

# 0 ~ 3 Months

## Member Development & Support



You are well on your way in the process of identifying and implementing the systems necessary to operate your program. A significant component of your program will be the AmeriCorps members you recruit and train to serve your local community.

Recruiting great AmeriCorps members whose personal values reflect the ethic of service can make the difference between a strong, productive service to the community and a program struggling with the challenges of attrition and ineffective service. This section and the ones to follow on Member Development and Support will guide you in recruiting and training a strong Corps.

### ***At the end of this section, you will be able to***

- Develop or adapt the AmeriCorps member contract.
- Interview, select, and enroll your AmeriCorps members.
- Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

# 0 ~ 3 Months

## Member Development & Support



### Member Interview and Selection Process

#### What is the Member Interview and Selection Process?

This is a criteria-based process that includes standard questions, scoring rubrics, and organizational collaboration to select Corps members. In many ways, Corps members are community ambassadors as well as community service providers. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a process to select members with attributes and characteristics that fit well with your organization and/or the service site.

#### Why do you need a Member Interview and Selection Process?

You need a roadmap to guide you to the best candidates for your program. The process of interviewing candidates and selecting members requires considerable time and focus. To ensure objectivity and thoughtful decisions, you will need to involve at least two or more staff plus the service site partners who will sponsor members.

#### How do you do it?

✓	Decide what interviewing techniques/mechanisms the interview and selection committee wants to use. The <a href="#">Planning Your Recruitment Process</a> worksheet can provide ideas on conducting interviews. (e.g., will interviews be conducted one-on-one, small group, large group, service activity?)
✓	Decide how your Service Site Partners, Community Advisory Group members and community stakeholders will be involved in the process.
✓	Train all interviewers in how to use the interview tools, document responses, and score candidates.
✓	Recruit for quality not quantity.
✓	Verify a candidate's eligibility to be in the program prior to enrollment. See the Program Director Handbook for specifics.

#### Resources

Resource	Description	Contact
Using a Team Project to Conduct a Group Interview	An innovative method to assess a prospective member's ability to work well within a group. The article provides a hands-on, team-based activity to use as a final selection process.	<a href="http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/">www.nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/</a>

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### Member Enrollment

#### What is the Member Enrollment Process?

Getting members into your program is a basic three-step process. The first two steps, recruitment and selection, were discussed earlier. The final step is the enrollment process. At this point you have received your award and identified potential members. Now you need to make them “official” members of your program.

#### Why do you need a Member Enrollment Process?

Whether you have five or fifty-five potential AmeriCorps members, you need a careful and detailed process to set up their files, complete all their paperwork and update the WBRS system.

#### How do you do it?

✓	Ensure your organization is officially enrolled in WBRS.
✓	Ensure a <a href="#">Member File Checklist</a> is included in each member’s file folder. The member file can be a folder that contains all official documentation related to the member’s service. All requirements must be accurate and up-to-date. Check all member files and documentation carefully for accuracy, proper signature, and appropriate and complete data.
✓	Decide whether the program will have a probationary period and establish a written policy. This probationary period can be up to 30-days (members must be entered into WBRS within 30-days). If a candidate is entered into WBRS immediately and drops from the program, your member attrition rate will be high and will not reflect well on your organization. Keep in mind the fiscal considerations associated with enrolling prospective members during a probationary period. Any funds spent on the individual during the probation period cannot come from the AmeriCorps grant.
✓	An enrollment policy should include a clause about the payment of the living allowance. An organization’s option is to pay the living allowance out of its own budget or to pay no stipend at all until the candidate has completed the probationary period. This policy must be clearly communicated to the candidate.
✓	All member documentation is confidential and must be kept in a locked area.
✓	Review with prospective members their needs related to healthcare, accessibility, childcare enrollment, and loan forbearance.
✓	Complete criminal background checks on members working with children or other vulnerable populations.

