

## Chapter 9 – Member Management

### My AmeriCorps

#### ***Tutorials***

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/myamericorps-support-ameri-corps-state-commission-and-sub-grantees>

On this site, you will find tutorials and other resources that will guide you through using the functions of MyAmeriCorps. Tutorials offer flexibility and quick references: users can access them at their convenience and "jump" to specific agenda items. You can also download the PowerPoint presentations that are used in the tutorials. State commission staff and sub-grantees may use these resources to develop their own training.

AmeriCorps Forms: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/tta/forms.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/tta/forms.asp)

On this site both official and sample forms are available online. Official forms are those required by Corporation programs to manage and report on grants. Sample forms, which are not official, have been provided by grantees and others.

### **AmeriCorps Recruitment**

This section is intended to give you some basic strategies that you can adapt to recruit members from your community and information on how you can tap into the national pool of applicants. More detailed information is available at: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/members/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/members/index.asp).

- Recruitment 101, Ask the Expert is another resource to access:  
<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/ask-expert-russ-donahue-%E2%80%94-ameri-corps-recruitment-101>
- EnCorps: Writing Position Descriptions – Use these samples to write an AmeriCorps position description to attract the right candidates,  
[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/recruitment\\_and\\_placement/write\\_an\\_ameri-corps\\_position\\_d.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/recruitment_and_placement/write_an_ameri-corps_position_d.php)

Whether you recruit locally or nationally, you are encouraged to target your recruitment activities to as many audiences as are appropriate. Diversity is important in recruitment, and can be represented in many ways: age, gender, sexual orientation, economic, education background, race and ethnicity, skills, and physical abilities.

First, take some time to plan your general recruitment strategy, which should include:

- position descriptions for your members;
- a list of target groups that may be able to fill the positions; and
- ways to make sure that your target groups are aware of your organization and the positions available.

## ***Developing a Recruiting Message***

Once you develop a list of target groups, think of different ways you can market or “sell” your AmeriCorps message to each group. Remember to vary your approach because not all people will respond to the same message. Below are some basic “selling” points:

- appeal of AmeriCorps and service
- give back to your community
- gain job skills and career networks
- travel/meet new people/adventure
- deferment for qualified student loans
- education award to pay off student loans or for post-secondary education
- opportunity to apply education and experience to help communities

***Target your materials.*** What would attract an applicant to your program? Applicants want to know what they’ll be doing and what they’ll gain from service as an AmeriCorps member. Target your approach to specific audiences. For example, if your project focuses on education, advertise to education majors the valuable classroom experience that they’ll gain as AmeriCorps members. Ask your current members to comment on your existing materials and give you either formal or informal reactions. Even though you don’t need to incorporate all of their comments you are likely to receive some helpful feedback.

***Make it personal.*** Personal contact makes the difference. Ask your alumni (or current members on non-service hours) to attend a state fair, conference, or school career day to share their experiences. Consider holding an information session with the contacts that you’ve made. Invite your current members, service alumni, and other members in the area to share their experiences and give potential applicants a firsthand account of your program.

***Respond quickly and follow up.*** Keep a record of people you’ve sent applications to or who have requested further information. Follow up with them with a postcard, phone call, or e-mail to invite them to take the next step. Offer suggestions to them on completing the application.

***Collaborate and ask for help.*** There may be other programs recruiting in your area--check with them and find out how you can combine mailings, or share space at events with other programs. They may even have a list of people they were unable to place who could be perfect for your program. Contact other national service programs and/or branches in your area including National Senior Corps and VISTA.

***Create a Network.*** People often decide to do something because someone they respect or trust has suggested it. Ask local high school counselors, college placement officers, and community leaders to promote AmeriCorps and your program. Again, consider your target audiences and the attraction that your program would hold for them.

**Order your materials.** Use the AmeriCorps Materials Request Form to order the recruitment materials that you need. [http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/ac\\_materials\\_request.pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/ac_materials_request.pdf)

**National Recruitment Website** – <https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>

*My AmeriCorps*, the web-based system for the recruitment and placement of AmeriCorps members, allows individuals to learn about AmeriCorps programs throughout the country, to search for programs based on selected criteria and to apply on-line. It allows programs to search for individuals based on the same select criteria and to contact these individuals via e-mail. Programs may also receive and approve applications on-line.

To assist you in reaching a national pool of potential members, you can list your program opportunities and select applicants online. The grants management and recruiting system are both in one place; you can access the recruitment system through <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>.

