



WELCOME PACKET

2023-2024 Service Year

SERVE WASHINGTON



AmeriCorps

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Incoming AmeriCorps member,

As you start your service journey, we want to take a moment to thank you. By serving in AmeriCorps, you join more than 5,500 people of all ages and backgrounds who have committed their time and talents to help communities in the state of Washington tackle their toughest challenges and positively impact the lives of countless individuals.

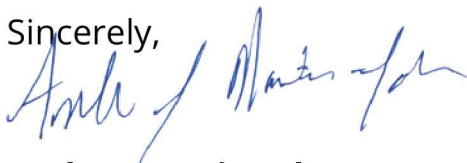
We recognize transitioning into service can be both exciting and challenging. This welcome packet is intended to give you resources to help you make this transition as smooth as possible. We created this packet based on input from past AmeriCorps members, program staff and supporters about what resources new AmeriCorps members might need at the beginning of service.

In this welcome packet, you'll find information and resources related to career development, training, networking, wellness and much more. Please note that some dates in this packet may be subject to change from the initial date of publication. Serve Washington and AmeriCorps program staff will notify you directly of any changes.

Stay up-to-date on AmeriCorps WA information in our AmeriCorps WA member newsletter! We've also created a monthly the newsletter to offer additional details on upcoming AmeriCorps WA activities, share additional resources and connect with fellow AmeriCorps members throughout the service year. You'll be receiving these newsletters using the email you provided when you signed up for AmeriCorps. If there's a different email you prefer to use, you can change it in our [subscribe to email updates](#).

We believe national service, volunteerism and civic engagement are key to achieving equity, strengthening communities and improving lives. We also believe service can be a pathway to education and employment. We want to make sure you have all the tools and resources you need to help you succeed in your service year and beyond. If you know of a resource that could be useful to a fellow AmeriCorps member that you'd like to see in this packet, send us a note! servewa@ofm.wa.gov or call (360) 902-0656.

Sincerely,



Amber Martin-Jahn
Executive Director, Serve Washington

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

Swearing-in Ceremony

All AmeriCorps members--whether new, returning or somewhere in between--are invited to attend our AmeriCorps Swearing in Ceremony & Launch. This "launch" of the service year celebrates AmeriCorps members' commitment to service. The ceremony gives members an opportunity to learn about other AmeriCorps programs in Washington state, be inspired by a keynote speaker and gain insights from hearing personal stories from alumni. The virtual ceremony takes place in the morning.

Launch workshops

Afterwards, you're invited to participate in some professional development workshops in the afternoon. They cover service-related topics and additional opportunities for you to meet other AmeriCorps members and professionals, share experiences and grow your network.

Many AmeriCorps members who attend the Swearing-in ceremony and launch workshops report receiving valuable information they can use during their service year and beyond.

You'll receive an email from program staff with a registration link in the weeks leading up to the event.

Save the Date!

Virtual Swearing-in Ceremony & Launch



Celebrate the start of your service journey!

Get motivated by inspirational speakers | Hear stories from AmeriCorps alums |
Network with other AmeriCorps members

Friday, October 20, 2023 | 10 a.m. - noon

Join us afterward for some valuable professional development workshops!

SERVE WASHINGTON



SERVICE TO CAREER RESOURCES

Service to Career Resources with Project Basta and SkillUp

Serve Washington believes that national service and volunteerism can be pathways to careers. Project Basta and Skill Up are two resources designed to give you access to tools that can help you explore and prepare for careers after service.

Project Basta

Project Basta is an organization developed in 2016 to close the employment gap for first generation college students of color. Project Basta will have a variety of career assessment and exploration tools for AmeriCorps members serving in Washington state:

Seekr+

Seekr+ is a 20-minute career readiness assessment. It is designed to expose you to various jobs and industries. It's also meant to give you knowledge of the tools you'll need to chart a career path with high social and economic mobility. At the end of the assessment, you'll get an individualized report to help guide your career exploration journey.

The Seekr+ assessment will be available to 100 participants.

Dates of all Basta activities will be planned by individual program staff, so notifications about Basta activities will come from your program's staff.



