



# Member Handbook

[www.stewardslegacy.org](http://www.stewardslegacy.org)



**AmeriCorps**

Welcome! We are excited to have you as a member of Stewards Individual Placement Program (Stewards). As you embark on your journey as a Stewards Member, we encourage you to use this handbook as a reference as you navigate your term of service with our program. This handbook is designed to inform you of the program's goals, policies, procedures, and to provide you with the tools and resources to help make your service term successful. Again, welcome to our program. We are honored to support your service!

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Disclaimer: This handbook is a thorough introduction to our program, however, it is not a complete description of our organization's policies and procedures. If you have a question that is not covered within the Stewards Member Handbook, please speak with your Stewards staff contact.

# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

## MISSION AND VISSION STATEMENT

Conservation Legacy engages future leaders who protect, restore, and enhance our nation's lands through community-based service.

We envision a world with healthy lands, air and water; thriving people and resilient communities.

## DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Stewards recognizes and values the array of characteristics and experiences contributed by individuals and promotes and celebrates the diversity of our members, partnering organizations, and staff.

Stewards' continued success is contingent on our ability to recruit, select, promote, and retain staff and participants of differing thoughts, backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities, marital statuses, socio- economic statuses, languages, and geographic locations.

We are dedicated to creating an organization that reflects the nation's diversity, hires the best people to do the best service possible, and recognizes that achieving an inclusive and diverse team is integral to our success as a national program. It is critical to our integrity as an organization that all staff and participants working or serving in partnership with Stewards are welcome and treated with dignity and respect throughout their service or employment.

This program is available to all, without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or expression, political affiliation, marital or parental status, genetic information, and military service. Where a significant portion of the population eligible to be served needs services or information in a language other than English, the recipient shall take reasonable steps to provide written material of the type ordinarily available to the public in appropriate languages.



## VALUES

- Engage the powerful leadership of the next generation.
  - We honor the expertise, energy, and commitment of young people by maintaining an unwavering commitment to welcoming work environments where everyone may live authentically.
- Center inclusivity at the core of our diversity and equity work.
  - Through intentional and equitable inclusion of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and lived experiences in our daily work, we grow in our understanding, compassion, and creation of innovative solutions to the challenges we face.
- Believe in healing people by healing the land.
  - The natural environment is a unique source of healing and resiliency for individuals and communities. We are committed to learning from the land on which we work and the greater landscapes and cultural histories surrounding us.
- Prioritize community first.
  - Our work only moves forward in community with one another, among our teams, and with local and natural communities where our work takes us. We prioritize listening first to the values and needs of local communities, members, and partners as we build relationships.
- Know service is our path to a better future.
  - Hands-on work in service to our land fosters a sense of purpose in our lives while instilling both humility and confidence. Service work builds crucial leadership skills and creates bonds among diverse populations that strengthen our commitment to justice, equity, and reducing human impact on our changing climate.

## ABOUT STEWARDS INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENTS PROGRAM

Stewards works with land and water management agencies and non-profit organizations to identify and facilitate individual placements for people interested in gaining experience in community development, and natural and cultural resource management.

As a Stewards Member, you have a unique opportunity to develop your own professional and personal skill set during your service term while helping your sponsoring organization with projects focused on environmental resource management or nonprofit programming.

Stewards places over 600 members in individual service terms ranging from 8 to 52 weeks throughout the country each year. Stewards works with multiple partners to create highly impactful national service projects and career development opportunities that fulfill the Stewards mission and grow the next generation of service leaders. Since its founding as the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team in 2002, many team alumni have become leaders in the nonprofit, government, or private sectors, often in the communities they served during their service term.

Stewards includes several signature initiatives and partnerships. Stewards AmeriCorps State and National initiatives include: Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) WaterCorps, Community Volunteer Ambassadors (CVA), Scientists in Parks (SIP), Gulf Islands, Historic Preservation Training Center (HPTC), Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA), Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) AmeriCorps, Youth Empowerment Stewards (YES), West Virginia Rural Engagement And Development Youth (WV READY), and other individual AmeriCorps placements.

Stewards AmeriCorps VISTA initiatives include the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF VISTA), The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Volunteer in Service to America (OSMRE VISTA) Team, US Forest Service (USFS VISTA) and other individual AmeriCorps VISTA placements. Stewards also support other placement opportunities for service with land management agencies.

The Stewards Individual Placements Program is a program of Conservation Legacy. Founded in 1998 to continue the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, Conservation Legacy was born from the commitment to support local programming and is dedicated to meeting the needs of unique individuals, communities, and partners across the country through national service. As a national entity supporting a cooperative of local programs Conservation Legacy provides a foundation of administrative, marketing, external relations, and risk management and development support, allowing local programs to focus on operations that meet the needs of their local stakeholders.

In 2023 Conservation Legacy engaged over 2,400 youth, young adults and veterans in conservation, restoration, and community development projects, and contributed 1.4 million hours of service to public lands. Conservation Legacy programs engage individuals in diverse conservation and community service projects that provide opportunities for personal and professional development, and meet the high priority needs of public land managers and community partners. Working in close collaboration with partners across the country, Conservation Legacy advances the goals of increasing opportunities in conservation, stewardship, national service, and workforce development.

Conservation Legacy supports many other programs in addition to Stewards Individual Placements. Below you will find a graphic of each of those additional programs.



For more information, visit [www.conservationlegacy.org](http://www.conservationlegacy.org) and [www.stewardslegacy.org](http://www.stewardslegacy.org).

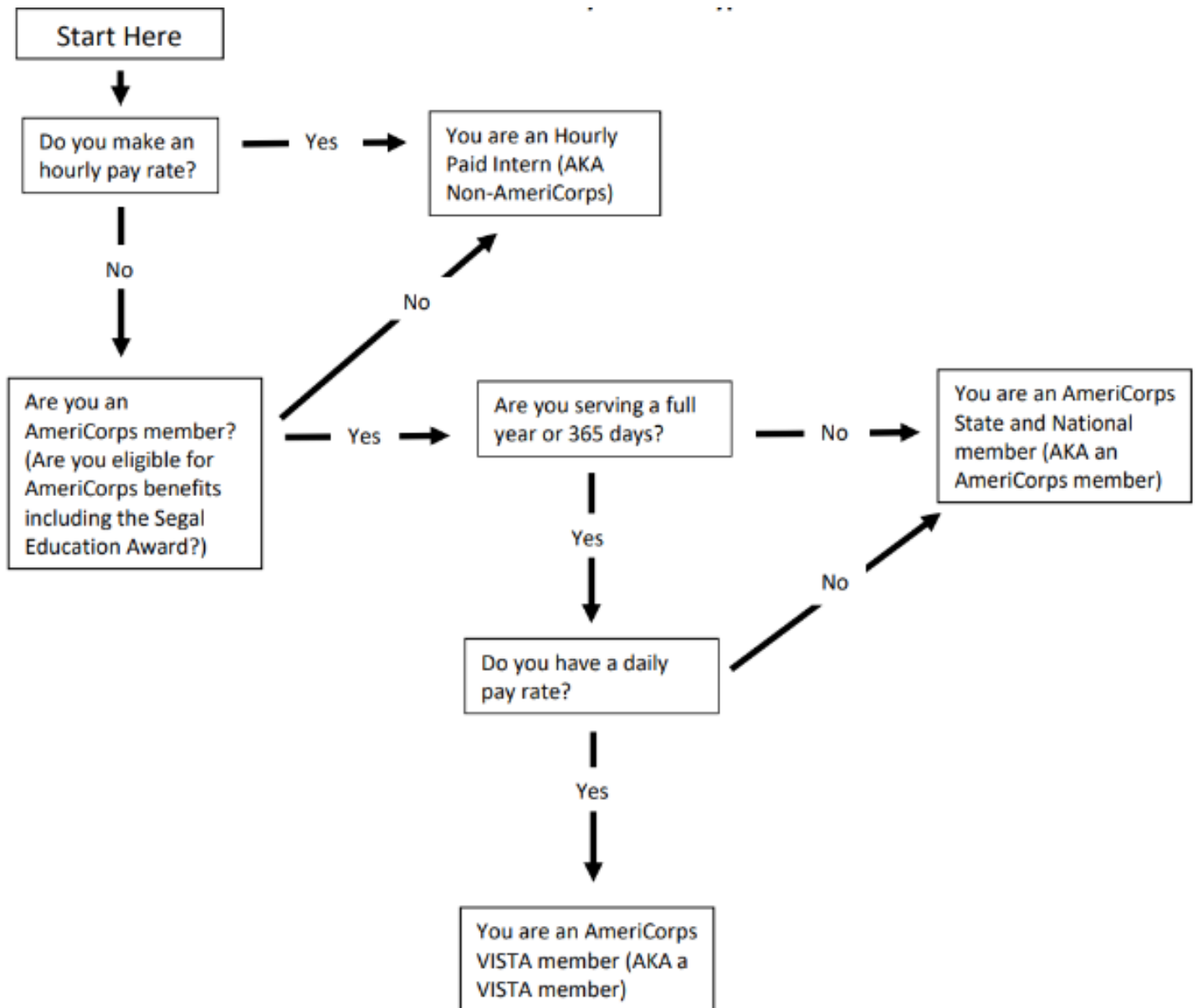
## Types of Individual Placements:

Stewards runs three distinct types of Individual Placements: AmeriCorps State and National (also referred to as AmeriCorps for short), AmeriCorps VISTA (also referred to as VISTA for short), and Hourly Paid Intern (also referred to as Non-AmeriCorps internally). Please review the types of individual placements below and make notes of which placement your position falls under. These different position types allow Stewards to provide a variety of member focus areas and experiences in collaboration with our partners.

