, a team-based residential program for young adults 18-24 who serve in public safety, the environment, youth development, and disaster relief and preparedness.

AmeriCorps By the Numbers

- Engages more than 80,000 members annually
- Members serve at 21,000 locations across the country
- Mobilizes millions of volunteers annually
- Leverages more than $1 billion in outside funding and donations every year
- More than 1 Million Americans have served since 1994
Strengthening Nonprofits and the Volunteer Sector

Strengthening nonprofits: AmeriCorps members help faith-based and community groups expand services, build capacity, raise funds, develop new partnerships, and create innovative, sustainable programs.

Encouraging competition and local control: AmeriCorps pushes funding and decision-making to the state and local level. Most grantees are chosen by bipartisan state commissions appointed by the governor.

Advancing social innovation: AmeriCorps invests in entrepreneurial organizations that have been recognized for their innovative approaches to citizen problem-solving such as Citizen Schools, City Year, Experience Corps, Teach For America, and YouthBuild.

Expanding Educational Opportunity and Building Future Leaders

Expanding educational opportunity: In exchange for a year of full-time service, AmeriCorps members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (equal to the maximum Pell Grant) that helps pay for college or pay back student loans. AmeriCorps members have earned more than $3.3 billion in these awards since 1994.

Preparing the 21st Century Workforce: AmeriCorps is a pathway to economic opportunity that provides members with valuable skills specific to their service (construction, teaching, weatherization, etc.) as well as general skills of leadership and problem-solving that all employers are looking for.

Creating future leaders: AmeriCorps members gain new and useful skills, advance their education, and become more connected to their communities. A longitudinal study has shown that AmeriCorps alumni are more likely to be civically engaged, to go into public service careers—such as teaching, public safety, social work, and military service—and to volunteer in their communities.

Leveraging a Powerful Return on Investment

Public private partnerships: AmeriCorps leverages substantial private investment—more than $480 million in non-CNCS funds each year from businesses, foundations, and other sources. AmeriCorps has cut costs and become more efficient by supporting more members with fewer federal dollars.

Mobilizing volunteers: AmeriCorps is a powerful catalyst and force-multiplier for community volunteering. In 2015 AmeriCorps members recruited, trained, and supervised more than 2.3 million community volunteers for the organizations they serve.
Getting Things Done for America

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) engages more than 8,000 individuals annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA members serve full time for a year at nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to build the capacity of these organizations to carry out programs that alleviate poverty.

AmeriCorps VISTA members recruit and manage community volunteers, raise funds, and help coordinate projects. They support programs that improve academic performance, expand job opportunities, develop financial assets, alleviate hunger, reduce homelessness, and improve health services. They also support programs that increase housing access, develop economic opportunities for low-income veterans and military families, and expand access to technology.
Core Principles of AmeriCorps VISTA

Anti-Poverty Focus

AmeriCorps VISTA supports community efforts to overcome poverty. Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, or tribal or government agency with a project explicitly designed to alleviate poverty may sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA member.

Community Empowerment

AmeriCorps VISTA values the inherent strengths and resources of the community. AmeriCorps VISTA expects project sponsors to involve residents of the community in planning, developing, and implementing the project. This approach allows low-income individuals the freedom to speak for themselves in determining the projects that best suit their specific needs.

Capacity Building

AmeriCorps VISTA expands the ability of sponsor organizations to alleviate poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA members strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and much more. These capacity-building activities enable organizations to provide better services to low-income individuals and communities.

Sustainable Solutions

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve as a short-term resource to help sponsor organizations achieve lasting solutions to poverty.

Join AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members work on impactful projects that lift people out of poverty while receiving comprehensive training and support, including a living allowance, skills-building, federal noncompetitive hiring eligibility, health benefit, and the Eli Segal Education Award or a cash stipend.

Sponsor a VISTA

Any nonprofit organization or public agency involved in alleviating poverty may partner with AmeriCorps VISTA to develop a project and host AmeriCorps VISTA members. Potential sponsors must have the capacity and commitment to recruit, train, supervise, and support AmeriCorps VISTA members.