# 0 ~ 3 Months

## Member Development & Support



### Member Contract

#### What is a Member Contract?

It is the comprehensive, official document that specifies the obligations and responsibilities of the AmeriCorps member. The member contract states the minimal qualifications, position description, length of service, number of hours for successful completion, requirements, expectations, benefits, grievance procedures, member rights and responsibilities, and other organizational policies. The contract also spells out what the member can expect from the organization.

#### Why do we need a Member Contract?

The Member Contract ensures that the member and the organization have a clear, agreed upon set of expectations and remedies if expectations are not fulfilled.

How do you do it?

✓	Review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions to fully understand the obligations inherent in hosting and supervising members.
✓	Review your organization's policies and procedures and incorporate into the <a href="#">AmeriCorps Member Contract</a> as appropriate.
✓	Walk prospective Corps members through the contract to ensure each member has a full understanding of her or his rights and responsibilities, and program requirements.
✓	Prohibited activities outlined in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions must be included in the contract and reviewed during orientation.
✓	Include a <a href="#">Grievance Procedure</a> in the contract. Again, review this carefully with your prospective members.
✓	All member documentation is confidential and must be kept in a locked area.

#### Frequently Asked Questions

**Can team leaders discipline Corps members?** *No. Team leaders provide guidance and direction. The Program Supervisor is the appropriate person to address any issues related to a Corps member's violation of the prohibited activities, program code of conduct, or inappropriate behavior.*

**What are the "must include" items to put in the member contract?** *\*\*Carefully review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions to ensure all required elements are in your member contract. The grant provisions include a list of specific items that are to be included in the member contract. The following are the critical elements: The minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the Program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award; description of acceptable conduct; prohibited activities; requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.); suspension and termination rules; specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause; position description; and grievance procedures. The contract may also include other program specific requirements as appropriate.*

# 0 ~ 3 Months

## Member Development & Support



### *Resources*

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
<b>National Service Resource Center</b>	Agreements/Contracts/ Grievance Procedure for AmeriCorps members	<a href="http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/resources/sample_forms/">www.nationalservicerresources.org/resources/sample_forms/</a>

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## Member Development & Support



### Member Benefits

#### What are Member Benefits?

Once Corps members are enrolled into your program they become eligible for a number of benefits including training, a living allowance, health care coverage, accidental insurance, childcare benefits, uniforms, and an educational award.

#### How do we do it?

✓	Review the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions section on the benefits that Corps members receive.
✓	Ensure that AmeriCorps members are properly enrolled in the WBRS system to receive the living allowance.
✓	Determine if members need and are eligible for childcare and/or health care coverage.
✓	Determine if members have student loans that need to enter into loan forbearance (where loan payments are suspended for a specific time period).
✓	Implement an effective Life After AmeriCorps program.
✓	Implement on-going training and development activities.

#### Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
<b>AmeriCorps Grant Provisions</b>	Provide information on benefits available to Corps members.	Corporation for National and Community Service – Grants Office
<b>National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies</b>	Provide childcare for AmeriCorps members.	1-800-570-4543

*TOOLS*  
*for*  
*SUCCESS*



## ***Planning Your Recruitment Process***

*Recruitment is not a magical process of having people sign up, but is one of the most critical aspects of operating your program. Recruitment should be a strategic process that connects you to candidates who need what you have to offer and who possess the skills and aptitude to help you reach your results. The success of your recruitment process will have direct effects on several areas, including morale, motivation, respect, retention, quality of service projects, relationships with service partners and community members, funding, and your ability to focus on the program rather than spend the majority of your time addressing problems. The following ideas may be helpful to use in recruitment strategies.*