	Position Type		
	AmeriCorps State and National	AmeriCorps VISTA	Hourly Paid Intern
<b>Sponsoring Organization (Site)</b>	Land management agency or organization	Community Based Nonprofit	Land management agency or organization
<b>Term Length</b>	8-52 weeks	365 days	8-52+ weeks
<b>Payment</b>	A set weekly living stipend that is dispersed in increments every two weeks	A set living stipend that is dispersed in increments every two weeks	An hourly pay rate that is paid every two weeks
<b>Earns Hiring Authority with Successful Completion of Term</b>	Public Land Corps (PLC) when applicable	Non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for up to three years	PLC or Direct Hire Authority (DHA) when applicable
<b>Eligible for Segal Education Award and other AmeriCorps Benefits</b>	Yes	Yes	Not eligible for AmeriCorps benefits
<b>Steps for a successful exit from the program</b>	Acquire the minimum service hours as outlined in your Member Service Agreement, serve through the end date as outlined in your Member Service Agreement, and submit all necessary paperwork. (See member responsibilities section below)	Serve for a minimum of 365 days, serve through the end date as outlined in your Member Service Agreement, and submit all necessary paperwork. (See member responsibilities section below)	Serve through the end date as outlined in your Offer Letter and submit all necessary paperwork. (See member responsibilities section below)



## How do I Know My Position Type?



\*if you are uncertain what member type you are, please reach out to your Stewards staff contact\*



# CHAPTER 2: ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Stewards consists of a network of organizations, agencies and individuals with varying roles and responsibilities. To help you understand the relationships between members, site supervisors/mentors with partner agencies, and Stewards staff please review the key roles below.

## STEWARDS MEMBERS

Stewards Members come from all over the country and bring a wide variety of experience to their positions. Typically, our members are motivated to join the program because they are interested in volunteer/national service work, starting a career in their field of work, and/or are passionate about conservation.

Members commit to a set length of time and number of hours for their term of service. Although you are a volunteer, unless you are a non-AmeriCorps Member, it is okay for your host site to have expectations of you like those that they have for employees. There is a wide range of responsibilities that you need to take seriously and complete in a timely manner in order to have quality member experience.

Members are expected to successfully perform the duties outlined by the Stewards Individual Placement Program and their host sites and to participate in professional development directed by their supervisor and their own interests and motivation.

## Stewards Member Responsibilities

- **Before you start:** Complete enrollment paperwork as instructed by Stewards staff – this includes completing a federal background check prior to your start date, as well as any additional background checks required for site specific duties. You will also need to submit copies of a driver’s license and documents of proof of citizenship; so, it is worth your time to gather these documents to make the enrollment paperwork process easier for you. Keep track of these same documents as you need to bring them with you on the first day of your term of service to complete an I9 with your site supervisor. Make sure to contact your site supervisor/host site before you start to make sure you know where to go, when to be there, and what to bring for your first few days as you settle into your new position. Your site supervisor/mentor will also be able to answer questions about what to wear (including uniform expectations) and things you may be doing your first few days. Remember, you can always call your assigned Stewards staff with questions or concerns about what you need to do before you start your term of service.
- **During your term of service:** By accepting this position, you agreed that you can satisfactorily complete the duties with or without accommodations that were outlined in the position announcement that you applied to. With that said, you are expected to focus on assignments outlined by your host agency and site supervisor.
- **Orientation:** During your first week, a Stewards staff will provide a required new member orientation. The member orientation covers topics to help make the best of your term of service. The orientation will answer many questions you might have about payroll, timekeeping, and vacation.
- **Onsite Commitment:** Stewards Members are expected to serve from an office in the service community. Under certain circumstances, a member can perform a service project under a teleservice agreement where they can conduct their duties from home. Teleservice may not exceed one day per pay period and may be requested only after a member has been serving for three months. All teleservices must be approved by your Stewards staff and your site supervisor.
- **Time Commitment:** Stewards Members are expected to serve full-time for their host site. Members may need to serve on weekends, at night, or overtime depending on the activities of their host organization, but their hours should even out to about 40 per week. AmeriCorps State/National positions are not permitted to be part-time.
- **Timesheet and Reporting: You must submit your timesheet to your supervisor for approval bi-weekly through the Community Portal.** If you are an AmeriCorps member working towards an education award, it is your responsibility to track your total approved hours.
  - We will ask you to complete reports throughout your term that are intended to provide updates on what you are working on, how you are doing, measure the impact that you are having, and give you an opportunity to provide feedback about our program. You will be asked to complete quarterly or midterm reports depending on the length of your term of service, and all members are expected to complete a final report summarizing your experience for the entire term of service. We read every report and use the information you provide to offer input to partner agencies, improve our own program, and provide your host agency details about what you accomplished during your term of service.
- **Communication Commitment:** As a Stewards Member, you have agreed to open and respond to emails or phone calls from Stewards staff. Please contact your Stewards staff contact with questions or concerns about anything relevant to your service. Remember, sooner is better when it comes to resolving potential problems.



- **As Your Term of Service Ends:**
  - All members will be asked to complete a final report and other closeout tasks, which are due on or before the last day of your term of service. Your assigned Stewards staff will send you instructions and links to report templates before the last day of your term of service. The final reports are an integral component of your service. Do not hesitate to ask Stewards staff questions about the final report or other assigned exiting tasks. In the same email, your assigned staff will include helpful information and updates on approved hours.
  - If you are an AmeriCorps member, you will receive an email a few weeks before the end of your term with a link and instructions to “self-exit” from your term of service. Please complete the “self-exit” process when you receive the email. If you do not complete the self-exit process, it can take an extra 30 days (about four and a half weeks) for us to exit you from the program. This delay impacts you the most, as it will take much longer to access the Education Award.
  - If you are an AmeriCorps member, you should be checking your approved hours throughout your term of service to ensure that you are on track to complete the hours you agreed to complete for your AmeriCorps Education award. Keep checking your hours to make sure you earn the Education Award you have been working towards since the day you started.

## SITE SUPERVISORS/MENTORS (MENTORS)

Site supervisors/mentors of Stewards Members are employees of partnering organizations and agencies. Site supervisors/mentors provide direct training, mentorship, and daily supervision to you, the member. Below is a general list of your site supervisor’s responsibilities.

### Supervisor/Mentor Responsibilities

- **Preparation for your arrival:** Ensure all trainings, orientations, workspaces (computer access and phone line), etc., are in place prior to your start date. Contact you to provide helpful information, offer advice on what to expect the first few days, and serve as your onsite contact. If you have not spoken with your site supervisor, please tell your assigned Stewards staff or Leader, and they will work with you to set up a call or meeting.
- **Training:** Your supervisor will provide a detailed orientation and training for you when you arrive onsite. Training might include introducing you to your host community and agency’s culture, introducing you to local stakeholders that will make your service successful, and reviewing all standard safety and workplace training provided to new employees, as well as technical training that will help you meet your site and supervisor’s expectations. Please contact your assigned Stewards staff or Leader and tell them if you feel you do not receive the training needed to help your host agency with your project.
- **Daily Oversight:** Your supervisor is responsible for day-to-day oversight and management of your Stewards Member experience. They will ensure that you understand host agency expectations and that you clearly understand your project. This includes working with you to provide meaningful work assignments each day, ensuring that you are performing your assignments safely, and that you receive proper staff oversight and support from your supervisor and other project partners. Please check with your site supervisor regarding dress code, lunch, and break policies (including smoking), days off, and weather/emergency contingencies.
- **Mentorship:** Your site supervisor has volunteered to supervise and mentor during your term as a Stewards Member. Be respectful and appreciative of your supervisor, as mentorship is an extraordinary opportunity to develop your professional and personal skills in your desired field. Depending on your prior experience and skills, your supervisor may need to teach you basic work skills, agency culture, how to receive feedback, draft reports, manage your time, and meet deadlines. We encourage you to take extra time to talk with your supervisor about your professional goals and to inquire about additional education and training opportunities. We hope you will agree that this program is an exciting opportunity to share your valuable knowledge and skills with your supervisor and further develop your professional and personal skill set.
- **Safety:** The site supervisor should ensure that you receive and use any necessary protective equipment, receive regular safety briefings on any project you will be helping with, and that you participate in all appropriate safety training, including training on the use of any specialty tools. Your site supervisor and host agency should have a detailed Risk Management plan in place that they share with you before you begin work on any projects. There are some limitations to what a member can do (i.e., you should not work on roofs, chainsaw operation requires specific training). Please contact your assigned Stewards staff or Leader should you have any questions about what is allowable/unallowable, and do not hesitate to speak with your site supervisor if you have any concerns about your personal safety.
- **Timesheets:** Your supervisor will review your timesheets, approve the hours you entered, and approve/review requests for vacation days. Your assignments are expected to represent a 40-hour week. Please contact your assigned Stewards staff or Leader if you feel you are not being given many opportunities to complete the service hours outlined in your member agreement.

- **Reporting:** Your supervisor will review and respond to any reports you complete as part of your service term. These are helpful documents to track your progress and share your successes with Stewards staff.
- **Performance Evaluations:** Stewards staff will ask your site supervisor to complete and review member evaluations with you to track your progress during, and as you complete, your term of service. They will be asked to complete a final program evaluation intended to gauge the impact that you had on the project you helped them with.

## STEWARDS STAFF SUPPORT

We want you to feel empowered and supported during your term of service. Your assigned Stewards staff or Leader is available to you to help problem solve any challenges that may arise during your term of service. We would rather hear from you early and often when an issue can still be resolved than hear from you when it is too late with questions or concerns during your term of service. We are here to help and enjoy working closely with members to ensure that your experience is powerful, impactful, and enjoyable!

## Stewards Staff Responsibilities

- **Helping you get started:** When you are selected as a Stewards Member, you will be assigned an Enrollment Specialist and a Stewards staff or Leader. The Enrollment Specialist will be your main point of contact for completing onboarding paperwork with the Stewards program and your staff contact or Leader will be your main contact during your term of service.
- **Helping you during your term of service:** Your assigned Stewards staff member will contact you during the first week at your new site to arrange to complete a member orientation. This staff member will send you templates for reports, and timelines for your member service year, including report due dates and timesheet approval schedules. Additionally, this staff member will stay in contact with you throughout your term of service. It is recommended that if you have questions or concerns to contact that person first.
- **Helping you as your term of service ends:** As you near the end of your term of service, your Stewards staff contact is available to help you navigate concerns like completing your required service hours, exit paperwork and reporting, and using any federal hiring eligibility or education award you may have earned through your service.
- **Member Safety:** Your safety and well-being are extremely important to us. If something unfortunate happens during your term of service, we will work with you and your site supervisor to document and initiate a Worker's Comp claim for you. Once you are safe and, in a place, where your injury can be taken care of by qualified individuals, please contact us immediately so that we can work with you to initiate a claim on your behalf.

## CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

In this section, we provide detailed information and instructions for you and your supervisor to fulfill key requirements of the program. Much of the following is critical to your (and the program's) continued success. Inaccurate reports and/or late paperwork could result in consequences such as you not receiving your AmeriCorps Education Award (if applicable), suspension of position or even termination.

### MEMBER'S PAYROLL, TIMESHEET & HOURS RESPONSIBILITIES

Stewards staff are responsible for disbursement of the living allowance to you. Your agency or supervisor does not have this responsibility. You are expected to submit a timesheet every other week via our Community Portal, which then must be approved by your site supervisor.

If your site supervisor is absent and unable to sign your timesheet, the site supervisor will need to designate another agency staff member to verify and sign the timesheet. It is your supervisor's responsibility to notify Stewards staff of their absence and who will approve your timesheet while away.

You must submit your timesheet at the end of each pay period, which occurs every other Friday. We ask your supervisor approves your timesheet no later than the Monday after the pay period ends.

Shortly after you begin your service, you will receive an email from [community@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:community@conservationlegacy.org) with a subject line of "Welcome to the Conservation Legacy Community". This email will contain your username and a link to set up the password for your account. This link expires after 7 days. Please note: the sender may show a "via" address: that is just how emails come from Salesforce.

A detailed tutorial for submitting and approving timesheets is included in the Member and Supervisor Orientation: please contact us if you have questions regarding this system. We greatly appreciate your support in making sure you meet payroll

deadlines, and in reminding your supervisor that untimely submission of timesheets may affect the direct deposit of your living stipend.

## Member Hours & Stipend

Typically, sites should be providing you with 40 hours of work each week on average, even if those hours are spread out from 4-6 workdays.

### **AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL-**

You will receive a weekly living stipend, not an hourly wage. You will receive your full stipend if you miss time at work unless we receive notification from your site supervisor that you are in breach of the member service agreement and need to be suspended or terminated, if you work more than 40 hours (about one and a half days). If you miss work time, it is up to your site supervisor to determine if they require you to make up those hours or if that time will be counted as Personal Time Off (PTO). Remember that missing work time maybe he necessary hours to receive your AmeriCorps Education Award. It is your responsibility to track your hours throughout your term to ensure to ensure you can reach this required amount, or else you may lose your award.

The minimum required hours to receive your AmeriCorps Education Award during your position can be exceeded, especially if your site supervisor and position require extra work in addition to those minimum hours. If you complete your minimum hours before your end date, you still signed a contract with your site agency and supervisor agreeing to remain working at your site until the end of your contract date.

For example, if you completed your 450 hours a week before your end date, this does not mean you can end your service or quit reporting for service after meeting your AmeriCorps hour requirement. Remember that the minimum hours designated by AmeriCorps to receive your Education Award is a benefit to your position; your supervisor and site agency have the ultimate say in what your service hour requirements are during your position.

### **AMERICORPS VISTA-**

You are compensated at a daily rate which is paid every other week. You will receive a daily rate for each day of the pay period you are in service. If you work more than 40 hours (about 1 and a half days) in one week, you will not be awarded overtime pay. If you miss work time, it is up to your supervisor to determine if they require you to make up those hours or if that time will be counted as a vacation or sick day.

You must complete your full 365 days of service to receive your AmeriCorps Education Award.

### **STEWARDS HOURLY PAID INTERNS**

You will receive an hourly wage and are eligible for overtime pay. All overtime hours must be approved in advance by your site supervisor. Overtime is calculated weekly; if you record over 40 hours in one week on your timesheet, any hours worked over 40 will be paid time and a half and will shorten your term length if overused. Non-productive hours (holiday or other paid time off) do not count toward overtime compensation. \*See below regarding PTO during your term as a Stewards Member.

## Personal Time Off, Holidays and other Leave of Absence

Stewards consider all holidays/vacation/sick time as Personal Time Off (PTO). Please notify your designated Stewards staff member if more than three consecutive days of work are missed for sickness or family emergencies designated Stewards staff member. You are permitted to use PTO on days your office and/or site will be closed due to the observance of a holiday. Using PTO on a Federal Holiday does not count toward your allotted PTO days.

### **AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL**

You are not guaranteed a set number of PTO during your term of service. It is up to the discretion of your supervisor as to how much PTO you can take throughout your term. However, you are entitled to take some days off. We advise site supervisors/mentors to apply the same standards for awarding time off, sick leave, and holidays as they would for their other staff with similar position lengths. If a supervisor awards you PTO, you must work with your supervisor to get this time approved beforehand and that this amount of time will not affect your AmeriCorps Education Award eligibility. Please read the full explanation in Chapter 6: AmeriCorps, of this handbook.

### **AMERICORPS VISTA**

You have 10 vacation days and 10 medical/sick days (in addition to 10 Federal Holidays) that contribute to your PTO during your 365 days of service. A full description of these days is available on [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov).

If you re-enroll or reinstate with Stewards for a second AmeriCorps VISTA term without a break in service, you may access your

unused personal and medical leave earned in your previous term of service.

### STEWARDS HOURLY PAID INTERNS

PTO may be used at any time but must be pre-approved by site supervisors/mentors. Any PTO or holiday must be noted in the member timesheet in the description field and approved as such by your supervisor. The number of PTO days allowed for your position can be found in your Stewards Offer Letter.

Please note, if you use up all your allotted PTO before the end of your term and need a sick day, it will be an unpaid day.

## ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS & TIPS

Before starting your position, you will be required to complete certain documents, forms, and/or tasks to fulfill the enrollment paperwork requirements for AmeriCorps, Conservation Legacy, Stewards, and your site agency. These tasks must be completed before your position start date. If not completed by your start date, you will be unable to start your service term.

## FIELD MEDIA

Field media is a way to share your story and includes all means of media originating from the field. It can reach and influence people widely through member stories, photos, videos, project reports, press articles, community impact stories, and presentations. Some field media is structured and can include project work photos, field notes, and reports. Other field media is organic and dependent on the project, experience, and person.

Sharing your story results in continued awareness of and support for AmeriCorps, Stewards, or other National Service programs which in turn supports more people participating in Conservation Legacy programs, and thus healthier individuals, communities, and ecosystems. Your story can impact others!



## Photography

- Tips
  - Check your camera – avoid ‘sweaty pocket’ photos, charge batteries, clean the lens
  - Include people in before/after project photos
  - Do not submit filtered or manipulated photos – submit the largest file size possible via email or file upload – not via text
  - Take a lot of photos - But submit only your best
  - Make sure your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and uniforms are being used properly
  - Get the Logos: Stewards, Conservation Legacy, AmeriCorps (VISTA), NPS, etc.
  - Take work and non-work photos – capture the full experience
  - Use good Composition – consider the [rule of thirds](#)...and break it
  - Capture the emotion – the human experience
  - Always think about the light – golden hours of early morning and evening, etc.
  - Change your perspective – get low, get high, move around, look around, etc.
- Ethics of Photography
  - Always ask permission to take a photograph of anyone
  - Always take photographs with the dignity of the subject in mind
  - Be sensitive to the photo guidelines of your site and project partners
  - Individuals have the exclusive right to privacy
  - Remain neutral
- Find examples of great photos by finding Conservation Legacy on [Flickr.com](#)

## Field Notes

Share your story through field notes and other reflections. If you have a compelling story to tell, talk with your supervisor – your story can impact others through social media, partnerships, grant reporting, local press, etc.



## Social Media

Follow us on social media and tag us in your social media posts.

Always use good taste, if Stewards, Conservation Legacy, or AmeriCorps 'A' is visible, make sure you are respectfully representing us and follow all relevant policies.

Instagram	@stewardsip
Twitter	@StewardsIP
Facebook	@stewardslegacy

## Talking to the Press

Any unplanned media attention should immediately be reported to your site supervisor. You do not have to talk to a reporter or be in a video if you do not want to. If approached, you should ask for some time before an interview, allowing you to involve the site and Stewards staff before proceeding. If you choose to and are approved to participate, plan, and prepare for media attention ahead of time. If a crisis arises and the media is involved, direct them to your site supervisor or Stewards program staff. Do not go on camera or the record, especially as events are still unfolding. Refer to your host site's Crisis Communication Plan.

Connect with your local and/or hometown media, tell your story of service. Let us know when you write something that gets published, or when you host an event and look for additional opportunities to get involved from Stewards and Conservation Legacy, like days of service.

## PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORTING

Reporting is your responsibility as a Stewards Member and the site supervisor. These reports will be used to track the accomplishments of each member. Please review the report template provided by your Stewards staff or Leader within your first weeks of work to prepare for the questions asked of you. We are always available to assist you (and your supervisor) if you have questions about reports and/or their submission.

## Reports

Reports are our primary means of measuring your impact on the impact of Stewards Members and sharing that impact with our partners. Without reports, our program would not be able to continue. All reports are considered a matter of public record and often shared directly with our funders and other stakeholders. Additionally, stories, quotes, facts, and figures from the reports you complete will be utilized in our annual report and newsletter. Reports are submitted either as quarterly, midterm, or final reports. Your reporting responsibilities and due dates will be communicated by your Stewards' staff.

### The purpose of the report is to:

- Document progress toward achieving project goals and objectives
- Provide a self-assessment tool for team members to promote continuous improvement
- Identify technical assistance needs for team members
- Help staff connect Stewards Members working on similar projects or programs.
- Collect information for distribution to the public (If you are working on a confidential project, have your site supervisor contact your designated Stewards Staff member be redacted from the public record.)