SERVICE TO CAREER RESOURCES

SkillUp

SkillUp connects workers and job-seekers with the tools, resources and support to move in their career path with confidence. AmeriCorps members are eligible for participation.

AmeriCorps members will have access to 60 college-level courses. These courses span across four industries (social impact, business, healthcare and technology) along with select universal courses, from online educational course providing organizations Coursera and edX. You can browse course offerings and get answers to FAQs [here](#).

How do I sign up for SkillUp?

Your program staff will give you a registration form with submission instructions. After you submit the registration, you should receive an email within two business days with a unique code that will let you log in and sign up for courses. We recommend signing up as soon as possible, as space is limited.

SkillUp will be available through Oct. 15, 2023.

If you have any questions email mikia.guy@ofm.wa.gov



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Leader Corps



One of the most clear-cut benefits of national service is the ability to gain new skills and sharpen existing ones. Each service year, Serve Washington hosts a Leader Corps training for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members interested in deepening their leadership skills.

Leader Corps makes it easy for participants to get a deeper understanding of effective leadership. In this training, you'll explore frameworks and tools to develop awareness and skills such in:

- critical leadership theory
- understanding leadership styles
- effective facilitation skills
- giving and receiving feedback
- practicing anti-racism in service and leadership

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Consultant, educator and experienced trainer Jeff Birdsall and Francesca Lo, executive director for the University of Washington's Community Engagement, and Leadership Education Center (CELE), facilitate the course.

Leader Corps is a workshop series consisting of sessions that take place around February and March. Space is limited and we recommend registering as soon as registration opens. Dates for LeaderCorps will be announced soon.

Other Workshops

Serve Washington also offers free training and workshops for members of the public that often feature topics that can be useful for AmeriCorps members. Topics vary from year to year. Past topics examples include using a people-centered approach to volunteering, volunteer supervision fundamentals, volunteer retention, fund development, nonprofit storytelling and more.

Registration information:

Your program director is responsible for forwarding Serve Washington sponsored professional development training and event notices and registration instructions to AmeriCorps members. You'll also receive notifications in the AmeriCorps WA member newsletter.

WELLNESS

Member Assistance Program (MAP)



During your service year, you may experience various levels of stress. It's not uncommon to be exposed to secondary trauma or feel pressure. We understand that too much stress can impact your ability to serve.

Many AmeriCorps programs offer a Member Assistance Program, MAP. The MAP provides accessible, quality mental health care services. Serve Washington has made MAP available to AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded through Serve Washington.

If you are in an AmeriCorps program funded through Serve Washington, MAP services include:

- A toll-free telephonic mental health counseling services with master's degree-level counselors available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- A mobile app that let you chat with a professionals, take part in video counseling, and browse through a web portal of resources
- Medical advocacy
- Life coaching
- Legal/financial resources (30-minute free consultations)
- Three face-to-face counseling sessions

Work/life resources and referrals

If you are in need of MAP services, please check in with your program staff and they can guide you to a resource that can meet your needs.

SHARE YOUR SERVICE STORY

Share your Great Service Story!

We love to hear about AmeriCorps members' service experiences, from how their service is making a difference in the community to how service helps AmeriCorps members grow. Sharing your stories can often inspire others to serve.

We accept stories on a rolling basis throughout the service year. Stories are shared to our [blog](#), social media and to our AmeriCorps WA member newsletter.

Sharing your story is easy! With our [Great Stories form](#), you can tell us your story and submit photos with the click of a button.

Story Ideas

Use some of these prompts for your story or come up with your own.

Program in the Spotlight: Is there something compelling your program is doing to strengthen your community? How has your program supported you during your service journey?

Why I Serve: Tell us what it's like to serve. What's does service mean to you? Did something happen while you were serving that made you smile? How has your service helped you grow? It could be "A Day in the life of Service" or something unique you think others would enjoy hearing about.

Tips for other AmeriCorps members: What's a challenge you've overcome? What's something you've done that has helped you succeed that you think might be useful advice to other AmeriCorps members?



