Introduction to AmeriCorps Members

A presentation for AmeriCorps grant applicants

Webinar # 3 of 5

Welcome to your introduction to AmeriCorps members. This is the third in a series of webinars to help familiarize you with important components of AmeriCorps that you must know in order to apply for a program grant.

AmeriCorps members have been serving communities across the country since 1994.

In order to become an AmeriCorps program, you must have a clear strategy for using AmeriCorps members to carry out evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions that will strengthen communities and solve community problems.

Overview

- ★ Definition of AmeriCorps Members
- ★ AmeriCorps Member Eligibility Requirements
- ★ AmeriCorps Member Terminology
- ★ Terms of AmeriCorps Member Service
- ★ Your Role in Member Recruitment, Training and Supervision
- ★ Prohibited Activities
- ★ Additional Resources
- ★ Session Evaluation

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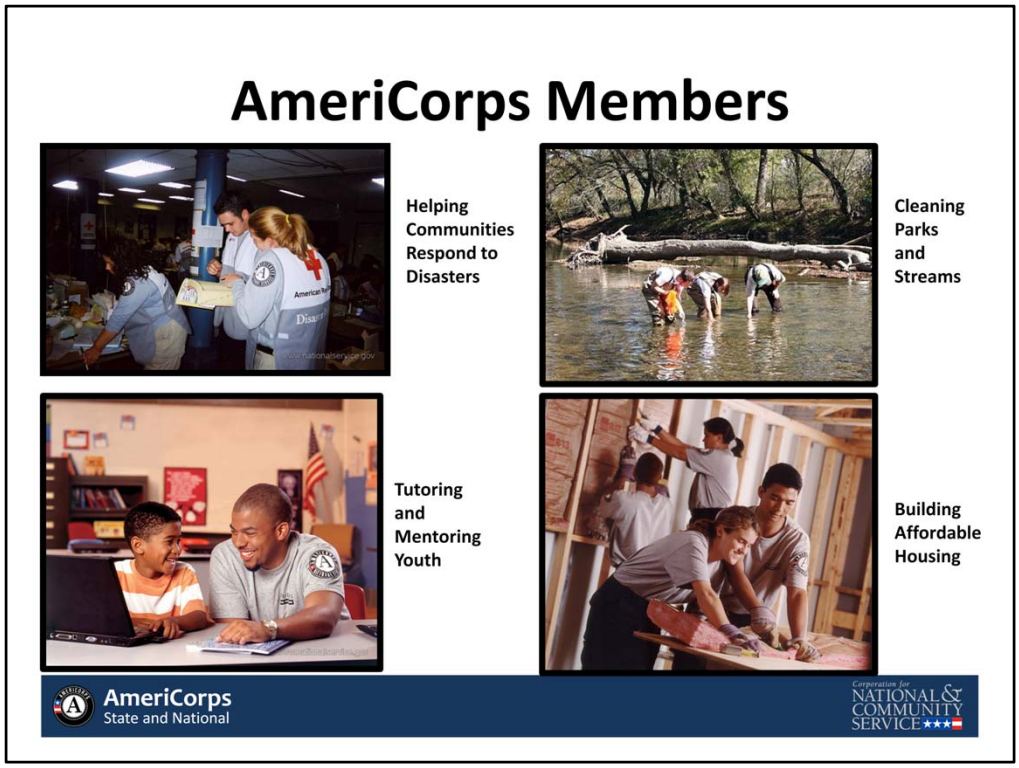
During this session, you will learn:

- How an AmeriCorps member is defined,
- What the eligibility requirements are for members,
- Concepts that are specific to AmeriCorps members,
- The different AmeriCorps member terms of service,
- Your role in member recruitment, training and support,
- And Prohibited member activities.
- The webinar will conclude with a list of the entire series, resources to assist you and a brief evaluation.



As stated earlier: All AmeriCorps programs utilize AmeriCorps members to meet community needs. Members can provide a variety of direct service or capacity building activities. For example, members can tutor and mentor youth, help communities respond to disasters, clean up streams and parks, or build affordable housing

AmeriCorps Members

- ★ Individuals enrolled for a specific term of service with an AmeriCorps program
- ★ Members are not volunteers or employees
- ★ Some members receive a living allowance, health insurance and child care assistance
- ★ AmeriCorps members receive the Segal Education Award upon completing a term of service

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So, who are AmeriCorps members?

