

# Member FAQs



## Application and Matching

**Q: How many positions are available?**

A: We have 22 full-time member positions. Topic areas include water quality, waste management, community outreach & education, and land management

**Q: What is the time commitment?**

A: Full time service terms are 11 months beginning in September and ending the following August. Members are required to serve a minimum of 1,700 hours during this time - about 40 hours per week.

**Q: Can I apply even though I have a Master's (or other postgraduate) degree?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Can I apply if I don't have a 4 year degree?**

A: Yes. You do not need a four-year degree to be considered for a position. Preference may be given to applicants possessing at least a bachelor's degree.

**Q: Can I serve part-time?**

A: We currently offer two part-time positions. Part time service terms are 6 months beginning in March and ending in the following August. Members are required to serve a minimum of 900 hours.

**Q: Can I join if I am not a U.S. citizen?**

A: Yes. If you are not a U.S. citizen you must be a national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S.

**Q: If I am mid-career or retired, can I still apply to be a member?**

A: Yes. There is no upper age limit for ECO AmeriCorps members.

**Q: So I just submitted my application, what's next? When do I hear back? Will I be interviewed?**

A: We are accepting member applications until May 11, 2020. Applications will be reviewed, and selected applicants will be interviewed through in-person, Skype/Zoom, or phone. If we think you are a good fit for one of our service sites, we will connect you with the site supervisor for an interview. Ahead of that interview, we will send you their position description and gauge your interest. After you have interviewed with a service site, if it is a good match, we will send you a member agreement and formally offer you the position.

**Q: Who matches me with the service site where I will be placed? Do I have any choice in choosing my service site?**

A: We have a team that reviews member applications and recommends possible placements. There are multiple steps in the matching process and you are an active participant all the way through. You have a choice in deciding to interview with a selected service site and a choice in saying whether or not it would be a good fit for you. However, if you decline a certain position we cannot guarantee placement elsewhere. We will make our best effort to get to know you as a candidate in order to identify a good pairing the first time, but we will not move forward on a match until you say so.

**Q: I don't understand how to answer some questions on the application or have questions at any point in this process; who can I contact?**

A: Contact us at [anr.ecoamericorps@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.ecoamericorps@vermont.gov).

**Q: I really love the idea of your program and want to be an ECO AmeriCorps member, but I am still in college. Is there anything I could do now to help support ECO AmeriCorps?**

A: Yes! Follow us on social media to get updates on our program

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ecoamericorps/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ecoamericorps/?hl=en>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ECOAmeriCorps>

## **Finances and housing**

**Q: How much is the stipend?**

A: The living stipend is \$17,300 for the program year. It is paid on a biweekly basis, and taxes may be withheld. The stipend amount is non-negotiable. Every member receives the same living allowance.

**Q: Will I be taxed?**

A: Living stipends are considered taxable income. FICA and Federal Income tax, according to allowances claimed on your W-4, are withheld from your living allowance. State income tax

may not be withheld from your living allowance. After the calendar year in which you earned any living allowance, we will send you a W-2 form indicating the amount of the allowance you earned in that year. We cannot offer tax advice, and because the program extends over two tax years, everyone's tax situation could be different year-to-year. Consult with a tax advisor about what serving in AmeriCorps would mean for you if you have more questions about this.

**Q: Does this program provide housing? If not, where can I look?**

A: Members are responsible for finding their own housing. We are not able to provide financial housing assistance. The AmeriCorps brand is well-recognized and we encourage you to speak with landlords about your service intentions. We are happy to verify your service placement, should a letter be needed. As we finalize member placements prior to the start of the service year, members can seek each other out as possible roommates serving in the same area. If finding housing remains an issue, please contact us and we will try to assist you in finding a good living arrangement.

**Q: I could be moving from out-of-state. Can you help me relocate?**

A: Financial assistance is not available for relocation expenses.

**Q: Can I get another job while I serve as an ECO AmeriCorps member?**

A: Your first priority will be your commitment to ECO AmeriCorps and your service site. Your service is considered full-time. We do not recommend getting another job, but you may consider other employment that does not interfere with your commitment to ECO AmeriCorps and your service site. Service schedules will likely include some evenings and weekends.