National Service

AmeriCorps VISTA is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President’s national call to service initiative, United We Serve.
AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women ages 18-24. AmeriCorps NCCC members are assigned to one of five regional campuses into teams of approximately ten members and complete 2-3 month projects responding to local communities’ needs throughout the United States. To achieve our mission of strengthening communities and developing leaders through service, members assist community and faith-based based organizations, national nonprofits, schools, local municipalities, national and state parks, and Indian tribes.

In 2012, AmeriCorps NCCC collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and created a new unit called FEMA Corps. FEMA Corps promotes an ethic of national service, strengthens the federal government’s disaster capabilities, and expands educational and economic opportunities for young people. FEMA Corps training and experience prepares members for careers in emergency management and related fields. Members learn about community organizing, public speaking, customer service, and office management skills, all while positively impacting the lives of disaster survivors.

Since 2000, AmeriCorps NCCC teams have:

- Assisted 17.6 million people in disaster areas
- Recruited or coordinated nearly 840,000 volunteers
- Assisted more than 70,000 veterans
- Served 7.7 million meals
- Protected more than 1.3 million acres of land through firefighting and fire management
Last year*, AmeriCorps NCCC members:

- Returned $16.5 million to communities through tax returns
- Supported or tutored 35,000 K-12 students
- Restored or protected more than 4,000 acres of wildlife habitats
- Weatherized or outfitted nearly **300 homes** with energy efficient modifications
- Assisted nearly **19,000 individuals** experiencing homelessness

*AmeriCorps NCCC projects ending between October 1, 2014, and September 30, 2015

AmeriCorps NCCC’s flexible program structure has created the opportunity to partner with non-profit or government organizations that might lack the capacity to manage longer grant programs, as well as the ability to create strategic collaborations with other national service programs and federal agencies to magnify the impact on communities served.

AmeriCorps NCCC projects span five issue areas:

- Natural and Other Disasters
- Infrastructure Improvement
- Environmental Stewardship
- Energy Conservation
- Urban and Rural Development

FEMA Corps members focus on disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery activities, providing support in areas ranging from working directly with disaster survivors to supporting disaster recovering centers to sharing valuable disaster preparedness and mitigation information with the public.
Corporation for National and Community Service

AmeriCorps
80,000 members
20,000 sites

Senior Corps
244,000 members
35,000 sites

Social Innovation Fund
$93 million annual match
426 organizations in 44 states

Cost-Effective Solutions for Our Communities and Nation

We are the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency and the nation’s largest grant-maker in support of service and volunteering. We manage AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund.

Working hand in hand with local partners, we tap the ingenuity and can-do spirit of the American people to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing our nation. Our service participants and the community volunteers they coordinate enable tens of thousands of non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and municipal agencies to solve tough problems and meet local needs. We serve, we build, and we make an impact that changes lives and communities.

Our Focus Areas

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Education

Environmental Stewardship
Healthy Futures
Veterans and Military Families

National Service By the Numbers

CNCS improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering.

- 324,000 Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members
- 3 million leveraged volunteers
- 55,000 service locations
- $1.26 billion leveraged

January 2017

NationalService.gov
Getting Things Done for America
AmeriCorps provides opportunities for 80,000 Americans each year to give intensive service to their communities and country. AmeriCorps members tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, assist veterans and military families, provide health services, run after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit organizations. In exchange for a year of full-time service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that can be used to pay for college or graduate school, or to pay back qualified loans. Since 1994, more than 1 million Americans have given 1.3 billion hours of service through AmeriCorps.

Making a Difference for Generations
Each year, Senior Corps taps the skills, talents, and experience of more than 244,000 Americans age 55 and older to meet a wide range of community challenges through three programs: the Foster Grandparent Program, RSVP, and the Senior Companion Program. RSVP volunteers help local police departments conduct safety patrols, participate in environmental projects, provide intensive educational services to children and adults, and respond to natural disasters. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with special needs. Senior Companions help homebound seniors maintain independence in their own homes.