AmeriCorps Members are individuals enrolled for a specific term of service with an AmeriCorps program. The term of service is between 300 and 1700 hours.

AmeriCorps members are engaged in National Service and are not volunteers or employees. They play a unique role in a community or organization to address unmet needs.

Eligible AmeriCorps members can receive a living allowance, health insurance and child care assistance to support them during their term of service.

In addition, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successfully completing a term of service.

AmeriCorps Members vs. Volunteers

- ★ Members have a contract with the program
- ★ Members must be supervised
- ★ Members receive extensive, program specific training
- ★ Members must commit to a specific term of service

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As stated earlier, AmeriCorps members should not be considered volunteers, because there are a some very specific difference between members and volunteers

- Grantee should ensure that members sign a service agreement before beginning their term of service so that the member is fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Members are to be adequately supervised by program staff or their designee
- The grantee must conduct an orientation for members, including training on what activities are prohibited during AmeriCorps service hours, and comply with any pre-service orientation or training required by CNCS
- Members are required to commit to a specific term of service (i.e. full time members commit to complete 1,700 hours)

Member Eligibility

Members must be:

- ★ U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals or Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States
- ★ At least 17 years of age – no upper age limit
- ★ High school graduates or GED recipients (or working towards this goal)
- ★ Subject to criminal history checks
- ★ AmeriCorps programs may add program-specific requirements

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AmeriCorps members must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

They must also be at least 17 years of age at the commencement of their term of service. Some youth corps programs can accept 16 year-olds who are out-of-school youth.

Members must be high school graduates, GED recipients, or must be working toward attaining a high school diploma or GED during their term of service. They must agree to obtain either a diploma or GED before using the education award.

All members are subject to a criminal history check. Individuals who have been convicted of murder and those who are required to register on a sex offender public registry are not eligible to serve in AmeriCorps.

As an AmeriCorps program, you have the ability to add eligibility requirements based on your program design.

Member Terminology

- ★ Living Allowance
- ★ Segal AmeriCorps Education Award
- ★ Member Terms of Service or Slot Types

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Next we will review a few terms that are specific to AmeriCorps members. You will learn what a living allowance is, what a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is and the different types of member terms of service or slot types that exist.

Living Allowance

- ★ The stipend an AmeriCorps member receives during a term of service
- ★ CNCS publishes a maximum and minimum living allowance for each member position
- ★ Is not a wage, not calculated on an hourly basis
- ★ Only full-time members are **required** to receive a living allowance

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The Living Allowance is the stipend an AmeriCorps member receives while serving. It is used to pay for personal expenses.

The maximum living allowance for each AmeriCorps member position and the minimum amount that a full-time member must receive are identified each year in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The living allowance is not a wage and is not calculated or paid to the member on an hourly basis.

Only full-time members are required to receive a living allowance. AmeriCorps programs may also choose to provide a living allowance to members serving in less than full-time positions.

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

- ★ A benefit provided for completing a term of service in AmeriCorps
- ★ Can be used to pay education costs, educational training, or to repay student loans
- ★ Maximum amount of the education award depends on the type of member position

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The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is a benefit provided to an AmeriCorps member who has successfully completed a term of service in AmeriCorps.

- ★ It can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans.
- ★ The amount of the education award is dependent on particular term of service or slot type in which an individual served (full-time, half-time, etc.). Full-time members (those requiring the completion of 1700 hours of service) receive the maximum value of the Segal award. Education awards are pro-rated for lesser terms of service.
- ★ The value of the education award is tied to Pell Grants. The maximum value of the award for each term of service appears each year in the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO.

