

In this webinar....

- Overview of our national service programs
- Benefits of participating in national service
- Answers to key questions prospective members with disabilities have
- Instructions for finding opportunities and applying to our programs

Corporation for National & Community Service

The Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency with the responsibility to engage Americans in service at non-profits, schools, public agencies and community and faith based groups through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.

AmeriCorps State & National (ASN)



- 65,000 members serve in 15,000 locations including nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country.
- Six focus areas for service programs: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families.
- National service members serve in a nonprofit organization, school, or other community setting.
- Projects range across the six focus areas and include activities like teaching reading to kids, cleaning a river bed and educating people about the earned income tax credit.

AmeriCorps VISTA



- 8,000 members create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty through capacity-building projects.
- Each VISTA member makes a year-long, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency.
- Service project examples:
 - Create an adult literacy awareness campaign and recruit volunteer tutors.
 - Set up transitional housing dedicated to helping the homeless turn their lives around.
 - Expand programs to help low-income families obtain affordable health insurance.
 - Recruit mentors for children of incarcerated parents.
 - Organize shelter and job opportunities for victims of disasters.

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

- 2,000 members serve in this team-based, full-time, residential program for 18-24 year olds completing 2- to 3-month projects responding to local communities' needs across the country. 10 member teams serve with local and national organizations, infusing resources and leading volunteers for hundreds of organizations.
- Service projects examples:
 - Filling and installing sandbags for local communities to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters.
 - Educating people on sustainability and energy conservation practices.
 - Constructing or repairing hiking trails in local and national parks across America.
 - Receiving, inventorying, and distributing donated food and other goods.
 - Removing exotic vegetation and planting new trees.
 - Making facilities accessible to people with disabilities and installing informative public signs.
 - Directly assisting veterans, homeless, and senior citizen populations.
 - Constructing and rehabilitating low-income housing.

AmeriCorps NCCC Fema Corps

- 10-month program for 18-24 year old members who want to gain professional skills in emergency management while serving with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) staff on disaster response and recovery efforts.
- Service project examples:
 - Educating communities, assessing needs, and collecting information.
 - Developing materials that promote disaster preparation to the public.
 - Ordering materials, tracking inventory, loading supplies, and managing IT equipment.
 - Updating electronic files, managing data, and compiling reports.
 - Working with nonprofits and government agencies to coordinate services for disaster survivors.
 - Helping survivors complete applications for disaster assistance.
 - Assessing and reporting damage to public facilities.
 - Setting up shelter operations and re-unification of families and pets.

Benefits of service for participants with disabilities

- Pre-employment skill building.
- Exploration of career interests.
- Expanding personal and professional networks.
- Practice using reasonable accommodations.
- Increased civic engagement.
- National Service members receive a living allowance that does not impact receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.
- Those who have completed a term of service are eligible for a Segal Education Award (Equivalent to the Pell Grant, in 2017 \$5960) for further education or repayment of student loans.
- National service alumni who serve with AmeriCorps VISTA are eligible to apply to federal employment with a non-competitive status.

Benefits of service for participants with disabilities

- CNCS research has shown:
 - Volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers;
 - Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than non-volunteers;
 - Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher likelihood of finding employment than non-volunteers
- CNCS also found that volunteering is associated with an increased likelihood of finding employment for all volunteers regardless of a person's gender, age, ethnicity, geographical area, or the job market conditions.

National service could benefit various types of clients/consumers

- There is not a certain type of VR client who would benefit from engaging in national service; all clients have something to gain.
- Service is beneficial to various clients. Including clients in need of:
 - Practical experience for their resume .
 - Further exploration of a particular career path.
 - Development of soft skills.
 - Connections in a particular career field to expand their personal and professional networks prior to a job search.
 - Participation in a program that will solidify their chosen career ahead of furthering their education.

Is AmeriCorps service “work?”

- AmeriCorps national service programs are not a form of employment and are temporary positions with fixed end dates.
- Service members earn a living allowance, not a wage.

Monetary benefits to service

- Living allowance – received while serving
 - Does not interfere with SSI payments.
- Segal Education award – received following a complete service term in AmeriCorps State & National, VISTA and NCCC programs.
 - Equivalent to the Pell grant in value.
 - Can be used to pay down college debt or for further education.
 - Must be used within 7 years.
 - Since the inception of AmeriCorps in 1994, more than 1 million alumni have earned more than \$2.4 billion in education awards.

Impact of service on Social security benefits

SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME EXCLUSIONS AVAILABLE FOR AMERICORPS PROGRAMS		
	Work Incentive Available for	
	SSI Beneficiaries	SSDI Beneficiaries
AmeriCorps NCCC	X	
AmeriCorps State and Local	X	
AmeriCorps VISTA	X	X

Types of service opportunities

- **What is the length of a service term?**
 - It varies. Most are about a year in length but there are some programs that only last a few months.
- **Do members serve multiple times in back-to-back service terms?**
 - Some people do. However, three sequential terms of service is the maximum.
- **Are there part-time options for service?**
 - Yes, there are some programs that are part-time.

Accommodations & service

- **Will AmeriCorps programs accommodate? Are they prepared for making accommodations?**
 - Yes, all CNCS programs receive federal funding and are required to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities according to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- **Does VR have to pay for accommodations?**
 - While most programs are able to handle the costs of accommodating members with disabilities, there may be instances where costly accommodations will be difficult for non-profits to fully fund. In these instances, it would be helpful for VR to provide supplemental accommodation funding.

Finding national service opportunities & applying



- **How can those interested in serving search available opportunities?**
 - [https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/american-corps/join-american-corps](https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/join-american-corps)
- **How do you apply to national service programs?**
 - By setting up a profile and submitting an application through the MyAmeriCorps portal:
<https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>
- **Questions about applying?**
 - You can call the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 for technical assistance with your application Monday-Thursday from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM Eastern time, or visit <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/> and submit a question for a response within two business days. You can also contact the project directly with any questions related to the specifics of the position.

Additional Information

- For more information about national service programs visit www.nationalservice.gov
- You may also benefit from the second webinar in this series. It focuses on:
 - Alumni outcome research that explains the benefits and skills alumni take from national service into their careers.
 - A former service member with a disability explains how she went from being a VR client, to serving in VISTA to launching her career and getting off SSI benefits.