### ***Interviewing potential members***

- Conduct **group interviews** of 10 to 15 candidates. Include members in this process and have a plan to discuss common situations and challenges.
- Use **behavioral interviewing** techniques. Prepare questions that cannot be practiced by the candidate the night before. For example, "This position requires a tremendous amount of patience and effective communication skills working with diverse populations. Tell me about a situation when you were successful in communicating and how it worked out. Tell me about a time where you needed to be patient and communicate and you were not successful. What happened?"
- Use **scenario interviewing**. People have learned in the past how to complete applications, resumes, interview, and provide references. Scenario interviews will help you get a sense for how prospective members would respond to some of the common challenges encountered in the service activities in your program. These scenarios may even be conducted as an informal role-play during the interview.
- Check references very carefully.
- Trust your judgment. If you have an uncomfortable feeling about an applicant, you are might be right. What you see is what you get. Don't delude yourself into thinking that you will change them after the "marriage."
- Consider having partners and/or site supervisors sit in on the interviews.
- Connect with and/or visit a program with strong leadership and high-quality members. Find out what they think they did well and what they would do differently.
- Create an interview and selection process that includes multiple steps so that you have several opportunities to observe and interact with the candidates. For example, candidates come for an interview, visit a morning opening session, submit an application, take a test, meet with a member's council, etc.
- Invite more applicants to the orientation than you have slots. Some will not be interested.

### **Serving, ongoing screening, and orientation**

- Establish some type of probation period.
- Develop an adequate orientation process. This should not be rushed. Invest time to build a functioning team of members who interact well with one another.
- Give all members a fair dose of what a typical program year will look like so that they can make an educated choice.

*Adapted from **Elements of a Successful Recruitment Process**, by Emilio N. Williams, formerly of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) [www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter/](http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter/)*

### *Member File Checklist*

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Documentation
Member application (signed)				
Member enrollment form				
Documentation of Eligibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Citizenship Status</li> <li>• High School Diploma/GED (see certification)</li> </ul>				
Parental consent ( <i>if member is under 18</i> )				
Signed Member contract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position description</li> <li>• Grievance Procedure</li> <li>• Term of Service</li> <li>• Performance Standards</li> <li>• Standards of Conduct</li> <li>• Other Program Requirements</li> </ul>				
Documentation of criminal background check				
Time and activity logs, signed by member and supervisor.				
Documentation of health care enrollment				
Documentation of child care enrollment				
Tax Documents: W4 (beginning of year); W2 (end of year)				
Loan Forbearance Request form				
Publicity release from (signed by parent if under 18)				
Mid-term performance review				
End of term performance review				
Documentation of Compelling Circumstances				
Change of Status Form				
End of Term/Exit Form				

## *Sample AmeriCorps Contract*

### **I. PURPOSE**

It is the purpose of this agreement to delineate the terms, conditions, and rules of membership regarding the participation of \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as the “member”) in the \_\_\_\_\_ AmeriCorps Program (hereinafter referred to as the “Program”).

### **II. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

The member certifies that he/she is a United States citizen, a United States national, or a lawful permanent resident alien and at least 17 years of age (or at least 16 years of age if the member is an out-of-school youth and a participant in one of two types of youth corps defined under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended).

### **III. TERMS OF SERVICE**

The member’s term of service begins on \_\_\_\_\_ and ends on \_\_\_\_\_. The program and the member may agree, in writing, to extend this term of service for the following reasons:

1. The member’s service has been suspended due to compelling personal circumstances.
2. The member’s service has been terminated, but a grievance procedure has resulted in reinstatement.

The member will complete a minimum of 1700\* hours (900 hours for part-time) of service during this period. *[\*Or the exact number of hours your program requires -- must be at least 1700 for full-time]*

The member understands that to successfully complete the term of service (as defined by the program and consistent with regulations of the Corporation for National Service) and to be eligible for the education award, he/she must satisfactorily complete at least 1700 (900) hours of service and satisfactorily complete pre-service training and the appropriate education/training that relates to the member’s ability to perform service *[You should customize this section to note any specific training requirements or other service requirements of your program. e.g., CPR, first aid, mediation and conflict resolutions skills and service-learning activities].*

The member understands that to be eligible to serve a second term of service the member must receive satisfactory performance reviews for any previous term of service. The member’s eligibility for a second term of service with this program will be based on at least a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation of the member’s performance focusing on factors such as whether the member has:

1. Completed the required number of hours;
2. Satisfactorily completed assignments, tasks, or projects; and
3. Met any other criteria that were clearly communicated both orally and in writing at the beginning of the term of service.