### Member project reporting requirements:

- Track data accurately throughout your term.
- Take photos of your experience (including photos of yourself working) throughout your term.
- Complete and revise all required reports accurately and thoroughly.
- Submit reports and photos to Stewards staff when requested.
- Receive permission from site supervisor (mentor) and Stewards staff before publishing any work completed during service.
- Complete program specific surveys, dependent on-site agency's report requirements.

### Supervisor project reporting requirements:

- Assist member in developing a system for accurate data collection.
- Review and approve reports before member submit them to the Stewards staff. By signing off on your report, your supervisor (mentor) agrees that the report meets reporting requirements and is accurate.
- Coach and mentor member if reports need revision and to ensure reports are submitted on time.



- Complete a final project evaluation and evaluations of the member. Your supervisor should discuss their evaluation of you midway through your term and at the end of your service.

**Quarterly Reporting Schedule (for year-long State and National and VISTA members only):**

Quarter	Reporting Period	Due Date
1	October 1 – December 31	First Monday in January
2	January 1 – March 31	First Monday in April
3	April 1 – June 30	First Monday in July
4	July 1 – September 30	First Monday in October

Quarters follow the federal reporting periods. This is not linked to when you start your service term. For instance, if you begin your term on February 2, it would be during the reporting period's second quarter. The first report that you would submit would be for Quarter 2.

Quarterly Reports will be due the day following holidays that may fall on the first Monday (i.e. New Year's Day or July 4th).

Members completing their service will submit a final Quarterly Report that covers the period served after the end of the previous quarter. For example, a member ending service on November 15 would submit a final report covering October 1 to November 15 before the last day of their service term.

**Mid Term & Final Report Schedule- AmeriCorps Interns and Hourly Interns**

Your mid-term report will be due half way through your term. Stewards staff will send you a prompt email to complete the report along with the due date.

Your final report will be due on your last day, along with other exiting tasks. Stewards will send you a prompt email to complete the report several weeks before it is due.

AmeriCorps Position Type	Type of Mid-term Report Collected	Pictures required?	Mid-term Evaluation collected
300 hr (11 wks & under)	mid-term survey	no	no
450 hr (12-17 wks)	mid-term survey	no	no
675 hr (18-25 wks)	mid-term survey	no	yes
900 hr (26-33 wks)	full mid-term w/ survey	yes	yes
1200 hr (34-45 wks)	full mid-term w/ survey	yes	yes
1700 hr (46-52 wks)	full mid-term w/ survey	yes	yes

\*Stewards staff will reach out to you with specific instructions on the type of reports you will be expected to complete. It is very important you read the directions and complete the reports prior to the deadline. Remember, reporting is a mandatory requirement of your position to exit successfully.

**REQUIRED NATIONAL DAYS OF SERVICE**

As an AmeriCorps sponsoring organization, Stewards is required to participate in National Days of Service. These days are set by the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS), the organization that oversees our member placements. [National Days of Service](#) provide an opportunity to participate in direct service in your community. To find projects near you, use the "Find Volunteer Opportunities" tool on the CNCS website. You are also welcomed to organize your own event.

Highlights of Stewards Members serving their communities on National Days of Service (including photographs, news coverage, and data) are shared with partners, funders, and stakeholders to highlight your impact within your communities. Additional guidance, announcements, and reporting requirements will be communicated by your Stewards staff or Leader closer to the day of service.

**Some Volunteer opportunities Include:**

- **MLK Day:** This day is always the third Monday in January. CVA and AmeriCorps VISTA members must organize or participate in a MLK Day project in their community. Projects focus on the theme of Dr. King’s message of service and equality. In the past, Stewards Members have organized food drives, tree plantings, community cleanups or conversations and celebration dinners.
- **9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance:** Stewards Members are encouraged to conduct direct service and remembrance activities in their communities on September 11. Projects often support and honor veterans, soldiers, military families, and first responders. Stewards Members have helped feed first responders and participated in community remembrance events.
- **National Service Recognition Day:** This day is typically the first Tuesday in April. Local officials around the country will hold events and use media to highlight National Service in their respective towns and cities. This coordinated day of recognition presents a unique opportunity to spotlight the key role that National Service members play in solving local problems and challenges. Participating in the day will highlight the impact of citizen service, shows support for nonprofit and national service groups, and inspires more residents to serve in their communities.
- **AmeriCorps Week:** CNCS designates a week each year (typically in early March) that celebrates and promotes the work AmeriCorps members do in their communities. This is an opportunity to invite elected officials to your project and showcase your work or promote AmeriCorps service through social media and news outlets.

## CHAPTER 4: POLICIES

Stewards is a program of Conservation Legacy, and Stewards Members must abide by Conservation Legacy policies and procedures. Members are responsible for knowing and following the policies and procedures below, as well as those of their site’s agency, CNCS, and other federal partners. The Stewards office is available to provide clarification on policies and appropriate activities.

### GENERAL SAFETY

A first-aid kit and communication device must be carried with any member or crew working in the field and be always accessible including at the work site or office, in base camp, and at every excursion beyond base camp should field work be conducted. No individual may administer any prescription or non-prescription medication unless they are professionally trained. If epinephrine is delivered in the field, regardless of the apparent success of the treatment, immediate evacuation is required. All serious and minor injuries and illnesses must be reported to the site supervisor and the Stewards staff.

### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

All required personal protective equipment (PPE) will be worn during project work: disciplinary action will be considered for anyone not wearing the proper PPE. Participants who do not have the proper PPE will not be allowed to work and may jeopardize their worker’s compensation benefits. Stewards Members should work with their site supervisor to review all work tasks to determine if any action will require PPE: should PPE be required, the site’s agency is required to provide it.

### PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism in all elements of operation is integral to the success of all Stewards and Conservation Legacy programs. Professionalism is a requirement of all interactions between program participants, site supervisors/mentors, project partners, and community members. At times, this can be difficult when dealing with others who choose a less tactful route. We always hold our program participants to the highest standard of professionalism. All participants and staff should regard their affiliation with Stewards and their Host Agency as a privilege and strive to maintain a positive appearance, attitude, and outlook at all times during projects and any AmeriCorps State & National and AmeriCorps VISTA activities that they participate in.

All those associated with Stewards are expected to be responsible community citizens at work as well as while away from work during their time with any of the programs. When your behavior—during formal work hours or otherwise—reflects negatively on Stewards, it impacts the entire organization, and may affect your ability to complete your term successfully. Any issues that may come back to the organization from the community, site agency, or site supervisor will be addressed directly and promptly.

All program members and staff are responsible for an emotionally safe environment and should actively interrupt any inappropriate language or other physical or verbal interplay that is any way sexist, racist, or is a slander toward any person or group of people. All members must respect and make reasonable efforts to accommodate others' religious beliefs and customs as well as their dietary needs. Everyone should also respect the rights and viewpoints of all other members.

All participants will keep all relationships with site supervisors/mentors and project partners professionally. Exclusive or sexual

relationships between any participant and supervisor is prohibited, regardless of the person's age. The participant may be dismissed for inappropriate relationships with a superior.

All participants are required to uphold all policies and abide by the Host Agency's regulations, regardless of personal views or philosophies.

## **ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT**

Essential eligibility requirements for the program must be met. If you are unable to meet certain requirements, we may be able to assist you with some modification unless it alters the fundamental nature of the program, compromises the health and safety of participants or staff, or places an undue financial or administrative burden on the organization.

## **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE POLICY**

If any Stewards Member is caught manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing, or using any illegal drug, alcohol, or controlled substance while in a Conservation Legacy workplace, they are subject to disciplinary action up to dismissal. By their actions, they have committed a serious violation of Conservation Legacy rules, jeopardized Conservation Legacy, and potentially created situations that are unsafe or substantially interfere with job performance.

It is against Conservation Legacy policy to drive a motor vehicle for Conservation Legacy business while impaired by any alcohol or drug, whether legal or illegal. If a Stewards Member is under the influence of over the counter or prescription medications, or are experiencing any neurological, physical, or emotional problems that hinder safe operation of a vehicle they should inform their supervisor so the supervisor can make appropriate arrangements.

Any Stewards Member convicted of any criminal drug statute must report the incident to their direct supervisor immediately. Direct supervisors/mentors must report the incident to the appropriate Stewards staff. No article of clothing bearing the AmeriCorps logo will be worn in any establishment that makes most of its money from the sale of alcoholic beverages.

Marijuana use, as stated above, is prohibited while conducting Stewards business, including driving Conservation Legacy, Host Agency/site, or personal vehicles. This includes medical or recreational marijuana use, whether the employee holds a valid medical marijuana use card. No Stewards Member may possess or consume marijuana in any form while performing Conservation Legacy business including while in a program office, at a work-related event or gathering, or while visiting crews and programs in the field.

In addition, Stewards Members may not be under the influence of controlled substances or have it in their system above the state mandated level during the events listed above. If this policy is violated, the member may be disciplined, up to and including the termination of their service term, depending on the severity of the offense.

### **Drug Testing**

Conservation Legacy maintains the right to perform drug testing of any individual at any time for the purposes of upholding policy and ensuring the safety of members. In addition, Conservation Legacy's workers compensation insurer may require a drug test when a claim is filed with them.

### **Tobacco Use**

Conservation Legacy prohibits tobacco use –including e-cigarettes, vaping and chewing tobacco –on Conservation Legacy property and inside of Conservation Legacy vehicles. Tobacco may be used before and after project hours and on designated breaks only. The same guidelines apply to volunteer events, Conservation Legacy sponsored events, and any other instance in which individuals are representing the organization.

Individuals choosing to use any of the above are expected to honor the rights and health of their fellow colleagues by refraining from smoking in communal areas and tight quarters.

Partner or project demands regarding tobacco use may supersede Conservation Legacy policy and must be followed. In addition, during periods of restrictions due to the potential for wildfire, smoking will not be allowed at any time during field activities including at camp or during breaks.

## **EEO POLICY**

We are dedicated to creating an organization that reflects the nation's diversity, hires the best people to do the best job possible, and recognizes that achieving an inclusive and diverse team is integral to success as a national program. It is critical to our integrity

as an organization that all staff and participants working or serving in partnership with Stewards are welcome and treated with dignity and respect throughout their service or employment.