Finding What Works, Making It Work for More People
The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) represents a new approach by the federal government to address urgent national challenges. The SIF mobilizes public and private resources to grow the impact of promising, innovative, community-based solutions that have evidence of compelling results. The program focuses on three areas of priority need: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. With its unique public-private partnership structure, the SIF annually leverages more than $93 million in matching funds through a network of more than 426 grantees in 44 states and the District of Columbia. The Social Innovation Fund reaches more than 700,000 individuals and will continue to impact tens of thousands more.

Other Programs and Initiatives
- The Volunteer Generation Fund strengthens the nation’s civic infrastructure by helping nonprofits recruit, manage, and support more volunteers.
- The September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance offers Americans the opportunity to honor victims, survivors, and those who rose up in service on September 11, 2001, through charitable service.
- The Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service supports community organizations in their efforts to engage local citizens in service on the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday.
- The President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll honors colleges and universities for the commitment of their students, faculty, and staff to community service.
- The National Service Knowledge Network provides training and resources to national service programs and nonprofits seeking to expand their capacity and impact.
- The CNCS annual Volunteering and Civic Life in America report provides comprehensive data to state and local leaders to help them expand the impact of service.
MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS IN VERMONT
More than 2,300 people of all ages and backgrounds are helping to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement through national service in Vermont. Serving at more than 530 locations throughout the state, these citizens tutor and mentor children, support veterans and military families, provide health services, restore the environment, respond to disasters, increase economic opportunity, and recruit and manage volunteers.

This year, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will commit more than $6,200,000 to support Vermont communities through national service and social innovation initiatives. CNCS invests in cost-effective community solutions—working hand in hand with local partners to improve lives, expand economic opportunity, and engage citizens in solving problems in their communities. Serving in many of the state’s most impoverished communities, CNCS provides vital support to schools, food banks, homeless shelters, community health clinics, youth centers, veterans service facilities, and other nonprofit and faith-based organizations at a time of growing demand for services. Through a unique public-private partnership, this federal investment will leverage an additional $5,520,000 in other resources to strengthen community impact, build local support, and increase return on taxpayer dollars. Nationwide, CNCS, its grantees, and project sponsors generated more than $1.25 billion in outside resources from businesses, foundations, public agencies, and other sources in FY 2015.

AmeriCorps: This year AmeriCorps will provide more than 340 individuals the opportunity to provide intensive, results-driven service to meet education, environmental, health, economic, and other pressing needs in communities across Vermont. Most AmeriCorps grant funding goes to the SerVermont, which in turn awards grants to nonprofit groups to respond to local needs. Most of the remainder of the grant funding is distributed by CNCS directly to multi-state and national organizations through a competitive grants process. Other individuals serve through AmeriCorps VISTA, whose members help bring individuals and communities out of poverty by serving full-time to fight hunger and illiteracy, improve health services, and increase housing opportunities, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps), a 10-month, full-time residential program for men and women between the ages of 18 and 24. In exchange for their service, AmeriCorps members earn an education award that can be used to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans. Since 1994, more than 5,100 Vermont residents have served more than 7.6 million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than $17,860,000.

Senior Corps: More than 1,900 seniors in Vermont contribute their time and talents in one of three Senior Corps programs. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to more than 750 young people who have special needs. Senior Companions help more than 370 homebound seniors and other adults maintain independence in their own homes. RSVP volunteers conduct safety patrols, renovate homes, protect the environment, tutor and mentor youth, respond to natural disasters, and provide other services through more than 340 groups across Vermont.