The member understands, however, that the mere eligibility for an additional term of service does not guarantee selection or placement.

#### IV. POSITION DESCRIPTION

[In this section, the program should include the position description for the individual member to whom the contract applies. The position description should specify the types of duties, service activities, and assignments the member will be expected to complete.]

The name of the member's direct supervisor is \_\_\_\_\_.

#### V. BENEFITS

A. The member will receive from the program the following benefits:

A living allowance in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
The living allowance is taxable, and taxes will be deducted directly from the living allowance.  
The living allowance will be distributed [*weekly/biweekly*] by [*direct deposit*]  
[*check*] starting on \_\_\_\_ [date] \_\_\_\_\_. The biweekly amount will be \_\_\_\_\_.

2. [*Health benefits (if the member is eligible). The health insurance policy is attached.*]

If applicable, a childcare allowance of \_\_\_\_\_ will be provided by the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) directly to the provider, if the member qualifies for the allowance. (NACCRRRA will distribute this allowance evenly over the term of service on a bi-weekly).

B. Upon successful completion of the member's term of service, the member will receive an education award from the National Service Trust. For successful completion of a full-time term, the member will receive an education award in the amount of \$4,725. For successful completion of a part-time term, the member will receive an education award of [*up to \$2362.50.*]

If the member has not yet received a high school diploma or its equivalent (including an alternative diploma or certificate for individuals with learning disabilities), the member agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using the education award. This requirement can be waived if the member is enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis or the program has waived this requirement due to the results of the member's education assessment.

The member understands that his or her failure to disclose to the program any history of having been released for cause from another AmeriCorps program will render him or her ineligible to receive the education award.

C. If the member has received forbearance on a qualified student loan during the term of service, the National Service Trust will repay a portion or all of the interest that accrued on the loan during the term of service.

#### VI. RULES OF CONDUCT

**\*\*\*\*REVIEW AMERICORPS GRANT PROVISIONS FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION.**

A. At no time may the member:

1. Engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state or federal law.
  2. Engage in activities that pose a significant safety risk to others.
- Engage in any AmeriCorps prohibited activities that include:

- attempting to influence legislation or an election;
- assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- engaging in religious instruction;
- conducting worship services;
- engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political candidates, political platforms, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- or providing a direct benefit to a for-profit entity, a labor union, a partisan political organization;
- engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- voter registration drives;
- other activities that the Corporation determines will be prohibited upon notice to the Grantee.

B. The member is expected to, at all times while acting in an official capacity as an AmeriCorps member:

***[NOTE: The following are given as examples only. You should customize this section to include all relevant requirements for your program.]***

1. Demonstrate mutual respect towards others.
2. Follow directions.
3. Direct concerns, problems, and suggestions to [*designate the appropriate program official here*].

C. The member understands that the following acts also constitute a violation of the program's rules of conduct:

***[NOTE: The following are given as examples only. You should customize this section to include all relevant requirements for your program.]***

1. Unauthorized tardiness.
2. Unauthorized absences.
3. Repeated use of inappropriate language (i.e. profanity) at a service site.
4. Failure to wear appropriate clothing to service assignments.
5. Stealing or lying.
6. \*\*Engaging in any activity that may physically or emotionally damage other members of the program or people in the community.
7. \*\*Unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of any controlled substance or illegal drugs during the term of service.
8. \*\*Consuming alcoholic beverages during the performance of service activities.
9. \*\*Being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs during the performance of service activities.
10. \*\*Failing to notify the program of any criminal arrest or conviction that occurs during the term of service.

***[\*\*Your program may want to have these violations result in immediate termination or something more severe than having them remedied through the progressive discipline system described below. If so, you will need to move them out this section and add them to the subsection VII(B)(4) below.]***

Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, you must immediately notify the Program Director if you are convicted under any criminal drug statute. Your participation in the Program is conditioned upon compliance with this notice requirement and we will take action for violation of this.