Other ideas: If your service ties in to any of these themes, let them inspire a story!

September - Preparedness month, 9/11 Day of Service, Back to School, Public Lands Day (23)

October - Indigenous People's Day (9) Make a Difference Day (28), LGBTQIA+History Month

November - Veterans & Military Families Month, Native American Heritage Month

January - MLK Day of Service (15), National Mentoring Month

February - Black History Month, Invasive Species Awareness Week (26-March 2)

March - AmeriCorps Week (10-16), Women's History Month

April - Volunteer Appreciation Month, Drop Everything and Read Day (12) Earth Day (22)

May - Older Americans Month, Asia Pacific Heritage Month, Public Service Recognition Week (5-11)

June - LGBTQIA+ Pride Month, Juneteenth (19), Great Outdoors Month

July- Disability Independence Day (26) **August** - Women's Equality Day (26)

SHARE YOUR SERVICE STORY

Service Snapshots



A picture is worth a thousand words. Being able to see service in action is a powerful way to help people understand the impact of your service.

When taking a picture ask yourself: *If there was an image to show people what it's like to serve, what would that be?*

Bonus points if you are wearing your AmeriCorps gear!

Follow Serve Washington and tag us in your pictures!

Share your images with us on social media!

You and your program are invited to share pictures showing your service in action on social media. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter/X](#). Make sure to tag us and your program and use #WeServeWA.



@[ServeWA](#)



@[ServeWashington](#)

Additional Tips:

- Tag your service site's social media accounts, if they have them, in your posts. If they have a communications coordinator, work with them to share your content on their official accounts.
- If anyone in your picture is not an AmeriCorps member or program staff, make sure to get their permission before taking and posting the picture.
- Be creative! People standing and smiling are great, but showing people performing acts of service are particularly impactful.
- When adding hashtags, it's helpful to use "camel case," capitalizing the first letter of each word. Example: #WeServeWA. It improves accessibility. Screen readers can't identify individual words without camel case.

NATIONAL SERVICE DAYS & SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Throughout the year, AmeriCorps and Serve Washington invites you to participate in service projects to commemorate National Days of Service and other special initiatives. AmeriCorps regularly has webinars and toolkits to help prepare AmeriCorps members for these special initiatives about a month in advance.

Serve Washington also invites you to share stories, quotes and photos from your projects on these special days. These are great opportunities to invite outside media, Washington state service commissioners and elected officials. Your program staff or host organization's communications coordinator should be able to help you with media outreach. You can also contact Serve Washington for further assistance.



National Service Days

September 11 - National Day of Service: AmeriCorps members across the country lead service project on or around Sept. 11. In the years following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the AmeriCorps agency joined families who lost loved ones during the attacks to get Congress to designate Sept. 11 as a National Day of Service in their memory. **#911DayofService, #WeServeWA, #ServeWA**

Martin Luther King Day of Service - January 15, 2024: This National Day of Service celebrates the life and legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. by encouraging all individuals to volunteer in their communities. For more than 25 years, AmeriCorps has led this initiative. **#MLKDay2024, #WeServeWA, #ServeWA**

AmeriCorps Week - March 10-16, 2024: During AmeriCorps week, Serve Washington recognizes your dedication to serve your communities. Many program sites have special AmeriCorps-themed activities. **Day of the "A" March 13:** Wear your AmeriCorps gear and share photos of your AmeriCorps "A"s. **#AmeriCorpsWeek #DayOfTheA, #WeServeWA, #ServeWA**

SAFETY & CIVIL RIGHTS

Safety

All AmeriCorps members have the right to serve in a safe environment and be treated with dignity and respect. All programs must provide a safe service environment for all AmeriCorps members and volunteers.

If you are experiencing a threat to your safety or security, and you are not comfortable talking about it with your program leaders, sponsor supervisors or local law enforcement, call the **AmeriCorps National Service Hotline** at **1-800-942-2677**. Phones are open weekdays between 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time. You may also leave a message during non-business hours and you call will be returned as soon as possible during business hours. AmeriCorps also has a [live chat and webform](#) if you prefer to talk online.