Social Innovation Fund: The Social Innovation Fund transforms lives and communities using limited federal investment as a catalyst to grow the impact of nonprofits with evidence of strong results. It harnesses the expertise of grantmaking intermediaries to identify, evaluate, and expand effective nonprofits and engages funding partners to contribute nearly three dollars for every one federal dollar invested. As the Social Innovation Fund network grows programs that work in Vermont, more people are able to overcome their most pressing challenges in the areas of economic opportunity, health, and youth development. The Social Innovation Fund is investing more than $56,000 in expanding the impact of 1 nonprofit in Vermont.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. CNCS engages millions of Americans in service to meet local needs through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and national days of service; improves communities through the Social Innovation Fund, and leads volunteer initiatives across the nation. To learn more visit NationalService.gov or Serve.gov or call 202-606-5000 or TTY 1-800-833-3722.
## Key Differences among the AmeriCorps Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>AmeriCorps VISTA Projects</th>
<th>AmeriCorps State Programs</th>
<th>AmeriCorps National Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member term of service</td>
<td>Full-time only: 365 days</td>
<td>Full-time, Half-time, Reduced Half-time, Quarter-Time, Minimum-Time</td>
<td>Full-time, Half-time, Reduced Half-time, Quarter-Time, Minimum-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member stipend/living allowance payments</td>
<td>Administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (unless VISTA project has a Program Grant)</td>
<td>Administered by the Grantee</td>
<td>Administered by the Grantee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member support costs (stipend and benefits)</td>
<td>Covered by the Corporation (unless the VISTA project is a Cost-share)</td>
<td>Required for full-time members and optional for others. Programs can use Corporation grant funds or match funding to cover member support costs.</td>
<td>Required for full-time members and optional for others. Programs can use Corporation grant funds or match funding to cover member support costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Training</td>
<td>Corporation provides a Pre-service Orientation to all new VISTA members</td>
<td>Grantee is responsible for training members</td>
<td>Grantee is responsible for training members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Service</td>
<td>Capacity Building activities, incidental direct service only</td>
<td>Direct service and capacity building activities</td>
<td>Direct service and capacity building activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Fundraising</td>
<td>No limit on % of time spent raising funds for the organization</td>
<td>Cannot allot more than 10% of their time to fundraising for the AmeriCorps program</td>
<td>Cannot allot more than 10% of their time to fundraising for the AmeriCorps program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segal AmeriCorps Education award and end of term options</td>
<td>Members choose a Segal AmeriCorps education award OR a cash stipend, paid upon successful completion of service.</td>
<td>Members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education award appropriate for the term of service completed. There is NO choice of a cash option.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational support costs</td>
<td>Projects contribute 100% of the operating costs in cash or in-kind</td>
<td>New programs must contribute a minimum of 24% of the total program costs in cash or in-kind.</td>
<td>New programs must contribute a minimum of 24% of the total program costs in cash or in-kind. Overall grantee share of total budget increases gradually to 50% overall share by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter. There is no minimum match required for EAP and Fixed-Amount grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation grant support</td>
<td>Training and support money may be available</td>
<td>Funding amount based on Member Service Years (MSY) and varies based on type of program.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporting Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Program reports required quarterly in first year, often reduced to semi-annual thereafter; financial reports required only for programs receiving grants</td>
<td>Set by the State Commission</td>
<td>Programs submit annual progress reports due the first Monday in December and semi-annual Financial Status reports directly to the Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Application Submission process</strong></td>
<td>Begins with a Concept Paper submitted to the Corporation State Office.</td>
<td>Begins with Commission issuing a Request for Proposals and applicants applying directly to the State Commission</td>
<td>Begins with submission of an application directly to the Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Member service must lift people out of poverty and be sustainable; program must address one or more CNCS strategic initiatives</td>
<td>Determined by State and CNCS priorities as well as program identified performance measures</td>
<td>Determined by CNCS priorities as well as program identified performance measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application Deadline</strong></td>
<td>No set deadline; contact your CNCS State Office</td>
<td>One annual deadline for each grant competition. Check with State Commissions for specific deadlines.</td>
<td>Specific annual deadline for Planning Grant applicants and a separate annual deadline for all other grant competitions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences between AmeriCorps Members and Employees

It’s essential to understand the differences between an AmeriCorps Member and a regular employee. As a supervisor, it is your job to make sure that staff members within your organization are coached on and aware of them. These differences provide a framework for how to meet the unique needs of the member.

Some Key Differences:

- **Motivation for applying** - Members are motivated by a desire to serve the community and ‘get things done’. Members receive little in the way of monetary compensation, and instead are driven by the satisfaction of their service. This makes it very important to have quality work and opportunities for successful projects lined up for the member(s).

- **Potential need for greater support & coaching** - Members may be young and/or have little experience in the workplace. In addition to technical training, members may need assistance with general and basic job skills.