## **AmeriCorps Application**

The Corporation has created a standard application for AmeriCorps, which you are encouraged to use as the application for your program. If you have your own application, you are asked to also to accept the AmeriCorps application from potential candidates who have enrolled on-line using the My AmeriCorps website. If requested, programs must make their forms available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities. If you need copies of the AmeriCorps application visit:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/tta/forms.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/forms.asp)

If your program has its own application form, it may be beneficial to include an area where an individual lists any other AmeriCorps experience. If an individual is selected for a fifth or more term of service not in keeping with Corporation policy and regulations, the program will be liable for any Corporation funds used to support that individual.

## **Term of Service & Education Award Limitations**

A term of service must be stated in a member contract. To learn more, go to:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/benefits/benefits\\_ed\\_award\\_faq.asp#Term\\_Limitations](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_faq.asp#Term_Limitations)

### **Member Start and End Dates**

Member start and end dates must fall within the start and end dates of the Subgrantee Agreement with ServeNebraska. Members, whether receiving a stipend or not, cannot continue to serve beyond the end date of the contract unless some unforeseen and special circumstance arises where the contract must be extended to allow members to complete their service hours. The continuation of a grant beyond the pre-approved end date is referred to as a “no-cost extension” and must be requested from ServeNebraska at least 30 days before the end of the contract.

### **Number of Education Awards**

Under no circumstances will an individual be eligible to receive more than the equivalent of two full time education awards.

## **Serving Multiple Terms**

The Edward M. Kennedy [Serve America Act Final Rule](#) (published August 20, 2010) increased the limit of terms one may serve in AmeriCorps State and National from two to four terms with added limits stating no individual may receive more than the aggregate value of two full-time education awards regardless of the stream of service through which the member earns the award.

<b>AmeriCorps National Service Network</b>	<b>Maximum Number of Terms within each type of AmeriCorps Program</b>
AmeriCorps*State & National	4
AmeriCorps*NCCC	2
AmeriCorps*VISTA	3

Exhaustion of the number of terms one may serve in AmeriCorps State and National would not necessarily prevent an individual from enrolling in a position in another national service program, such as AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps VISTA, or Silver Scholars.

## **Member Eligibility**

In order to be eligible to serve, an individual must:

- be at least 17 years of age (with limited exceptions);
- be a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident alien; and
- possess a high school diploma or GED or work to attain one during the term of service.

Beginning February 27<sup>th</sup> 2012 AmeriCorps programs will no longer be required to verify identity and citizenship. Identity and citizenship status of potential AmeriCorps members will be automatically verified by the Social Security Administration when a member is enrolled by the program. Full verification of the member should be completed within three days, and the member's status in the eGrants portal will be changed to "verified." In the case that a member's identity cannot be verified by the Social Security Administration, a letter will be sent to the program director and the individual who enrolled the member giving instructions on what steps are needed to proceed with the member's enrollment. For additional information, go to: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/ready/eligibility.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/ready/eligibility.asp) .

Even with this provision, ServeNebraska still strongly encourages that programs retain evidence that an individual is eligible to serve.

## **Criminal History Check**

With the passage of the Serve America it is now a requirement that all AmeriCorps members and any program staff funded, either by match or federal funds, through AmeriCorps must submit to the following two requirements:

- 1) a name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR), [www.nsopr.gov/](http://www.nsopr.gov/)
- 2) a search of the Nebraska State Patrol registry and, if not Nebraska, the designated criminal registry for the state in which the individual was residing at time of application
- 3) an FBI Background check

Processes for securing the Nebraska State Patrol and the FBI Background check are featured within the Grantee Central section of the ServeNebraska website.

Programs should very carefully follow the requirements for National Service Criminal History Checks. Please refer to: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/manage/history\\_checks.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/manage/history_checks.asp) to ensure that the timing, safeguards, permissions and timing of this law are followed.

## Enrollment

Enrollment is conducted online via the eGrants/My AmeriCorps portal. Members can complete a hard copy version of the enrollment form, with the information then placed online by the Program Leader. The enrollment form can be accessed at: [http://www.americorps.gov/forms/ac\\_enrollment.pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/forms/ac_enrollment.pdf).

The enrollment form must be completed and executed by the member and Program Leader on or before the first day of service.