Discrimination

To report discrimination in AmeriCorps programs, call **202-606-3461** or eo@cns.gov.

Sexual Harassment

The National Sexual Harassment Hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call **1-800-656 HOPE (4673)**

For all other safety or security issues or if you believe your service environment is not safe or secure you can share your concerns and questions directly with AmeriCorps by calling **202-606-3999** or email healthandsafety@cns.gov

Civil Rights

AmeriCorps has a zero tolerance for unlawful harassment of anyone engaged in national service. Our agency prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, national origin, gender, age (40 and over), religion, sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical), gender identity or expression, political affiliation, marital or parental status, pregnancy, reprisal, genetic information (including family medical history), or military service. All programs administered by or receiving federal financial assistance from AmeriCorps must be free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Service members, volunteers, employees, and applicants for Federal employment who wish to file a discrimination complaint may do so by sending an email message to eo@cns.gov or by leaving a voice message on the **Civil Rights Hotline at 1-202-606-3461**. Calls to the hotline will be returned within 24 hours.

LOAN FORBEARANCE

One of the benefits you have as an AmeriCorps member is the ability to defer payments on qualified existing student loans while you are serving. This is called forbearance. To get started, you will need to log in to your [MyAmeriCorps](#) account.

How to Request Forbearance on your Qualified Loans

Requesting forbearance on your student loan is a very simple process. Just follow the steps below:

1. From the member's homepage, on *My AmeriCorps*, click on "Create Forbearance Request."*
2. Verify that all of the pre-populated information on your request form is correct.
3. If you served more than one term of service, select the dates of service for which you are requesting forbearance.
4. Search for and select your Financial Institution.
5. Once you click the "submit" button, your forbearance request will be sent to your Financial Institution for them to process.

* Please note that it may take up to two weeks after you have started service for the "Create Forbearance Request" link to appear.

If you need to have a forbearance request processed and the option is not yet appearing, please place a request using the "Contact My AmeriCorps" link at the top of the "My AmeriCorps" screen.

For additional information on loan forbearance, please visit

http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_repayment.asp.

HOUSING RESOURCES

Looking for a place to live during your service year? Check out Silvernest

As an AmeriCorps member, you'll be doing extraordinary service in your community. By living within your community, you gain an intimate understanding of what your community's critical needs are.

Serve Washington recognizes finding affordable rental housing near your service location can make serving easier. So we've partnered with Silvernest to help you in your housing search.

As an AmeriCorps member, you'll be able to use Silvernest to search for housing listings created by homeowners and property managers who have rooms available for rent. Often, the rooms listed on Silvernest have rents lower than market rate rents of a standard one bedroom apartment.

While Silvernest isn't the only way to find affordable rental housing, we hope Silvernest's homesharing tool is another resource you can use to help in your search.

Get started

1. Visit <https://info.silvernest.com/ameriCorps> and create a profile.
2. Answer a few basic questions about your location and living space preferences and Silvernest will find potential matches based on your responses. You'll also be able to securely message your potential matches and set expectations for your shared space.

New listings are added regularly so check back often.



ABOUT SERVE WASHINGTON

Mission

Serve Washington advances national service, volunteerism and civic engagement to improve lives; expands opportunity to meet the local critical needs of residents of Washington; and strengthens community capacity while creating healthy and resilient communities.

Vision

National service, volunteerism, and civic engagement are the foundation for caring communities and a thriving Washington.

What We Do:

Serve Washington promotes and grows volunteer efforts in the state of Washington. These include the AmeriCorps and Community Emergency Response Team, CERT programs.

We are the state commission on service and volunteerism. We are also a grantmaking partner of the AmeriCorps agency. A group of governor-appointed commissioners guides our work.

Our work helps organizations develop, launch and maintain AmeriCorps programs. We do this by providing programs training, technical assistance and monitoring. We also give AmeriCorps staff and AmeriCorps members the chance to learn and celebrate volunteerism together. Read our latest [State Service Plan here](#).

For questions about our programs and opportunities, please contact us.

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