- **Compensation** - Members do not receive a wage or salary. Instead members receive a minimal living allowance, frequently set at/near the poverty level and subject to state and federal tax. Members also receive an education award at the completion of their service (also subject to tax). They may opt to enroll in the AmeriCorps health insurance whereby the monthly premium is covered. Additionally, members are gain valuable skills, training and networking opportunities through their service.

- **Tenure in position** - Members are placed at sites on a temporary basis, most commonly 11 months. Full-Time members are contracted to complete 1700 hours, while half-time members will complete 900 hours of service. Members may sign on for a second term of service, but are not allowed to serve more than 4 terms of service.

- **Responsibilities** - Members are guided by a position description developed before the position begins. AmeriCorps positions should fill a unique niche at the organization, and should not displace other employed positions. Members also have many responsibilities to the AmeriCorps program. These responsibilities may include attending trainings, completing reports, engaging in other service projects, service learning activities, etc.

- **Regional and national implications** – AmeriCorps is nationwide program that engages more than 80,000 members each year. As part of this program, members are subject to a special set of rules and regulations. *See page 18 for an overview of these rules and regulations*. In addition, members may be called away from the site for events that relate to AmeriCorps, such as providing relief services in the case of a disaster.

- **Ability to terminate** - Unlike an employee, a member may not be “fired.” Members and sites must adhere to the grievance procedure set forth by the AmeriCorps Program. If an issue
cannot be resolved and the member or site wishes to terminate the position, the program may exit the member from the program. In some cases, the member may be able to relocate to another site and/or the position may be refilled.

- **Orientation** - Members attend an AmeriCorps Orientation before or at the start of their service. If members are relocating from another area, supervisors may have to help members meet some basic needs that a regular employee wouldn’t require. For example, the supervisor may want to assist the member in finding a place to live, locating key resources, and accessing local networks.

- **Contracts** - AmeriCorps Members are placed for a contracted period, and are not permanent employees. The member will need to be thinking of “what’s next?” during their service. Sites should support the member in using their service experience as a springboard for “life after AmeriCorps.”

In the case that the site is hosting members from various branches of service, the site should be aware of the differences. The three branches of service are 1). AmeriCorps State and National, 2). AmeriCorps VISTA, and 3). AmeriCorps NCCC/FEMA Corps. Each branch is subject to a different set of regulations, and there are differences in what the member can and can’t do.
Prohibited AmeriCorps Activities

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

a. Attempting to influence legislation;
b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
c. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
d. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
e. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
f. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
g. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
h. Providing a direct benefit to—
   i. A business organized for profit;
   ii. A labor union;
   iii. A partisan political organization;
   iv. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these 9 provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
   v. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph 3.g. above, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
i. Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
j. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
k. Such other activities as CNCS may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

In addition to the Prohibited Activities listed above, as an AmeriCorps State* program, members are disallowed from:

- General fundraising for the host site or AmeriCorps, including funds that would be used for overhead costs, wages, general operation, or the Host Site’s cost share for the member.
- Conducting Administrative tasks that are not directly related to the members Direct Service.
AmeriCorps Education Award

Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards
Named after Eli Segal, one of the pioneers of the national service movement and the first CEO of CNCS -- are a post-service benefit received by AmeriCorps members, including those supported through AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC.

Upon successful completion of a term of service, members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, which may be used only to pay college costs or to repay student loans. Members may earn up to two awards and have seven years to use this benefit. Since the inception of AmeriCorps in 1994, more than one million alumni have earned more than $3.3 billion in education awards.

The award, which was designed to encourage AmeriCorps alumni to seek postsecondary education opportunities, serves as a powerful recruitment tool for individuals to join AmeriCorps. Studies show that AmeriCorps alumni, with their commitment to service, also make excellent students. A growing number of higher education institutions, in order to encourage AmeriCorps alumni to enroll in their institutions, are “matching” the education award with scholarships and/or academic credits.

