AMERICORPS GUIDE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps offers three programs and each provide a different community service experience. All three AmeriCorps programs require applicants to have U.S. Citizenship. The programs include:

• National, State, and Local AmeriCorps

**Overview:** Supports a broad range of local service programs throughout the United States that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs such as education, environmental, public health and safety, and disaster preparation and response. AmeriCorps members also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations where they serve.

**Duration:** Part-time and full-time for 9-12 months.

**Sample positions:** Youth Mentor, Rehabilitation Counselor, Park Restoration Worker

**Requirements:** At least 17 years of age

• AmeriCorps VISTA

**Overview:** This program funds full-time positions to community organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs for larger capacity and ultimately seek to bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

**Duration:** Full-time for 12 months at a non-profit or local government agency. Stay in one community at one organization for entire duration.

**Sample positions:** Literacy Tutor, Community Organizer, Resource Developer, Marketing Coordinator

**Requirements:** At least 18 years old. The program looks for college grads and adults who have a few years of work experience. You are not, however, allowed to hold additional employment with the intent that you can then be fully committed to your service.

• AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

**Overview:** This full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24, strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service.

**Duration:** Full-time for 10 months. Projects usually last from 6-8 weeks.

**Sample positions:** Disaster Relief Worker, Youth Tutor, Renovation Worker

**Requirements:** Members live on one of four campuses, located in Denver, Colorado; Sacramento, California; Perry Point, Maryland and Vinton, Iowa. They serve in teams of ten to twelve and are assigned to projects throughout the region served by their campus. This involves relocation and travel during the 10-month service period.

Through these programs, AmeriCorps engages more than 75,000 men and women in intensive service each year at more than 15,000 host locations including non-profits,
government agencies, and schools. Members gain valuable professional, educational, and life benefits.

**AmeriCorps Program Options**

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<th>Overview</th>
<th>State and National</th>
<th>VISTA</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Local service programs for communities' needs</td>
<td>Expansion of community organization capacity</td>
<td>Team-based direct community service</td>
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<td>Topics</td>
<td>Address critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.</td>
<td>Diverse initiatives that all serve to alleviate poverty</td>
<td>Various assigned projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Part-time or full-time for 9-12 months</td>
<td>One year of full-time service</td>
<td>10 months of onsite service</td>
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<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Living allowance, child benefits, healthcare</td>
<td>Limited healthcare, student-loan forbearance, non-competitive eligibility for a federal government job</td>
<td>Room and board, living allowance, limited healthcare, education award</td>
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<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Must be at least 17</td>
<td>Must be at least 18, Must not be employed in another position during service</td>
<td>Must be 18-24, Residential</td>
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**What are the benefits of being an AmeriCorps Member?**

Participating in one of the AmeriCorps Programs comes with several benefits. Program participants may take advantage of health insurance, childcare, and student loan deferment/forbearance benefits provided they are otherwise eligible by federal law. In addition to these benefits, participants are provided with roughly $880/mo full-time, $440/mo part-time. Depending on the type of service, one may even be eligible to count their term of service as one year non-competitive status for a federal government employment.

Among the greatest benefits is the education award given out upon completion of service. Eligible participants can receive the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award after one year of service. The award is equal to the maximum amount of the Federal Pell Grant for that academic year. The award can put towards future education expenses or to pay for past qualified loans. The award expires within seven years of service. An alternative to the award is a stipend of $1,200, given at the end of the year, which can be used at the individual's discretion.

Furthermore, Macalester alums attest that their AmeriCorps experience was integral in introducing them to the non-profit sector. Sometimes, an AmeriCorps placement, depending on the organization funding, can turn into a permanent position. Alums also cited not just the possibility of full-time employment, but also the expanse of the program’s networks proved to be beneficial in further exploring the possibilities in the field.
What are some potential drawbacks?

An AmeriCorps position takes dedication, and even the willingness to sacrifice. To help set an honest understanding of some of the challenges you may face, here are some of potential drawbacks to keep in mind:

♦ Mac Alums have described the stipend as "an introduction to one of the realities of non-profit work." In other words, your monetary compensation may be unequal to the amount of work you’re putting in.
♦ Alums say that sometimes the work is not necessarily part of the original position description and as a result may require more flexibility.

When do I apply?