## EMERGENCY FUNDS POLICY FOR AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBERS

The CNCS State Office may authorize a one-time expense allowance for AmeriCorps VISTA members to cover extraordinary costs, such as reimbursement for theft, fire loss, or special clothing necessitated by severe climate. This allowance is not intended to supplement the living expenses of members. Expense allowances are paid directly to the member by CNCS. If you need emergency expense allowances, contact your assigned Stewards staff or Leader immediately to file a report with our partners at CNCS.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Stewards and its associated programs are committed to supporting members when emergency situations arise during your term of service. An emergency situation is one that poses a potential or actual threat to life or property, such as a natural disaster or active shooting.

### Policy

If there is an emergency situation in your area of service, follow the order or recommendations of the state and local governments and your service site regarding the need to evacuate an area. Seek safe haven (evacuation shelters, etc.) and contact your assigned staff at the Stewards office as soon as possible. If you anticipate a natural disaster may impact your area of service discuss emergency plans with your supervisor, and then contact your Stewards staff contact. If your staff cannot be reached, you can contact Corps Director, Geoff Elliot, at 970-946-1320 [gelliot@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:gelliot@conservationlegacy.org) or Corps Director, April Elkins-Badtke, at 304-533-3265 [april@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:april@conservationlegacy.org).

If you are an AmeriCorps member, if an emergency causes you to leave your site of service, you will continue to receive your living allowance for up to one work week. In the situation that the emergency forces you to leave your site for more than one work week contact your Stewards staff to evaluate next steps. Every situation will be different, so it is important you discuss the next steps with us over the phone, if possible. In the case of a short-term displacement from your site (more than one work week but less than a month) Stewards will work with you to determine if placing your service on administrative hold makes the most sense for you to still complete your term and receive your full education award. In situations where the displacement is projected to be long term (more than a month) Stewards will work with you to determine if there are options for relocation to a new site. In some cases, the emergency situation may have significantly impacted your site. If your site has been significantly impacted, please notify us as soon as possible. Stewards will work with you and your site supervisor to make appropriate amendments that allow you to complete your service and work.

### Procedures

In an emergency situation follow these steps:

1. If you can anticipate the possibility of an emergency situation discuss emergency response plans with your site supervisor and notify your Stewards staff.
2. Follow the order or recommendations of the state and local governments regarding the need to evacuate an area.
3. Once you have sought safe haven (evacuation shelters, etc.) contact your site supervisor and Stewards staff and explain the situation. If your staff contact cannot be reached contact Corps Director, Geoff Elliot, at 970-946-1320 [gelliot@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:gelliot@conservationlegacy.org) or Corps Director, April Elkins-Badtke, at 304-533-3265 [april@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:april@conservationlegacy.org).
4. In the situation that the emergency forces you to leave your site for more than 5 days contact your Stewards staff to evaluate next steps.
5. In the case of a short-term displacement from your site (more than 5 days but less than a month) Stewards will work with you to determine if placing your service on administrative hold makes the most sense for you to still complete your term and receive your full education award.
6. In situations where the displacement is projected to be long term (more than a month) Stewards will work with you to determine if there are options for relocation to a new site.
7. If the emergency situation has significantly impacted your site notify your Stewards staff contact as soon as possible. Stewards will work with you and your supervisor (mentor) to make appropriate amendments that allow you to complete your service and complete work that is appropriate.

## GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN POLICY

In the event that the government has a shutdown for reasons mandated by Congress, we have to facilitate processes that align with

our partnerships with federal agencies. Below is our policy for working with you through a government shutdown. Be advised that our office will be in touch with you when we see a shutdown looming and work with you through the entire process.

*Note: Guidance may differ by federal agency and service site.*

## Policy

In the case of a lapse in appropriations resulting in the event of a shut-down of the federal government the following policies and procedures apply:

All members who serve at federal sites will be suspended immediately when a shutdown begins unless otherwise notified by Stewards staff. This suspension is without pay.

If in the case members are approved to continue service, they will need to develop a Telework/Alternative Worksite Plan with their supervisor and Stewards staff prior to the shutdown. A member can perform telework to earn hours if they have a telework plan that was approved by their supervisor and Stewards staff **prior** to the shutdown beginning.

## Procedures

**All Stewards Members serving at a federal site should follow the following procedure one week prior to a schedule shutdown:**

- Member will review agency shut-down policies and procedures with their on-site supervisor (mentor), who will communicate to Stewards staff if any part of this policy is superseded by federal policy
- If federal policy allows telework for the Member, agency contact will provide written confirmation that financial assistance agreement(s) may continue
- Member and supervisor will contact Stewards staff to initiate the telework plan

**Once the Shut-down event occurs:**

- If an approved 35-40 hours/week telework plan is on file and a member checks in with their assigned Stewards staff member as outlined in their telework plan, the member will continue to be provided with compensation (stipend).
- If a member is suspended, they will not receive compensation (stipend) for the days they are suspended. There is also no possibility of back pay.

## NEPOTISM POLICY

It is Stewards policy that members are selected or hired only if they will not be supervised by an immediate family or a close relative. CNCS defines immediate family as a spouse, domestic partner, parent, or guardian whether by blood or adoption, child whether by blood or adoption, and a close relative by either blood or adoption as a grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, or first cousin. CNCS also requires that members not be a relative of a project site staff member, a Stewards Individual Placement or CNCS staff member, or member of the board of directors where the Stewards Member reports for service.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Stewards and its associated programs are committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, Conservation Legacy requires that all relationships among persons in the workplace will be respectful, business-like, and free of prejudice and harassment.

Any benefits and terms and conditions of this program are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or expression, political affiliation, marital or parental status, genetic information, and military service. Conservation Legacy policy and federal law prohibits reprisal for engaging in protected activity (reporting discrimination or harassment, participating in investigations of such allegations, or intervening to assist those who are subjected to prohibited behaviors), and it will not be tolerated. In addition to filing a complaint with local and state agencies that are responsible for resolving discrimination complaints, you may bring a complaint to the attention of the Corporation for National and Community Service. If you believe that you or others have been discriminated against, or if you want to seek advice, contact:

Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO)  
Corporation for National and Community Service  
250 E Street, SW Washington, DC 20525  
(202) 606-7503 | eo@cns.gov (email)



# Policy

## **Equal Employment Opportunity/Unlawful Harassment**

Conservation Legacy is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. We expect that all interactions will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

Conservation Legacy complies with all laws barring discrimination against employees, members, participants, or applicants for employment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), parental status, national origin, age, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), political affiliation, military service, or other non-merit-based factors or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

Unlawful harassment includes verbal or physical conduct which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's professional performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group. This policy applies to all employees, including managers, supervisors, colleagues, and non-employees such as customers, clients, vendors, consultants, project partners, etc.

### **Definitions of Harassment**

**Sexual Harassment:** Conservation Legacy opposes sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

All employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Conduct which may violate this policy includes, but is not limited to, sexually implicit or explicit communications whether in:

- Written form such as cartoons, posters, calendars, notes, letters, e-mails.
- Verbal form such as comments, jokes, foul or obscene language of a sexual nature, gossiping or questions about another's sex life, or repeated unwanted requests for dates.
- Physical gestures and other nonverbal behavior such as unwelcome touching, grabbing, fondling, kissing, massaging, and brushing up against another's body.

**Other Harassment and unfair treatment:** Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows aversion toward an individual because of a person's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law, and that:

- Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance;
- Or otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes and display or circulation of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows aversion toward an individual or group, including through e-mail.

This policy is also intended to cover unfair treatment to any employee who feels that they have been consistently treated in an unfair manner or have been repeatedly disrespected by another employee/participant of Conservation Legacy.

These policies apply to all applicants and employees, and prohibit harassment, discrimination, and retaliation by fellow employees, a supervisor, or a manager. Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the setting such as during business trips, business meetings, and business-related social events.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

## Grievance Procedures

Stewards requires the reporting of all incidents of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassing conduct must file all grievance with Stewards staff before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive.

Employees who have experienced conduct they believe is contrary to this policy have an obligation to take advantage of this grievance procedure. Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment. Therefore, please promptly report any grievance or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken. Conservation Legacy will conduct an investigation concerning the alleged harassment, and if confirmed, it will make every effort to stop it before it becomes severe or pervasive. This is only possible with the cooperation of its members and partners.

## Investigation Procedures

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated by Stewards' executive leadership or by federal investigators through the members' service site, depending on the situation. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. Efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation process to an extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action.

### Discipline

Discipline for conduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be handled appropriately. Discipline will include any steps to assure the conduct will not be repeated.

## Procedures

If a situation makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, you have permission to physically leave the space where the harassment occurred. If you feel comfortable doing so, tell the person who is harassing you to stop. If you do not feel comfortable confronting the harasser directly, or if the behavior does not stop, talk with your Stewards staff and/or site supervisor. If your staff or site supervisor is the perpetrator, then talk with the Program Director or Corps Director. Explain what has happened and ask for that person's help in getting the behavior to stop.

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

### Imagining a "Restorative" approach:

Conservation Legacy incorporates restorative practices into our service. This information provides educational points about the restorative philosophy that aligns with our organization's mission to promote healthy and resilient communities and ecosystems. A restorative approach is circular in nature and requires five key components:

RELATIONSHIP | RESPECT | RESPONSIBILITY | REPAIR | REINTEGRATION

### What is restorative justice?

Restorative justice creates a framework to repair harm and restore community. Restorative processes identify the needs of the harmed party, the responsible party, and the larger community. This interconnected relationship requires taking responsibility for the harm caused. The goal is reintegration and repair. Restorative practices may not work for every situation, for example when a policy is broken or accusations of violence or sexual harassment. But for many common situations where harm has been caused, restorative practices can be applied.

### Restorative Questions to respond to challenging behavior:

- What happened?
- Who has been affected by what happened?
- What needs to be done to make things right?