Amount, Eligibility, and Limitations

Beginning with terms of service that were supported with 2010 funds, the amount of a full-time education award is equivalent to the maximum value of the Pell Grant for the award year in which the term of service is funded. Prior to this time, the amount of an education award had remained the same since the AmeriCorps program began. Because AmeriCorps State and National programs are funded on a different schedule than VISTA and NCCC, VISTA and NCCC members will be eligible for the new amount sooner than AmeriCorps State and National members. As a reference, the amount of a Pell grant for the 2017 fiscal year was $5,815. Members should check with their program or project sponsor to confirm the amount of the award for which they are eligible.

Because the maximum amount of the Pell Grant can change every year, the amount of a full-time award can change in the future. However, once a member earns an award, the dollar value of that award will not increase. For all programs, award amounts for part-time terms of service vary based upon the length of the required term of service. Payments made from Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards are considered taxable income in the year that the Corporation makes the payment to the school or loan holder. A member serving in a full-time term of service is required to complete the service within 12 months.

Forbearance

Individuals who are serving in a term of service in an approved AmeriCorps position may be eligible to temporarily postpone the repayment of their qualified student loans through an action called loan forbearance. While your loan is in forbearance during your term of service, interest continues to accrue. However, if you successfully complete your term of service the National Service Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that accrued on your qualified student loans during your service period.
You can request that your loan company (your “loan holder”) approve forbearance for your qualified student loans during your service period. You can easily and quickly request the forbearance on-line through My AmeriCorps Portal. After you finish your term of service, you will be responsible for repaying your loan according to the terms of the loan.
Interest Payments

Individuals who have successfully completed a term of service in AmeriCorps or Silver Scholars are eligible to have the Trust pay as much as 100% of the interest that accrued on their qualified student loan during their service. The portion that the Trust will pay is determined by the type of service (full or part-time) and the length of your service period. The Trust will only pay interest on qualified student loans, as described on the Using your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award web page (http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/segal-americorps-education-award/using-your-segal-education-award).

The Trust will not pay interest if you fail to complete your term of service. Exceptions will be made only if you fail to complete your term of service for compelling personal circumstances and you have earned a pro-rated award. It is up to your individual program to determine compelling personal circumstances. Examples that might be considered are a serious illness or injury, death of your immediate family member, or early closing of your project. An interest payment can only be made after you have completed your service and have earned an award.

Interest payments are in addition to your education award; they are not deducted from your education award amount. Interest payments are based upon the interest that accrued only during the time you were serving in the AmeriCorps program.

Remember that interest payments, as well as payments made from your education award account, are considered by the IRS to be taxable income in the year in which a payment is made.
AmeriCorps Jargon

1. Accepted applicants will become a “member” of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Program, not a “volunteer”. We don’t want to disrespect people who give freely of their time by claiming we get no remuneration for the work we do, and yet we want to respect ourselves by acknowledging that we have committed to a year of national and community service by identifying as members of a movement. This term seems to work the best all around.

Volunteers are persons who give their time with no financial reward. (School board members, land trust board members, church members, scouts, students, people participating in a project on their person (not work) time. We serve with volunteers, and often help to recruit and perhaps train volunteers to help mostly volunteer powered organizations/non-profits who depend on community and professional people to operate services. AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance (however small) and an educational award for the service they commit to.

2. As members, they were “selected”, not “hired”. They receive a “living allowance” and not a “wage”. They are a “member”, not a “volunteer” or “employee”. And they were selected to participate in a service opportunity or to fulfill a season of service for your community, not to do a “job”.

3. Members “serve” at a “host site” of Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Program and you are referred to as the site supervisor, often simply shortened to: supervisor. Groups, organizations, schools, etc. with whom we join to carry out project plans are referred to as “community partners”.

4. Projects are the collaborations we develop with community groups, and/or organizations based on their interest and needs. Projects have goals and objectives, develop from a plan, have resources and needs identified, can be measured for success and impact and can be continued without our assistance. We plan our own obsolescence due to the vagaries of political funding whims. Our goal is to leave communities empowered, so that they don’t need us in the future. If communities can continue these projects on their own without AmeriCorps program assistance, then the project is truly sustainable.