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

- ★ Funding for education awards comes from the National Service Trust and will not be part of your submitted budget
- ★ Can be used for up to seven years after a term of service has ended
- ★ Is transferable to an eligible child, grandchild or foster child of a member who is 55 years of age or older

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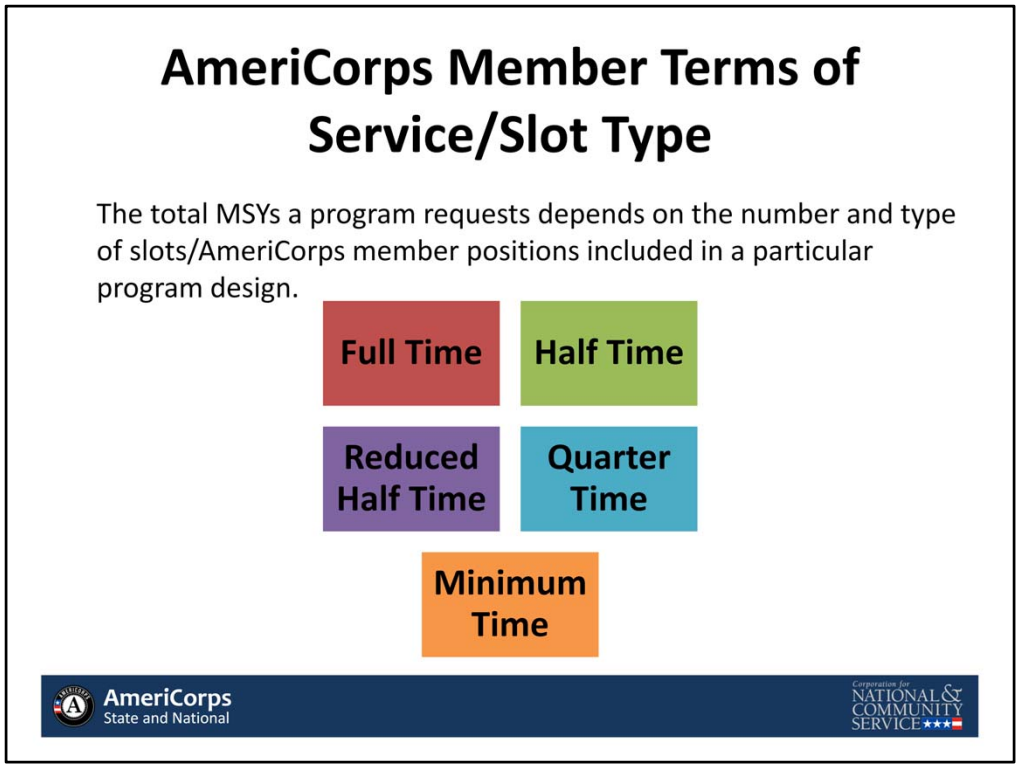
- ★ The education award benefit is provided to the member through the National Service Trust and is not included within the AmeriCorps grant funds.
- ★ Once a member receives the award, it can be used to make payments in full or part, for up to seven years after a term of service has ended.
- ★ A member who is 55 years of age or older at the time they are enrolled in AmeriCorps can transfer this award to an eligible child, grandchild or foster child.



★ As you learned in the Key Terms webinar, the number of Member Service Years (or MSYs) a program requests depends on the number and type of member terms of service, or slot types, included in a particular program design. There are five slot types.

(The boxes include the 5 slot types: Full Time, Half Time, Reduced Half Time, Quarter Time, & Minimum Time)

Member Terms of Service

Member Term	Minimum Hours Served	Maximum Length of Term
Full Time (FT)	1,700	12 months
Half Time (HT)	900	12 or 24 months *(usually 12)*
Reduced Half Time (RHT)	675	12 months
Quarter Time (QT)	450	12 months
Minimum Time (MT)	300	12 months

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This chart shows the various terms of service or slot types that you can use in designing your program and the minimum number of hours a member must complete if serving in that slot. You should consider what types of member service terms best support your program design in addressing critical community needs.

Most AmeriCorps members have up to 12 months to complete their term of service. The actual term may be shorter and is rarely longer than 12 months.

Specific terms of service that are tied to actual AmeriCorps members are also referred to as slots. You can design a program utilizing one or multiple types of slots.

An example of a possible program design that uses 300 hour slots is a program that conducts intensive service activities in the summer. A 900 or 675 hour slot might be utilized by a program engaging college students in service during the academic year. 1700 hour slots are equivalent to 35 to 40 hours a week over a 52 week span.

In designing your AmeriCorps program, you would review the intensity of the intervention you are proposing as well as the variety of responsibilities your members will have, then you would determine the number and type of member positions you will need to effectively impact the community or communities where your program will serve.

Keep in mind that the hours of service do not include holidays, sick leave, vacation or lunch time.