## Member Records

For each member entered into an AmeriCorps position, there are a number of records that must be retained by the program. To aid programs in maintaining compliance with required documentation, ServeNebraska has created the Member File Checklist which is accessible in the Grantee Central section of the ServeNebraska website. Items in the member file should be kept in the order indicated on the Member File Checklist, and a copy of the Member File Checklist should be included in each member's file.

Supervisors and program directors should conduct periodic reviews of member files to ensure that service hours are being accurately tracked and that member files are current and complete.

## Member Contract

Each AmeriCorps member must execute a contract that includes his/her responsibilities and rights as an AmeriCorps member on or before his/her first day of service. Execution of the Member Contract includes signature by the Program Leader.

To assure compliance with the expectations below, ServeNebraska has drafted a standardized member contract template which can be accessed within the Grantee Central section of the ServeNebraska website.

At a minimum the member contract must contain the following:

- ✓ Member position description: Each member must have a position description for their service activities including performance criteria. It is the responsibility of the grantee to ensure that member positions “do not include or put the AmeriCorps member in a situation in which the member is at risk for engaging in any prohibited activity (see 45 CFR § 2520.65).” Resources to aid in creating a member position description can be found at [http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/create\\_a\\_position\\_description.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/create_a_position_description.php)
- ✓ Member term of service: Each contract must state the number of hours the member must serve to complete their term of service and the time span over which that member has to complete their service hours.
- ✓ The amount of the education award: The amount of the education award the member will receive for successful completion of their service

- ✓ Standards of Conduct: Describe how the member is expected to behave under the specific circumstances of their service; this may include dress code and appropriate use of language.
- ✓ Prohibited Activities (45C.F.R. 2520)
- ✓ Drug Free Workplace Act: Programs receiving federal funds must follow the Drug Free Workplace Act and publish a drug-free workplace statement.
- ✓ Suspension, Termination and Release for Cause: The guidelines under which an AmeriCorps member's term of service can be found in 45 C.F.R 2522.230
- ✓ Grievance Procedures (45 C.F.R. 2540.230): Include in the member contract to ensure that the member receives the procedure and acknowledges receipt with a signature.
- ✓ Other requirements by Grantee: Grantees may also include in the contract any additional requirements necessary for the member to complete their term of service tied to the member's education award. Examples of additional requirements of members may be required attendance at service events or a minimum of volunteers recruited.

### ***Position Descriptions***

Position descriptions should clearly describe each member's service activities. More extensive input on how to develop member position descriptions can be found on the EnCorps website at the following link: [http://encorps.nationalservicerresources.org/create\\_a\\_position\\_description.php](http://encorps.nationalservicerresources.org/create_a_position_description.php)

### ***Nonduplication and Nondisplacement***

It is imperative that AmeriCorps member roles do not duplicate or displace existing staff functions.

- **Nonduplication** – Assistance provided under the national service laws shall be used only for a program that does not duplicate, and is in addition to, an activity otherwise available in the locality of such program.
- **Private Nonprofit Entity** – Assistance made available under the national service laws shall not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency that such entity resides unless nondisplacement requirements are met.
- **Nondisplacement** – An employer shall not displace an employee, position, or volunteer (other than a participant under the national service laws), including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving assistance under the national service laws.

## **Member Benefits**

### ***Living Allowance***

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires an AmeriCorps program to provide its full-time members with a living allowance. Living allowances for less-than-full-time positions are not required, but are recommended (except for education award-only programs). Each year the Corporation sets the minimum and maximum amount for member living allowance. It is important to always specify that the living allowance is not a wage just as AmeriCorps members are not employees. In regard to the treatment of the member living allowance as income for purposes of determining eligibility for federal benefits programs, the Corporation will continue to work with other federal agencies, states and local entities so that they treat the living allowance appropriately for determining eligibility for other assistance categories.

## **Health Care**

Health care benefits must be made available to all full-time members and meet the standards established by the grant provisions for the particular grant year. Health care benefits may be provided to members serving less than full time, but no Corporation funds may be used to support the cost. Grant funds will not pay for dependent coverage. The program must budget funds to pay health insurance premiums for full-time members.

## **Child Care**

Income eligible full-time AmeriCorps members can receive funds towards child care expenses. Details can be found here: <http://www.americorpschildcare.com/> . All full-time AmeriCorps members must be made aware of the opportunity to access child care services.

Programs do not include funding for child care expenses in their budget.