5. Members don’t do projects “for” communities, but rather they join “with” communities to carry out projects. This is more than a semantic difference, since our intent is to leave communities more empowered than they were to help themselves. We want to respond to their needs and ideas, not just act on our own and hope they fit in the community later. Empowerment is helping people help themselves. We always look for opportunities in our projects to involve those people who benefit from the project, as partners, collaborators and/or consultants in the project activity itself.

6. Please encourage members to refrain from using the words “advocate” and “solicit” when they are describing their service. Although what they do may involve advocacy or solicitation of resources for a project, the Corporation for National Service is sensitive about the use of these words because of their
misuse and misinterpretation in the past. It’s preferred that we say “I support the residents,” or “I obtained donated materials for this project from XYZCorp,” etc.

7. AmeriCorps members complete direct service with organizations that amounts to increased capacity building, something that enables host sites to expand their reach further than they could have without our efforts.

Thanks for your cooperation with this! Words truly matter to us....

AmeriCorps FAQs
Is AmeriCorps like Peace Corps?
Yes. AmeriCorps is often referred to as "the domestic Peace Corps." Both agencies are committed to service, and both offer challenging and rewarding full-time opportunities. Peace Corps assignments are all overseas, and AmeriCorps members serve only in the US. While Peace Corps Volunteers serve for two years, a stint in AmeriCorps usually lasts 10 months to one year. (Some AmeriCorps projects also offer part-time opportunities, and some AmeriCorps members serve more than one term of service.)

**What skills do members need to have?**
Some programs have specific skill requests in certain areas, and others look for a bachelor's degree or a few years of related volunteer/job experience. For others, motivation and commitment may be the primary requirement.

**Do they get paid?**
For all AmeriCorps programs, members receive a modest living allowance, and some programs provide housing. They may not save much money during your year of service, but most members find the living allowance to be adequate to cover their needs. AmeriCorps members who complete a term of service also receive an AmeriCorps Education Award.

**Is there an age requirement?**
Members must be at least 17 years old, although some service opportunities require you to be at least 18. For one of our programs, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), members must be between 18 and 24 years old, but for most there are no upper age limits

**Can a non-U.S. citizen join?**
One must be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S. to be an AmeriCorps member.

**Are there any loan forgiveness programs or repayment plans for which members might qualify?**
On September 27, 2007, President Bush signed the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 ("CCRAA") into law. In addition to other amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965, the CCRAA created two new federal programs: a new Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and a new Income-Based Repayment plan (IBR) for the repayment of federal loans. The new Income-Based Repayment plan helps to make repaying education loans more affordable for low-income borrowers, such as an AmeriCorps member living on a stipend; AmeriCorps service is also recognized as equivalent to a public service job for the purposes of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

**Can members defer student loans during service with AmeriCorps?**
Members may qualify for postponement, or forbearance, of the repayment of your loans during your service. The education award will help pay off qualified student loans when the term is completed. Members can contact their lender for more specific information or to confirm loan status during AmeriCorps service.

**What if a member is out of school and not interested in the education award? Can they get that money in cash?**
If members part of AmeriCorps VISTA, they may opt for a cash payment of $100 per month of service instead of the education award. All other AmeriCorps members are eligible only for the education award.

**I'm confused. There are different programs, with different names, but they're all AmeriCorps?**
Yes, basically. AmeriCorps is a national network of hundreds of programs throughout the United States. Two of these programs -- AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC -- are managed nationally. The others fall under the umbrella of our AmeriCorps State and National programs, which are administered by
with members to determine which program might be best for them.

**We have a member currently participating in AmeriCorps who has a question about their Education Award. Who should they contact?**

For general questions about the Education Award and student loan deferment, contact National Service Trust at 1-800-942-2677. If you have successfully completed your AmeriCorps service, you can view your AmeriCorps Education Award account balance and activity online. To request a copy of your AmeriCorps Education Award voucher or report a change of address, you can visit https://questions.nationalservice.gov/. For general information on student financial assistance, you may contact your high school guidance counselor, the financial aid officer at the post-secondary institution you plan to attend, the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243), or consult the Student Guide issued by the U.S. Department of Education.