

AmeriCorps VISTA FAQ for Career Centers

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Application Questions

What do AmeriCorps VISTA members do?

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve full time (~40 hours/week) for 1 full year at a community organization (nonprofit, college/university, local government office, etc.) on anti-poverty projects. AmeriCorps VISTA members work on projects that build the capacity of their organization. Projects can vary and are not limited to: developing outreach and marketing campaigns, building a social media presence, creating a program database, writing grants, managing a program in its first year, and recruiting volunteers. If you are interested in developing a certain skill set, working on a specific project, exploring a certain career path, check out the My AmeriCorps Portal: [My.AmeriCorps.gov](https://my.americorps.gov).

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How do I apply to AmeriCorps VISTA?

Search for positions and apply at the My AmeriCorps Portal: [My.AmeriCorps.gov](https://my.americorps.gov).

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Where is AmeriCorps VISTA?

There are AmeriCorps VISTA positions in every state including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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Who can apply to AmeriCorps VISTA?

Applicants need to be over 18 years old when they start their AmeriCorps VISTA service and must have the following citizenship statuses: U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens, and persons legally residing in a state that have the following legal residency classifications: refugee, asylum or asylee, temporary protected status or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status. (By law, only VISTA members who are either U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, or Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens—sometimes referred to as “Lawful Permanent Residents”—are eligible to receive an AmeriCorps Segal Education Award in lieu of a cash stipend.)

Specific AmeriCorps VISTA positions may have additional requirements on top of general program requirements such as a college degree, specific experience/classes, languages, etc.

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How long does the application process last?

The application takes about one to two hours to complete.

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What does the application include?

The application includes a profile (basic demographic info) and an application that includes work and community service history, motivational statement, and two references.

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[Which citizenship status are eligible to participate in AmeriCorps VISTA?](#)

U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens, and persons legally residing in a state that have the following legal residency classifications: refugee, asylum or asylee, temporary protected status or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status. (By law, only VISTA members who are either: U.S. Citizens; U.S. Nationals; or Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens (sometimes referred to as “Lawful Permanent Residents”), are eligible to receive an AmeriCorps Segal Education Award in lieu of a cash stipend.)

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[When should I start applying to AmeriCorps VISTA?](#)

The best time to apply is about two months before your anticipated start date. Positions are posted year-round, so keep checking the My AmeriCorps Portal: my.americorps.gov!

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[What is the application deadline?](#)

Applications deadline vary by position and positions are posted all year. You can apply year-round to be an AmeriCorps VISTA.

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[How many positions can I apply to?](#)

You can apply to up to 20 positions.

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[How competitive is AmeriCorps VISTA?](#)

If you are over 18 years old and have the appropriate citizenship status, you can serve with AmeriCorps VISTA. Be flexible and open to different positions, locations, and start dates.

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[I have questions about the position, who do I talk to?](#)

Each AmeriCorps VISTA listing has a gray summary box to the right of the page. There is a contact listed right before the AmeriCorps VISTA logo. Contact that person with any questions you may have about the AmeriCorps VISTA position and organization.

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[I am having trouble completing the application, who do I talk to?](#)

Call the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 or submit application questions via webform at:

<https://questions.nationalservice.gov>.

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[Why do I need to provide two references?](#)

References are an important part of any application process. Teachers, professors, coaches, and supervisors are appropriate references. Family members are not acceptable references.

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There are no interesting AmeriCorps VISTA positions open right now, should I still apply to AmeriCorps VISTA?

Yes! Positions are posted throughout the year. Keep checking the My AmeriCorps Portal: my.americorps.gov.

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How do I explain AmeriCorps VISTA to my parents?

Great question.

You can explain VISTA in a couple of different ways:

Nuts and Bolts: AmeriCorps VISTA stands for Volunteers in Service to America. By participating in this AmeriCorps program, you are volunteering for one year to build the capacity of a community organization focused on anti-poverty initiatives. There are several benefits to participating in the AmeriCorps VISTA programs. AmeriCorps VISTAs earn a modest living allowance, a monetary end-of-service award that can be used to pay off qualified student loans or specific education expenses, loan deferment or forbearance, Noncompetitive Eligibility (special hiring preference to fast track into federal government jobs), and more.

You are joining a movement and becoming part of history: VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) was envisioned by President Kennedy to be a domestic Peace Corps. President Johnson enacted VISTA as part of the War on Poverty. VISTA is over 50 years old and by joining, you are entering a community with over 200,000 passionate activists who have gone on to careers in every sector of this economy. President Johnson's words are as relevant today as they were when the first class of VISTAs were sworn into service: "Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor often will be difficult. But you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man."