### Guiding Principles of Restorative Justice

1. *Safety*: Ask yourself – can you proceed with a restorative process and keep everyone involved safe while doing so? Is the situation beyond your capacity to ensure safety to you and your colleagues? Has a policy been broken?
2. *Harmed party centered*: Have you checked in with those harmed by the actions? What are their needs? How do they want to proceed?
3. *Accountability*: Is the responsible party willing to take accountability to restore relationships and repair harm?
4. *Equity*: What are the underlying racial, gendered, and historical context of this situation?

**What is Accountability?**

Accountability is a practice. We can hold ourselves accountable, but we can also support someone else in their own accountability.

To be accountable, the responsible party must:

1. Acknowledge the harm that they caused.
2. Acknowledge the impact caused to the harmed party/community.
3. Express genuine remorse.
4. Do sorry: take actual steps – ideally those identified by the harmed party – to repair the harm.
5. Become a person that doesn't cause harm again.

**What is Remorse?**

Remorse is how we express and feel empathy when we are the cause of the harm. When we feel remorse, we are putting ourselves in the shoes of the person(s) we harmed.

**What About Blame and Shame?**

There is no place for blame and shame in the restorative process. We can process feelings in a healthy way that leads to authentic change. Blame and shame prevent that from happening.

**SERVICE-RELATED TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY (AMERICORPS VISTA ONLY)**

If you are required to travel for a service-related activity and cannot use public transportation or a company-owned or rented vehicle, and you drive your personal vehicle, your hosting organization must reimburse you according to their reimbursement policy. Be sure to review with your supervisor the proper protocol for your agency/host site for service related travel.

**UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION POLICY**

Most AmeriCorps State & National and AmeriCorps VISTA members are ineligible for unemployment benefits as most states do not recognize AmeriCorps members as employees.

# CHAPTER 5: PROCEDURES

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Keeping Stewards Members safe is the most important part of our job. We are always available to assist sites in ensuring that members are performing their duties safely. Below are a few key risk management issues to review and discuss with your supervisor. You should have a plan that includes who to contact in case of emergency and who to talk to if you feel unsafe. Stewards staff are available to work with you and your supervisor to create a plan if your site does not have one in place.

Failure to comply with safety procedures or to provide a safe working environment could result in your site losing the ability to host a Stewards Member.

### Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)

Many organizations have processes for assessing hazards on a job site. If your organization is unfamiliar with JHAs or the process of risk assessment, please contact our office for resources and assistance. We expect that members and their sites are assessing and mitigating hazards for all job duties.

### Chainsaws, Heavy Machinery & Tool Training

Tools and equipment should be operated by individuals who have been trained in how to safely use them. If you need to operate special tools or machinery, please confirm with your supervisor that you receive adequate training per your agency's policies. If you will be using chainsaws, Stewards staff must be notified to ensure proper workers' compensation coverage and training is provided. If you are unsure about new duties, you are being assigned, please contact your assigned Stewards staff or Leader.

### Work at Heights

Working on roofs or on ladders above 6 feet is not allowed per Conservation Legacy's workers' compensation policy. In general, working at heights is one of the most dangerous activities that exist, and all precautions need to be made including the following:

- No working on roofs unless approved by Stewards Corps Director.
- Those under age 18 may not perform any work at heights.
- Any work where a person is exposed to a fall of 6 feet or more requires risk mitigation whether it is on ladders, up a tree, over a ledge, etc. Mitigation will require guardrails, safety harnesses, and/or personal fall arrest systems in accordance with all current OSHA and industry standards. (See OSHA standards 1910.25-28 and 1926 Subpart M)
- Any risk of injury from falling objects should be mitigated through closing off areas, using a hanging net, and posting warning signs as appropriate.
- When working at heights, before any work is completed, a staff person familiar with OSHA regulations must provide written confirmation of the structural integrity of walking surfaces that are at height and identify hidden hazards. Crews must consider air temperature, wind conditions, and UV exposure.
- Absolutely no chain-sawing at height and no ladders on elevated surfaces, trees, et cetera.

### Search and Rescue Participation

At your site, you may be asked to participate in Search and Rescue operations. You must notify your Stewards staff or Leader before going into the field. During Search and Rescue operations, your Host Site is responsible for your wellbeing, but Stewards wants to ensure that you also have support after the event should you need it. Your physical and mental health and wellbeing are important to us, and Stewards staff may deny you permission to participate in an event at any time.

### Administratively Determined (AD) Detail

Stewards Members occasionally but rarely get the opportunity to participate in an AD Detail facilitated by their host site. Those that want the professional experience are allowed to participate with the following caveats:

- Before you accept an AD detail, you must review the detail with your Stewards staff to ensure that the time away from your service site does not negatively affect your project or required AmeriCorps hours. (This generally means no details extending over two weeks will be approved.)
- During your AD detail you will be working as an employee of your host site and therefore not covered by Workers Compensation provided through your participation in Stewards programming. You will also not be able to count hours worked on AD toward your AmeriCorps hours and cannot record them on your Community Portal timesheet.

Your staff contact will work closely with your supervisor to determine AD detail approval.

## Vehicles

If you need to drive as part of your position, please follow the policies and protocols for your host site to be in compliance. Use public transportation or a company vehicle when possible. Hands free communication devices must be used while driving, and texting is prohibited.

### **AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL and STEWARDS HOURLY PAID INTERNS:**

Additionally, Conservation Legacy will need to ensure that you are eligible to drive per the organizational insurance requirements through your completion of the Driver's Consent Release Form and uploading a copy of your Driver's license during your enrollment paperwork process. In order to be eligible to drive, in addition to passing the Conservation Legacy Driver Eligibility, you must be at least 21 years of age or have possessed your license for at least 3 years. If your site requires you to drive for your term, you will be ineligible if:

- Your driver's license has been suspended, restricted, or revoked in the past 3 years.
- You have one or more of the following in the past 3 years:
  - Driving while under the influence of drugs
  - Negligent homicide arising out of use of a motor vehicle (Gross Negligence)
  - Using a motor vehicle for the commission of a felony
  - Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
  - Operating a motor vehicle without the owner's authority (grand theft)
  - Reckless driving
  - Hit & run driving
- You have two or more of the following in the past 3 years:
  - Driving while intoxicated
  - Operating a motor vehicle during a period of suspension or revocation
  - Permitting an unlicensed person to drive
  - Speeding contest
- You have three or more of the following or any of the above in the past 3 years:
  - Accidents (regardless of fault)
  - Moving violations

### **AMERICORPS VISTA**

Due to the Federal Tort Claims Act and Federal Employee Compensation Act, your service-related travel includes third-party liability and personal injury coverage. CNCS is not responsible for damage to your vehicle, so adequate insurance coverage should be maintained on any vehicle you drive. If you are involved in an accident, immediately notify the police, comply with local requirements, and report the incident to Stewards staff and CNCS as soon as possible as additional actions and paperwork must be completed within two days of the incident. Do not make statements regarding responsibility to anyone other than government investigating officers. See Chapter 7 of the VISTA Member Handbook for the complete policy and procedure. (The VISTA Member Handbook can be accessed through [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov).)

## MEDICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURE & WORKERS' COMPENSATION

In the event of a work-related injury or illness, during work hours, we expect your site supervisor to apply their agency's protocols and emergency response systems. If you require professional medical attention, please contact us immediately, go to the closest preferred provider or hospital or call 911. Below we have outlined our policies and procedures for any medical emergency and/or work-related injury.

### Incident Report Forms (IRFs)

Stewards staff members are responsible for starting an IRF for any incident/accident that involves a Stewards Member, whether this is filled out by you or a Stewards staff member. If an incident does occur, you may be asked to provide details, including follow-up information, before the incident can be closed.

### Medical Care

If you are injured, seek medical care at the closest medical facility and then notify your Stewards staff or Leader. Non-emergency injuries should be treated at the nearest medical clinic. Use the Emergency Room only for more severe emergencies, or if no clinic is available. After the incident is reported, information will be provided regarding where you should seek follow up treatment. For each medical visit, be sure to have a Letter to Treating Provider with you and have the doctor/provider complete the form.



## Workers' Compensation

Workers' compensation insurance is for the protection of workers who receive an injury or disease as a direct result of their occupation. Stewards AmeriCorps State and National Members and Hourly Paid Interns are covered under Conservation Legacy's Workers' Compensation insurance while fully enrolled in a term of service. AmeriCorps VISTA Members are covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA), administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP).

- **Filing a Workers' Compensation Claim**
  - You (or your supervisor, if you are unable) must file a Workers' Compensation claim with Stewards staff within 48 hours of the injury or illness. Contact Stewards staff before you seek medical care unless it is an emergency.
  - You (or your supervisor) should contact Stewards staff to start the claim – your information will need to be provided so that Stewards staff can complete the IRF and other documentation required for a Workers' Compensation claim.
  - Stewards staff will compile and submit a report to our Workers' Compensation insurance company for AmeriCorps State and National members and Hourly Paid Interns or CNCS/OWCP for AmeriCorps VISTA members.
  - The insurance company or OWCP (in the case of AmeriCorps VISTA members) will review the claim and accept or deny it. They may contact you for follow up information. All follow up communication regarding the claim will occur between the insurance company or OWCP and you. Some information may be sent via the postal service.
  
- **Follow-up & Restriction of work duties**
  - Any injured member who has filed a Workers' Compensation claim is required to receive a doctor's clearance for future work duty. Clearance ranges from full return to work to light duty to a zero clearance to return to work. Injured members cannot return to unrestricted work without the doctor's clearance. Site supervisors/mentors are encouraged to provide light duty work projects. If a member's injury or illness was not work-related and they cannot perform their basic job duties, please contact assigned staff.
  - If the member is unable to return to work or there is not enough light duty work to keep the member occupied while they recover, please contact the program so that we can discuss the options available to you and your member. For longer-term injuries, the member may need to be suspended and/or released from duty early. Stewards staff will work with you and the member to determine the best course of action.
  - **All follow up paperwork, doctor's notes, and work restrictions need to be submitted to both the site supervisor and Stewards staff.** When in doubt, call us. Although we do not directly manage member Workers' Compensation claims, we can help trouble-shoot issues and clarify the sometimes confusing process.