In general, for violating the above stated rules in section VI(C), the program will do the following (except in cases where during the term of service the member has been charged with or convicted of a violent felony, possession, sale or distribution of a controlled substance):

1. For the member's first offense, an appropriate program official will issue a verbal warning to the member.
  2. For the member's second offense, an appropriate program official will issue a written warning and reprimand the member.
  3. For the member's third offense, the member may be suspended for one day or more without compensation and will not receive credit for any service hours missed.
  4. For the fourth offense, the program may release the member for cause.
- D. The member understands that he/she will be either suspended or released for cause in accordance with paragraphs (B), (D), and (E) of section VII of this agreement for committing certain acts during the term of service including but not limited to being convicted or charged with a violent felony, possession, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance.

## **VII. RELEASE FROM TERMS OF SERVICE**

- A. The member understands that he/she may be released for the following two reasons:
1. For cause, as explained in paragraph (B) of this section; or
  2. For compelling personal circumstances as defined in paragraph (C) of this section.
- B. The program will release the member for cause for the following reasons:
1. The member has dropped out of the program without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances from the appropriate program official;
  2. During the term of service the member has been convicted of a violent felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance;
  3. The member has committed a fourth offense in accordance with paragraph (E) of section VI of this agreement;
  4. The member has committed any of the offenses listed in ***[Your program may want to add the \*\*violations in section VI(C) 6-10 here or any others you deem appropriate]***; or
- Any other serious breach that in the judgment of the director of the Program would undermine the effectiveness of the program.
- C. The Program may release the member from the term of service for compelling personal circumstances if the member demonstrates that:

1. The member has a disability or serious illness that makes completing the term impossible;
  2. There is a serious injury, illness, or death of a family member which makes completing the term unreasonably difficult or impossible for the member;
  3. The member has Military service obligations;
  4. The member has accepted an opportunity to make the transition from welfare to work; or
  5. Some other unforeseeable circumstance beyond the member's control makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for the member to complete the term of service, such as a natural disaster, a strike, relocation of a spouse, or the nonrenewal or premature closing of a project or the program.
- D. Compelling personal circumstances do not include leaving the Program:
1. To enroll in school;
  2. To obtain employment, other than in moving from welfare to work; or
  3. Because of dissatisfaction with the program.
- E. The Program may suspend the member's term of service for the following reasons:
1. During the term of service the member has been charged with a violent felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance. (If the member is found not guilty or the charge is dismissed, the member may resume his/her term of service. The member, however, will not receive back living allowances or credit for any service hours missed.)
  2. During the term of service the member has been convicted of a first offense of possession of a controlled substance. (If, however, the member demonstrates that he/she has enrolled in an approved drug rehabilitation program, the member may resume his/her term of service. The member will not receive back living allowances or credit for any service hours missed.)
  3. The Program may suspend the member's term of service for violating the rule of conduct provisions in accordance with the rules set forth in paragraph (C) of section VI of this agreement.
- F. If the member discontinues his/her term of service for any reason other than a release for compelling personal circumstances as described in paragraph (B), (D), and (E), the member will cease to receive the benefits described in paragraph (A) of section V and will receive no portion of the education award or interest payments.
- G. If the member discontinues his/her term of service due to compelling personal circumstances as described in paragraph (C) of section VII of this agreement, the member will cease to receive benefits described in section V.

## VIII. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- A. The member understands that the Program has a grievance procedure to resolve disputes concerning the member's suspension, dismissal, service evaluation or proposed service assignment.
- B. The member understands that, as a participant of the program, he/she may file a grievance in accordance with the Program's grievance procedure. ***[Incorporate your grievance procedure into the body of this section].***

**IX. AMENDMENTS TO THIS AGREEMENT**

This agreement may be changed or revised only by written consent by both parties.

**X. AUTHORIZATION**

The member and Program hereby acknowledge by their signatures that they have read, understand, and agree to all terms and conditions of this agreement. (If the member is under the age of 18 years old, the member's parent or legal guardian must also sign.)

AmeriCorps Member

AmeriCorps Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Legal Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*