You are building skills: AmeriCorps VISTA is more than a service opportunity. Yes, you will be working with the community on grass-roots solutions. Yes, your service will move individuals and communities out of poverty, rather than making poverty more tolerable. Yes, you will make a community organization more effective and efficient. But as you are building community, you will also be building your career. You will start service with two training opportunities and have access to professional development training throughout the year. As a capacity-builder, you will be focused on creation and sustainability. You will be gaining professional experience and building skills as you learn, experiment, and adapt to a new environment while delivering outcomes. You will finish your year of service with an incredibly robust set of skills that can be applied to any professional career.

You are earning money for undergrad, grad school, or to pay off loans: A great perk of AmeriCorps VISTA service is the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. VISTAs who successfully complete a year of service can opt to receive an education award (\$5,815) that can be used towards qualified school loans and specific educational expenses or an end-of-service cash stipend (\$1,500). Use your AmeriCorps VISTA service as a gap year to pay off loans or save for school as you plan your next move whether that's graduate school, another program like Peace Corps or the Fulbright, or entering the workforce.

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Program Questions

[What does national service mean?](#)

National service is volunteer service on a national level. National service members are funded federally by the Corporation for National and Community Service and can serve in locations across the U.S.

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[What is the difference between AmeriCorps, NCCC and VISTA?](#)

There are three AmeriCorps programs: State/National, National Community Civilian Corps (NCCC) and Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA).

- AmeriCorps State/National (named to distinguish between State and National funding) is an intensive service program located in nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. Members must complete 300-1,700 hours of service.
- AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a 10 month, full-time, team-based residential service program for individuals ages 18-24. NCCC members serve on 10- to 12-member teams that travel to serve in communities all over the U.S. and U.S. territories.
- AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) 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.

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[Can I go to school at the same time?](#)

Yes, but classes cannot interfere with your AmeriCorps VISTA position.

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[Can I have a part-time job at the same time?](#)

Yes, you can have a part-time job. You need to request approval and the job cannot interfere with your AmeriCorps VISTA position.

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[Will AmeriCorps VISTA pay for my relocation?](#)

If you move more than 50 miles from your home to a new community for service, AmeriCorps VISTA offers limited relocation travel assistance and a settling-in allowance.

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[Does AmeriCorps VISTA provide housing?](#)

No, AmeriCorps VISTA does not provide housing assistance. Specific AmeriCorps VISTA positions may offer housing benefits depending on the sponsoring organization.

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[What is the living allowance?](#)

The amount of the living allowance varies by the county where the AmeriCorps VISTA is located. AmeriCorps VISTAs receive a living allowance similar to the income level of the community they are serving in. To find out the exact stipend reach out to the Program Contact, listed on the opportunity listing.

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[What if I find a job during my AmeriCorps VISTA year?](#)

If you accept a job or leave service during your AmeriCorps VISTA year, you forfeit all benefits including your stipend, the Segal Education Award, and Noncompetitive Eligibility (special hiring preference for federal jobs after successfully completing an AmeriCorps VISTA year).

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[What is the health benefit?](#)

The health benefit is an option between a Healthcare Allowance or a Benefit Plan. The Health Care Allowance is a reimbursement program that covers out-of-pocket costs associated with healthcare expenses. The Benefit Plan is available for members who are legally exempt from needing to maintain qualifying healthcare coverage. The Plan covers eligible medical office visits, most lab and x-ray services, and limited preventative care. Dental and Vision insurance is provided.

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[What if I don't want the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award?](#)

AmeriCorps VISTA members are able to select an end-of-service stipend as an alternative to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. The end-of-service stipend is a \$1,500 end-of-service cash award. You cannot select both the end-of-service stipend and the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

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[What is NCE \(Noncompetitive Eligibility\) and how can it get me a job in the government?](#)

NCE is a special hiring preference for federal jobs. NCE is a hiring authority that allows federal agencies to hire AmeriCorps VISTA alumni outside the traditional hiring process. It allows alumni to fast track into federal service or in other words: No USAjobs.gov. NCE status does not guarantee employment. AmeriCorps VISTA alumni must still apply and meet qualification standards and additional requirements, such as a background investigation.

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[Do I have to use my education award right away?](#)

No, you have seven years after you complete service to use it.

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