**Q: Can I defer student loans during my service with AmeriCorps?**

A: You may qualify for postponement, or forbearance, of the repayment of your loans during your service. The education award can potentially help you pay off qualified student loans when you're finished. Contact your lender for more specific information or to confirm your loan status during AmeriCorps service.

**Q: How much is the education award?**

A: The education award is \$6,195. It is awarded upon successful completion of service. Members who fail to successfully complete their term of service are not eligible to receive an education award. The education award is considered taxable income, but only in the year it is spent, and you may break up the award to be used over multiple years. The award can be used within seven years of service. For more information on the Segal Education Award visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/segal-ameriCorps-education-award>.

**Q: What if I have completed my education, do not owe student loans and am not interested in the education award? Can I get that money in cash instead?**

A: No. It may only be used towards loans or future education.

# Service

**Q: What does a typical day look like (hours of work, tasks, etc.)?**

A: Every position varies slightly. When interviewing for positions, you will have a chance to review a position description for a specific service site and ask what a typical day looks like.

**Q: Will I be provided with all the tools I need (computer, desk, work space, etc.)?**

A: Yes. Service sites must provide members with all necessary equipment and tools, and provide an orientation to the worksite and service duties. It will be necessary to bring some personal gear such as outerwear, boots, etc. Specific needs vary by position.

**Q: Will I be required to wear a uniform?**

A: ECO AmeriCorps members are issued various pieces of AmeriCorps apparel. Although members are not required to wear their AmeriCorps clothing every day, it is required while participating in some service and/or training projects. Members are also issued AmeriCorps pins. Members must be properly branded at all times during their service either by wearing issued apparel or an AmeriCorps pin.

**Q: Who do I report to if I have a problem?**

A: Each member has a main supervisor to whom you report your time and any issues you encounter in your service work. If you have a problem with your service site, you should be in touch with ECO AmeriCorps staff as soon as possible. We will work with you and your site supervisor to resolve the problem. In addition, the ECO program has a panel of mentors. The mentors' role is to help you build professional goals and be available for questions you encounter in your service projects. You will be in touch with these mentors throughout your service term and can seek their advice on minor issues as well.

**Q: Do I need to be able to lift heavy objects or do strenuous types of work?**

A: This depends on the service site.

**Q: Do I get paid sick/vacation days?**

A: Members are not eligible to receive credit for hours on days which they do not serve. Members are responsible for tracking their time to make sure they reach the minimum 1,700 hour requirement by the completion of the service term. Time missed due to vacation or illness may need to be made up at a later time. Member time off requests should be worked out with the assigned service site in accordance to its policies.

# Post-Service

**Q: Will I have the option to serve another year in ECO AmeriCorps if I wanted to?**

A: Yes. The number of terms an AmeriCorps member can serve varies by program. It is broken down as follows: AmeriCorps State and National (including ECO AmeriCorps)—4 terms;

AmeriCorps VISTA—5 full-year terms, AmeriCorps NCCC –2 terms. Regardless of the number of terms served, AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive only two full education awards.

**Q: AmeriCorps It seems that there are a lot of rules and regulations when it comes to AmeriCorps. Where else can I get information?**

A: More information is available on the AmeriCorps website:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps>.

## General info

**Q: Is AmeriCorps like the Peace Corps?**

A: Yes. AmeriCorps is often referred to as the “domestic Peace Corps.” Both organizations are committed to service, and both offer challenging and rewarding opportunities. Peace Corps assignments are all overseas, and AmeriCorps members serve only in the US. While Peace Corps volunteers serve for two years, a stint in AmeriCorps usually lasts one year or less.

**Q: I’m confused. There are different programs, with different names, but they are all AmeriCorps?**

A: Yes. AmeriCorps is a national network of hundreds of programs throughout the U.S. AmeriCorps consists of three main branches, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC & FEMA Corps, and AmeriCorps State and National programs. ECO AmeriCorps is a State and National program. Focus areas, service projects, eligibility requirements, and compensation can vary among programs, but all programs share a commitment to service.