## WELLNESS AND WELL BEING

As a Conservation Legacy Program participant, you have access to the Employee and Member Assistance Program. This program provides a counseling service that covers topics such as:

- Stress Support & Management
- Career Advice
- Issues/Thoughts deriving from Mental Instability or Trauma
- Personal Finances (Includes managing your Retirement)
- Death & Grief
- Eating Disorders
- Work-Related Relationship Issues
- Non-Work-Related Relationship Issues

A flyer with more information in on the next page.

## Help, when you need it most

With your Employee Assistance Program and Work/Life Balance services, confidential assistance is as close as your phone or computer.



### Always by your side

- Expert support 24/7
- Convenient website
- Short-term help
- Referrals for additional care
- Monthly webinars
- Medical Bill Saver™ — helps you save on medical bills



### Who is covered?

Unum's EAP services are available to all eligible employees, their spouses or domestic partners, dependent children, parents and parents-in-law.



### Employee Assistance Program — Work/Life Balance\*

Toll-free 24/7 access:

- 1-800-854-1446 (multi-lingual)
- [www.unum.com/lifebalance](http://www.unum.com/lifebalance) Group # 0913486



*Turn to us, when you don't know where to turn.*

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Your EAP is designed to help you lead a happier and more productive life at home and at work. Call for confidential access to a Licensed Professional Counselor\* who can help you.

#### A Licensed Professional Counselor can help you with:

- Stress, depression, anxiety
- Family and parenting problems
- Relationship issues, divorce
- Anger, grief and loss
- Job stress, work conflicts
- And more

### Work/Life Balance

You can also reach out to a specialist for help with balancing work and life issues. Just call and one of our Work/Life Specialists can answer your questions and help you find resources in your community.

#### Ask our Work/Life Specialists about:

- Child care
- Financial services, debt management, credit report issues
- Elder care
- Even reducing your medical/dental bills!
- Legal questions
- And more
- Identity theft

### Help is easy to access:

- **Online/phone support:** Unlimited, confidential, 24/7.
- **In-person:** You can get up to 3 visits available at no additional cost to you with a Licensed Professional Counselor. Your counselor may refer you to resources in your community for ongoing support.

\* The counselors must abide by federal regulations regarding duty to warn of harm to self or others. In these instances, the consultant may be mandated to report a situation to the appropriate authority.

Unum's Employee Assistance Program and Work/Life Balance services, provided by HealthAdvocate, are available with select Unum insurance offerings. Terms and availability of service are subject to change. Service provider does not provide legal advice, please consult

your attorney for guidance. Services are not valid after coverage terminates. Please contact your Unum representative for details.

Insurance products are underwritten by the subsidiaries of Unum Group. [www.unum.com](http://www.unum.com)

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## **AMERICORPS VISTAS**

CNCS provides access to free telehealth (i.e. virtual care) alongside the elected health benefit. Visit <https://americorpsvista.imglobal.com> for more information regarding this benefit.

## **DISCIPLINE AND PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

The philosophy of Stewards is to correct inappropriate behavior or performance through a process that allows members the opportunity for learning and improvement. Many members are brand -new to the workforce and may need a little guidance on how to meet expectations of their position. With that said, if, after your supervisor sets clear expectations and directly communicates with you, and they do not see the improvement they expect, then disciplinary action may be needed. *Your direct supervisor can best assess the correct course of action, but they will contact us if they feel more formal disciplinary procedures like a corrective action contract, suspension, or termination are needed.* In general, we are here to support you and your site at any time if expectations are not being met.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Conservation Legacy philosophy is to modify inappropriate behavior through a developmental learning process. When action is necessary it will be guided by a series of formal progressive steps. However, at any time your program may accelerate the process based on the action of the individual(s). Any disciplinary action procedures that are implemented should be documented appropriately. Below are the guidelines for disciplinary actions to be taken when performance does not meet the written expectations.

1. **Clarifying or Resetting Expectations:** In many cases, the best way to correct performance or behavior problems is to meet with the person to discuss the issue and to work together to solve it. Doing this successfully requires prompt attention to and a clear understanding of the issue, combined with a willingness to listen to the person's point of view.
2. **Formal Verbal Warning (document on Disciplinary Action Form):** This is a verbal communication regarding a person's unacceptable performance or behavior.
3. **Performance Improvement Plan:** If, following the above steps, a person continues to engage in similar unacceptable behavior, or if bypassing earlier steps is justified, a Performance Improvement Plan may be issued. The person is informed in writing that a serious infraction has occurred, and that immediate improvement is required to avoid further disciplinary action. The member must sign the contract & program staff must be alerted.
4. **Suspension from program:** Typically, a person is suspended when previous disciplinary steps have failed to correct the problem. This is a severe disciplinary action that must be initiated only with the knowledge and support of program staff.
5. **Termination:** The decision to terminate a member typically is made after the above corrective measures have been tried without success. When a member is terminated, it must be because they have failed the program and not because the program has failed them. However, certain behaviors are grounds for immediate termination, without attempting prior corrective measures. These include:
  - Purchasing, possessing, using or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during project hours, at camp, or any AmeriCorps-related event.
  - Physical altercation or intimidation.
  - Verbal abuse or threats.
  - Immediately dangerous practices or gross negligence.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is a normal part of life and learning how to handle it appropriately is an important life skill. Conservation Legacy's conflict resolution process is to help staff, leaders, and members resolve concerns about unfair treatment or dissatisfaction that is related to the program. We strongly encourage all individuals to follow the steps below:

1. Talk directly to the person you are in conflict with. If this is not effective or feels unsafe, proceed to step number two.
2. Use a leader or program staff to act as a mediator. If this is not effective go to step number three.
3. Schedule time to discuss the matter with program staff.

# Member Resignation or Termination

## Resignation

Should you choose to resign and leave the program early, you must contact Stewards staff with the dates served and reason for terminating the service contract. Contact Stewards staff immediately if you are resigning or considering resignation.

If you are enrolled in AmeriCorps, understand that resignation implies forfeiting the remainder of the living stipend and the entire AmeriCorps Education Award. If resigning because of a compelling circumstance (e.g. as a death in the family, or similar circumstances outlined in your Member Agreement), you may be eligible for a partial Education Award. Please contact us to inquire about applying for a partial award.

## Termination for Cause

A member's termination for cause cannot occur without the Stewards' staff's prior approval. In most cases, your supervisor will already be in communication with us regarding the behavioral issue at hand and we will be working together to decide the best course of action. At times, however, a supervisor may need to suspend a member immediately if the infraction is deemed inexcusable by both the site supervisor and the Stewards staff or is a blatant disregard of the following policies:

- Purchasing, possessing, using or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during work, spike or any work-related service work or event.
- Physical altercation or intimidation.
- Verbal abuse or threats.
- Immediately dangerous practices or gross negligence.

If the site supervisor and Stewards staff decide termination is appropriate, written notification will be given of the decision, outlining the term served and the reason for termination.

## SITE COMPLIANCE

To confirm that each site is properly utilizing its resources, Stewards staff members will complete compliance reviews through the application process, check-in calls, quarterly reports, and annual site visits. Following these reviews, Stewards staff will contact the site supervisor if any noncompliance issues are identified or if any follow up is required.

In some cases, a written notice of noncompliance will be sent to the site supervisor of a project site, with a requested acknowledgement of receipt by signature. Issues of noncompliance will be considered when reviewing renewal applications and may lead to the closing of a site.

## POST SERVICE

### Public Land Corps Hiring Authority

You may be eligible for a leg up in federal hiring due to your service term. Here are some details. If interested in obtaining a PLCHA certification, reach out to your program staff.

- Public Land Corps Hiring Authority (PLCHA) - What is it and what does it mean?
  - A federal hiring authority that makes it potentially easier to be hired into seasonal, term, and permanent positions with DOI, and permanent positions with USDA.
  - The PLC certification gives members two years of noncompetitive hiring status when applying for qualified federal positions.
- Who is eligible?
  - Veterans completing 640 PLC hours before age 36.
  - Non-Veterans completing 640 PLC hours before age 31.

\*Not all projects that Conservation Legacy serves on are PLC eligible.
- How to use it
  - Complete at least 640 hours of qualifying service AND successfully complete your term of service with Conservation Legacy.
  - Complete Verification of Work Hours form (or equivalent) to document hours.
  - Submit signed form of hours to appropriate regional staff of USFS, NPS, USFWS, or BLM.

**Upload PLC Certificate to USAJobs Profile and apply for qualified PLC jobs.**

# CHAPTER 6: AMERICORPS



# AmeriCorps

## OVERVIEW OF AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps is the federal agency for national service and volunteerism. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans of all backgrounds to serve their country, address the nation's most pressing challenges, and improve lives and communities.

Each year, more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Senior volunteers prepare today's students for tomorrow's jobs, connect veterans to services, fight the opioid epidemic, help seniors live independently, rebuild communities after disasters, and lead conservation and climate change efforts.

Conservation Legacy has partnered with AmeriCorps for over 25 years. As an AmeriCorps member, you are dedicating your term of service to others, making lasting improvements to your communities, and gaining technical and non-technical skills to carry forward in your career. After your term of service, you will be joining over 1 million AmeriCorps alumni who have served across the country and have access to AmeriCorps Alumni resources and networks.

**AmeriCorps Mission:** To improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

**Service Opportunities:** There are many different program opportunities for service with AmeriCorps. These programs include AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC. While you are with Conservation Legacy you are in the State and National or VISTA program.

**Focus Areas:** AmeriCorps focuses on 6 key areas to make an impact - disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

### **AmeriCorps Pledge:**

I will get things done for America - to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.

For more information on AmeriCorps, reach out to program staff or visit [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).

## Benefits of Service

In addition to connecting our members to land management agencies and meaningful service work, AmeriCorps members who complete their service earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. AmeriCorps members also receive a modest living allowance during their term of service. Members enrolled for a year-long term of service are eligible for health benefits. Members should direct questions about their living allowance, health insurance and education award to Stewards staff.