(The chart reflects the minimum hours that a member must serve according to their service type and the maximum length of the member's term of service. Full Time members must serve a minimum of 1,700 hours during a maximum of 12 months. Half Time members must serve a minimum of 900 hours during a maximum of 24 months, but they usually serve a 12 month term. Reduced Half Time members must serve a minimum of 675 hours during a maximum of 12 months. Quarter Time members must serve a minimum of 450 hours during a maximum of 12 months. And Minimum Time members must serve a minimum of 300 hours during a maximum of 12 months.)

AmeriCorps programs are responsible for developing and executing a recruitment and selection process to find the right AmeriCorps members for their program design.

AmeriCorps Members can come from the local community that is being served, from the state where the program operates or from other parts of the country.

Beyond the minimum eligibility requirements described earlier, your program must consider the desired qualifications that you seek in a member and match those to the type of service activities that will be completed.

Once you have interviewed and selected your members, it is your responsibility to train them to successful deliver the impactful service your program provides to the community.

You are also responsible for ensuring AmeriCorps members are appropriately supervised by qualified supervisors. The amount of supervision a member requires depends on your program design, the type of service being provided and the level of skill your members will have.

(The graphics include a picture of a Help Wanted sign, two people conducting a job interview and a teacher teaching a computer class to two students.)

These next few slides will walk you through the activities that are prohibited for AmeriCorps members, program staff while charging time to the AmeriCorps grant, and volunteers recruited by AmeriCorps members. In designing your AmeriCorps program it is important to you are able to ensure that your program is not in violation of these prohibited activities.

The prohibited activities fall into broad categories that include:

- Political activity and advocacy
- Religious activity
- Benefiting for profit entities
- Voter registration, and
- Abortion services

(The boxes show the five categories of prohibited activities: Political Activity and Advocacy, Religious activity, Benefiting for profit entities, Voter registration, and Abortion Services)

Prohibited Activities

(1) Attempting to influence legislation;
(2) Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
(3) Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
(4) Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
(5) Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
(6) 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;

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This slide outlines the types of political activity and advocacy that is prohibited. The full list of prohibited activities can be found in the AmeriCorps Regulations, section 2520.65.

Prohibited Activities

(7) 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;

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This slide outlines the religious activities that are prohibited. The full list of prohibited activities can be found in the AmeriCorps Regulations, section 2520.65

Prohibited Activities

(8) 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 except that nothing in this section 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 (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities;

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This slide outlines other service activities that are prohibited, including those that benefit for profit entities, labor unions and non profits that are not compliant with IRS requirements. The full list of prohibited activities can be found in the AmeriCorps Regulations, section 2520.65

Prohibited Activities

(9) Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
(10) Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
(11) Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

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.

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This slide explains the prohibitions against voter registration and abortion services. The full list of prohibited activities can be found in the AmeriCorps Regulations, section 2520.65.

You should note that individuals enrolled in AmeriCorps are able to exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in any of the listed prohibited activities on their own initiative, during non-AmeriCorps time and with no representation or affiliation with AmeriCorps or CNCS funding.

Additional Resources

Webinar Series:
Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National
Key AmeriCorps Grant Terminology and Concepts
Introduction to AmeriCorps Members
Categories of AmeriCorps Grants
AmeriCorps Program Management and Design

Current AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and other applicant resources are available at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities

Live Topical Calls: AmeriCorps State & National hosts Q&A calls with potential applicants. You can find the call schedule by following the link above and clicking on the current NOFO.

Sign up for Email Updates! Visit www.nationalservice.gov and click on the "Email" icon on the blue bar near the top right-hand corner of the page.

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This concludes the Intro to AmeriCorps Members presentation. This is the third of five webinars to assist grant applicants in understanding how to apply for AmeriCorps funding. In addition to these webinars, please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity and other materials posted on our website to help you prepare to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

In addition to the various online resources, the AmeriCorps Outreach team will host calls in the fall to assist applicants as you complete the application process. You can also sign up for periodic email updates by clicking on the "Email" icon in the blue bar near the top right-hand corner of the CNCS website.

For more information please contact CNCS via internet or phone at these addresses.

(The photos show an AmeriCorps member helping a child paint and an AmeriCorps member wearing a gas mask while clearing out a home after a disaster.)