## **Student Loan Forbearance & Interest Accrual**

AmeriCorps members can have eligible student loans put into forbearance during their term of service and have the National Service Trust pay any interest that accrues on the student loan during that term.

Details can be found here:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/benefits/benefits\\_ed\\_award\\_repayment.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_repayment.asp)

All AmeriCorps members must be made aware of the Forbearance and Interest Accrual opportunity.

## **Education Awards**

The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is a benefit VISTA, AmeriCorps, and NCCC members receive upon successful completion of their term of service. The award can be used to finance higher education or repay qualifying student loans. The award is subject to taxes at the time it is used.

Use this site, <http://edaward.org/guidebook/education-award-guidebook> to learn more about the award and to help members form a strategy on how to use it and discover post-service opportunities related to school and student loans.

For additional resources about the Education Award and higher education institutions that match the Education Award go to:

Institutions that Match the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/benefits/ed\\_award\\_match.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/ed_award_match.asp)

The College Cost Reduction & Access Act and AmeriCorps:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08\\_1210\\_ccraa\\_faqs.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08_1210_ccraa_faqs.pdf)

## **Member Orientation**

The grantee must conduct an orientation for members designed to enhance member security and sensitivity to the community. Orientation should cover member rights and responsibilities, including the Program's code of conduct, prohibited activities (including those specified in the regulations), requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 *et seq.*), suspension and termination from service, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, other non-discrimination issues, and additional topics as necessary.

***Core topics for initial member orientation should include, at a minimum:***

- National service: the big picture
- An overview of the history and nationwide importance of national service including:
  - The history of service in America
  - A discussion of the AmeriCorps ethic
  - The meaning of community
  - The doors of opportunity that will open through service
  - The responsibilities individuals have to themselves, their families, their community, and the nation
- Program rules, regulations, and benefits (provide member program manual)
  - Drug Free Workplace Act, sexual harassment, and other discrimination issues
  - Grievance procedure
  - Safety protocol
  - Prohibited activities
  - Rules of conduct
  - Suspension
  - Making up missed service hours
- Program operating policies:
  - Timesheets
  - Travel policies
  - Expense reimbursement
  - Benefits
  - Living allowance
  - Staff and member roles
- The objectives of the program and how to collect data for evaluation purposes
- Background information about the community or natural environment

Orientation sessions for your staff, site supervisors, and members should include a discussion of the national scope of AmeriCorps, and explanation of how your local program fits into the AmeriCorps network of national service programs.

**Additional Resources**

EnCorps: Orientation Requirements & Samples

[http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/mo\\_elements.php](http://encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/mo_elements.php)

AmeriCorps Connect: Orientation & Training Tips

<http://www.americorpsconnect.org/content/member-orientation-and-training>

**Member Supervision**

Program Leaders should ensure that each member has sound direct supervision. AmeriCorps members are evolving professionals, so consistent constructive input is important.

***Evaluating Member Performance***

It is a requirement that every AmeriCorps member receives a mid-term and end of term evaluation. A member evaluation must record at a minimum:

- The number of hours the member has completed and whether this satisfies his/her term of service.
- Whether the participant has satisfactorily completed assignments, tasks or projects.
- Whether the participant has met other performance criteria which had been clearly communicated both orally and in writing at the beginning of the term of service.

Under AmeriCorps regulations end of term evaluations are a key piece in determining a member's eligibility for an education award and additional terms of service.

## **Exiting a Member**

In order to officially end their time in AmeriCorps, whether they have completed their term of service or not, members should either exit themselves through the My AmeriCorps portal or complete and sign the National Service Trust End of Term Form. In the case that a member does not exit themselves and cannot be reached by the program, the program should complete a national trust exit form indicating that the member was not available to sign the form and keep this documentation in the member file. The final step of the exit process is for the program to exit the member from eGrants. It is required for this to be completed within 30 days of the member's final hour served.

## **Life After AmeriCorps – Next Steps**

The CNCS Resource Center provides current information and tools developed specifically to help members prepare and plan for their next steps. To learn more, go to:

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/amicorps-next-steps-life-after-amicorps-workshop-materials>

EnCorps Resources & Tutorial: <http://encorps.nationalservicerresources.org/whatsnext/index.shtml>

AmeriCorps Alums: Using the Ed Award Wisely: <http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/grantee/grantee.htm>

Life After AmeriCorps Curriculum: <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/ac-next-chapters>