AmeriCorps runs several programs with organizations across the U.S (and Puerto Rico). Each of these programs has their own application deadlines. There are two main deadline dates, one for the fall cycle (April 1st) and one for the winter cycle (July 1st). However, sometimes deadlines may be extended. Refer to your "My AmeriCorps" profile for accurate listings.

How do I apply?

The application for an AmeriCorps position involves a few, albeit intricate, steps. To aid in this process, here are some helpful directions courtesy of the Minnesota Literacy Council. *Please note, these instructions are based on the 2012-13 application period and are subject to change in the following years.

Creating an Application

1. In the left menu, click on the tab labeled “Applications”

2. Select “Create Application”
3. You’ll be taken to the first page of the 8 page application. Complete the entire application before submitting it. Here are some general tips that apply to every page of the application:

- If you have not made changes to your application for 15 minutes or more, you will be locked out of the site, and any unsaved information will be deleted.

- Make sure you complete all required questions on a page before clicking the “next” button. If you click “next” before completing all the required sections, you’ll get sent back to the page you were on and some of your information may get deleted.

- Pay attention to character limits. If you go over the character limit on a section and click “next” you will be sent back to the page you were on and some of your information may get deleted.

- Pay attention to the format they would like you to use when entering numbers (ex: mm/dd/yyyy for dates) because if you enter them wrong it will not let you go on to the next page, and some of your information may get deleted.

- When you click “next” the website will save any information you have entered on the page IF you have not gone over any character limits, missed any required questions, or entered any information incorrectly.

- Because your information can get deleted for the reasons listed above, we highly recommend that you save your answers in a word document as well as on the online application.

Tips for crafting a strong application:

**Basic Information Section:**
- Name should match the name on your driver’s license

**Employment Section:**
- Explain your reasons for leaving each work position
- List number of hours per week for each work position
- Explain any employment gaps of six months or longer

**Skills and Experience Section:**
- Each section is limited to 200 characters
Community Service Section:
- Explain why you volunteer or want to begin volunteering
- Don’t just list your volunteer experiences in your written statement
- Don’t check the “I do not have any volunteer experience” box unless you actually don’t have any experience
- List your most recent volunteer experiences and explain what you did
- List hours per month for each volunteer position

Education Section:
- Select the highest level of education you will have achieved by the time you start service (Example: Select “college graduate” if you are currently in school and will have completed your degree by August 2013)

Motivational Statement Section:
- Explain why you are applying for a year of AmeriCorps service
- Describe the experiences in your life that influenced your decision to join AmeriCorps
- Share the impact community service has had on you or the community

Background Questionnaire Section:
- Don’t include minor traffic violations (Example: speeding ticket)
- Do include anything that would show up on a state or federal background check (Example: petty misdemeanors including those that were expunged). Additional information may be requested.
- Admission of minor crimes does not automatically disqualify you for service but omissions will disqualify you

References Section:
- Alert your references that they will receive an email from AmeriCorps and send an email reminder to complete the reference questionnaire if necessary
- Appropriate References: Work or volunteer supervisors, teachers, counselors, coaches, clergy
- Inappropriate References: Family members, friends, coworkers, classmates, peers
- References should include at least one work or volunteer supervisor (using two teachers is not encouraged)
- If two references are not complete by the time you submit your application, follow up with your references and check your application to ensure they are completed as soon as possible. You cannot be selected for a VISTA positions if both references are not complete.
Sources
http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet_vista_0.pdf
http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps
http://thenewservice.org/2009/10/06/lifeafteramericorpsresources/
http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0515_ac_memberimpact.pdf
http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/fact-sheets/americorps
http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0515_ac_memberimpact.pdf

Minnesota Literacy Council AmeriCorps VISTA program,
http://mnliteracy.org/volunteers/become-vista
Notes:

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<td>All guides are available for download on the CDC Web site.</td>
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<td>• Clarify strengths &amp; interests</td>
<td>• Resume &amp; C.V. Guide</td>
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Networking & Personal Branding:
• Tools to Access Mac Alumni
• Social Media Inventory
• LinkedIn Profile Review

Complimentary CDC Guides
• Resume & C.V. Guide
• Talking about your Skills Workbook
• Interviewing
• Writing Personal Statements
• Job Search Skills & Tools

Need help? Questions?
• Scheduled 30- or 60-min. appointments
• Drop-in Appts: M-F: 2-4pm
• Appointments in person, phone & Skype.

Connect with CDC

Updated August 2013. Please contact the CDC for permission to reprint.

CDC/Marketing&Brochures/FinalGuides