As an AmeriCorps member, you have committed to a term of service that ranges from 8 weeks to 52 weeks. As an AmeriCorps member, you are not an employee but are a member in a national service program. As such, you receive a living allowance, not a salary.

### **Waiving the Living Allowance**

You may waive all or part of the receipt of the living allowance for you service term. You may revoke this waiver at any time during the term of service. If you revoke the living allowance waiver, you may begin receiving your living allowance prospective from the date of the revocation, you will not receive any portion of the living allowance that would have accrued during the waiver period.



### **Leaves of Absence/Temporary Leave**

Programs are contingent upon members being present and project hours being completed as outlined by agreements with partners. Therefore, we expect that members are present for the duration of the entire program term.

All leaves of absence require prior approval from program staff. All requests must be documented and turned into the office at a timeline designated by the program. In the case of medical, family, or other emergencies, special accommodations can be made. The length of the leave will be based on two considerations: (1) the circumstances of the situation; and (2) the impact of the absence on the member's service experience and on the overall program. Individual programs have the flexibility to determine if they will continue providing health or other benefits, including the living stipend, during the period of absence.

### **Suspension/Reinstatement**

If suspension is appropriate, a member will be suspended in service via signed suspension form the first day the member serves 0 hours of their agreed to suspension period. Members will be reinstated via signed reinstatement form the first day the member serves at their site after being suspended in service.

### **Release from Service**

Members may be released from service for two reasons: (a) for compelling personal circumstances; and (b) for cause.

#### **Compelling Personal Circumstances**

The following circumstances have been determined by Conservation Legacy as being "beyond the member's control," and will be eligible for release from service for Compelling Personal Circumstances. Members released for Compelling Personal Circumstances are eligible for a partial education award:

- A member's disability or serious illness.
- Disability, serious illness, or death of a member's family member that makes completing a term unreasonably difficult or impossible.
- Conditions attributable to the program or otherwise unforeseeable and beyond the member's control such as a natural disaster, a strike, relocation of a spouse, or the nonrenewal or premature closing of a project or program, that make completing a term unreasonably difficult or impossible.
- Military service obligations.
- Acceptance of an opportunity to make the transition from welfare to work (when applicable).
- Acceptance of an employment opportunity by a member serving in a program that includes in its approved objectives the promotion of employment among its members (when applicable).

**Compelling Personal Circumstance for Pregnancy/Childbirth:** Pregnancy and/or childbirth could be determined to be compelling personal circumstances if the member requests it. The program cannot require a member to justify wanting to leave a term of service for pregnancy. Likewise, a program cannot require that a member leave their term of service due to a pregnancy. A full-time (1700-hour) member might qualify under the Family Medical Leave Act if the member is covered, or the program can suspend the member so that the member can return some time in the future (within 2 years) to complete their term of service.

#### **Release for Cause**

A release for cause encompasses any circumstances other than compelling personal circumstances that warrant a member's release from completing a term of service. If released for cause, members will not receive any portion of the AmeriCorps education award.

- Conservation Legacy must release for cause any individual who is convicted of a felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service.

**No Automatic Disqualification if Released for Cause:** A release for cause covers all circumstances in which a member

does not successfully complete their term of service for reasons other than compelling personal circumstances. Therefore, it is possible for a member to receive a satisfactory performance review and be released for cause.

### **Release for Cause & Grievance Policy**

If released for cause, a member may contest the program's decision by filing a grievance. Pending the resolution of a grievance procedure filed, the member's service is suspended. Full grievance procedures can be found in the AmeriCorps Member Service Agreement.

## **AMERICORPS HOURS**

In order for you to successfully complete your AmeriCorps term and be eligible for an education award you must complete all three of the following requirements:

1. Acquire the minimum service hours for AmeriCorps position as listed in your AmeriCorps Service Agreement, or 365 days of service for AmeriCorps VISTA Members
2. Serve through your term of service end date
3. Submit all necessary paperwork, including onboarding paperwork, reports, midterms and end of term evaluation.

You have signed an AmeriCorps member agreement that outlines your term of service and the minimum AmeriCorps hours you are required to complete. You and your supervisor should review your progress periodically to ensure you are on track to completing your hours by the end of your term.

## **PTO, Holidays and other Leave of Absence**

PTO does not count towards AmeriCorps service hours. If you need to take time off, you should coordinate that with your site supervisor. When planning time off, please take into consideration that you must meet the minimum hour requirement by your end date. If you miss too many hours, you may need to be assigned extra hours. If you are concerned that you will not complete your AmeriCorps hours within your term, please contact your Stewards program staff immediately.

## **Project Hours**

Project hours include any service hours that are part of accomplishing projects as described in your job description, including drive time\*, preparation and logistics, et cetera. This will be the bulk of your work.

\*Drive time does not include daily commute to/from your residence to your work site.

## **Education & Training Hours**

Education and training hours include any orientations, trainings, or supplemental educational activities you participate in. These hours typically do not result in project accomplishments. To be eligible to receive your education award, you must participate in training, professional development and education opportunities. However, no more than 20% of your time may be allocated to development and education.

AmeriCorps' support is critical to our program providing you with positive service experiences. Part of our partnership involves adhering to high standards of reporting: this includes accurately reporting on project accomplishments, hours, and successes and challenges. Your thoroughness in reporting is vital to the continued success of our partnership with AmeriCorps.

## **AMERICORPS CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Prior to the start of your term, you submit to a FBI and state criminal background check, as well as a National Sex Offender Registry check conducted by our office, or by CNCS in the case of AmeriCorps VISTA members. Certain offenses can result in being ineligible for enrollment in AmeriCorps. If our background check deems you ineligible, Stewards staff will contact you and your supervisor immediately. Please note that all Stewards Members must complete a FBI criminal background check, even if they have already completed one with the site. This is a requirement of AmeriCorps.

As of May 1st, 2021, regardless of access to vulnerable populations, all AmeriCorps members must have a 3-part check which includes: a state criminal history check (state of residence as identified in their hiring paperwork & state of service), sexual offender registry check, and an FBI check, before they start their term of service, employment, or work on the grant. This rule applies to any

AmeriCorps member who is 18 years or older at the start of their term of service. Any individual that is registered or required to be registered on a state sex offender registry or the national sex offender registry or has been convicted of murder will be immediately disqualified from employment or service.

## AMERICORPS PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- 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;
- 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;
- Providing a direct benefit to -
  - A business organized for profit;
  - A labor union;
  - A partisan political organization;
  - 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;
  - An organization engaged in the religious activities
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

In addition to the above activities, the below activities are additionally prohibited:

**Census Activities.** AmeriCorps members and volunteers associated with AmeriCorps grants may not engage in census activities during service hours. Being a census taker during service hours is categorically prohibited. Census-related activities (e.g., promotion of the Census, education about the importance of the Census) do not align with AmeriCorps State and National objectives. What members and volunteers do on their own time is up to them, consistent with program policies about outside employment and activities.

**Election and Polling Activities.** AmeriCorps member may not provide services for election or polling locations or in support of such activities.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. 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 engaging in any of the above activities on their personal time.

\* Individuals are always free to exercise their rights as private citizens to participate in political activities (1) on their own initiative and personal time; (2) not affiliated with AmeriCorps programs or supported by AmeriCorps resources; and (3) not wearing any program insignia, logos, or uniforms.\*

# AMERICORPS FUNDING REGULATIONS

## NON-DISPLACEMENT AND NON-DUPLICATION

As reviewed in the initial application process, a site's AmeriCorps member may not duplicate activities that are already available in the area they serve including activities provided by government agencies. In addition, a site's AmeriCorps member may not displace or partially displace an employee or volunteer of the organization including infringing upon promotional opportunities for an employee, supplanting the hiring of employed workers, or performing duties assigned to an employee currently working, recently resigned or discharged, on leave, on strike, or who is subject to a reduction of force.

## AMERICORPS POST-PROGRAM

After successfully completing your AmeriCorps term of service, you are eligible to receive the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. You can use the award to repay qualified student loans and to pay current educational expenses at eligible institutions of higher education and training programs.

To manage your education award, log in to your My AmeriCorps portal (see QR code) →

- Check your award balance and value.
- Request payments to educational institution and loan holder.
- Request forbearance on qualified student loans.
- Update contact information.
- Check living allowance and tax statements.



After you complete your term of service, program staff will exit you from AmeriCorps. It can take up to 1 month for your exit paperwork to clear. Once you have been exited a new option will show up on your My AmeriCorps Portal under "My Education Award." If you are having trouble accessing your My AmeriCorps Portal, call 1.800.942.2677.

**Schools of National Service:** You can search for schools that offer scholarships, application fee waivers, and other benefits for AmeriCorps alumni. Some states will offer in-state tuition to AmeriCorps alumni. Go to the [americorps.gov](http://americorps.gov) website>Partner>Partnerships>Schools of National Service.

**Employers of National Service:** You can search over 700 organizations that connect AmeriCorps alumni with employers from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Go to the [americorps.gov](http://americorps.gov) website>Partner>Partnerships>Employers of National Service.

**Alumni Resources:** There are many alumni resources you can benefit from. Go to the [americorps.gov](http://americorps.gov) website>Members & Volunteers>Alumni.

### Important Notes

- You have seven years to use your education award, with the possibility of a two-year extension.
- All payments made using the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award are subject to federal tax in the year each payment is made. It is considered taxable income regardless of whether it is used to pay current educational costs or to repay qualified student loans.
- Already went to college or have a great financial aid package? Don't have any student loans? There are many other ways to use your education award. You can use your education award at any Title IV institution. There are a few organizations that aren't Title IV but accept the award: National Outdoor Leadership School, Outward Bound, Trade Schools, Medical Skills Training, Etc.

# THANK YOU FROM THE STEWARDS STAFF



Thank you for your commitment to serve your environment and community as a Stewards Member. We appreciate all that you do every day. We are here to work with you, cheer you on and support you every step of the way during your service term. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Stewards Staff with questions, to talk through a situation, or to celebrate your accomplishments. Our goal is to ensure that you have a successful service term.

Thank you again, without your service our work would not be possible.