

Jobs for Montana's Graduates Foundation



AmeriCorps Member Handbook



Warm Greetings,

On behalf of the Jobs for Montana's Graduates Foundation (JMGF) I would like to welcome and thank you for your participation in our AmeriCorps Program! The JMGF AmeriCorps Program is sponsored by the Jobs for Montana's Graduates Foundation (JMGF), the Montana Office of Community Service and AmeriCorps.

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS is an independent federal agency created to connect Americans with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. The Corporation also oversees Senior Corps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and Learn and Serve America. Together these programs engage more than 1.5 million Americans in service each year!

JMGF was established to support the mission and goals of Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG). JMG is sponsored by the Governor's Office and the Office of Public Instruction and is administered by the Department of Labor and Industry. JMG is affiliated with the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Program and is intended to serve high school students through development of skills and learning experiences that are intended to assist a student participant to secure a quality job and/or postsecondary education experience that will lead to a meaningful future.

The JMGF AmeriCorps Program is intended to build upon the JMG Program to offer all Montana students the opportunity to enhance their abilities to obtain their education and career aspirations through participating in National Service. Upon successful completion of a 300 hour term of service, JMGF AmeriCorps Members earn a \$1,000 Education Award. AmeriCorps Members also benefit through their experiences in service learning.

Montana is the first state to offer such a program and we are delighted you have decided to serve with us. Thank you for participating in the JMGF AmeriCorps program and for your support of National Service in Montana!

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or ideas you may have.

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Section I- Overview

Purpose

The JMGF AmeriCorps Program is a service learning program and projects are intended to foster pursuit of postsecondary education, facilitate the development of work place skills, and offer experiences that offer a variety of professional, personal and service related opportunities. Further, JMGF and AmeriCorps is also intended to benefit Montana's communities by promoting volunteerism.

The program has five objectives that will be measured and the results will determine our success. These are:

1. Each JMGF AmeriCorps Member completes a 300 hour Term of Service.
2. Each JMGF AmeriCorps Member will recruit and engage at least 1 non-AmeriCorps volunteer(s). Each volunteer is to serve at least 8 hours and complete the Volunteer Satisfaction Survey.
3. School and community based organizations where the JMGF AmeriCorps Members and community volunteers serve, should report an increased ability to deliver services; and
4. JMGF AmeriCorps Members will complete two leadership module assignments. One assignment consists of two modules or one module and a one-two page paper on National Service.

Reasonable Accommodation

JMGF does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, creed, physical or mental disabilities, color, or any other characteristics protected by the law.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided qualified individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship. The accommodation must be essential for the Member to perform his/her service successfully. Funds for reasonable accommodations are available for use by Member with disabilities, who have been offered a position with an AmeriCorps Program, and require an accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of their service. In the event you encounter the need to provide reasonable accommodations, please communicate with your site supervisor and the JMGF AmeriCorps Program Director.

The Education Award

Upon completion of the 300 hour Term of Service, JMGF AmeriCorps Members are eligible for a \$1,000 Education Award. The Ed Award is not cash; it comes in the form of a voucher and is held by the National Service Trust for a period up to 7 years, effective from the end of service date. The Ed Award may be used to offset the cost of attending qualified Title IV educational institutions, including colleges, universities, vocational schools, and may also be used to offset qualified student loans.

If a Member has questions about the Ed Award, contact the National Service Trust by calling 800.942.2677 or emailing epayments@americorps.gov . For more information on the Ed Award: http://www.americorps.org/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award.asp

JMGF AmeriCorps as Volunteer Incentive

The JMGF AmeriCorps Program is an added benefit to School and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in their quest to recruit volunteers; fostering both volunteer recruitment and retention. JMGF AmeriCorps is designed to both offer participating students financial incentive for their service, and to provide CBOs with tools to engage young adults in local communities. The JMGF AmeriCorps Program enhances volunteer recruitment and retention while also providing the participant with educational, service learning activities and financial benefits that relate to higher education.

Community Based Organizations

Part of JMGF AmeriCorps program mission is to connect young adults and community volunteers with community based organizations (CBOs). CBOs are nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations. AmeriCorps encourages partnerships with organizations that serve educational, public safety, environmental, human health/welfare, and homeland security needs. Ideally, service site representatives understand the goals of the JMGF AmeriCorps program and work to provide quality service activities and on site support to ensure a positive service experience for the AmeriCorps Member and community volunteers.

In your role, you may work with CBOs as service sites. JMGF recognizes that each community is unique and that some may have more CBOs than others. It is crucial that together we develop and maintain relationships with parents, employers, non-profit agencies, governmental agencies and other civic organizations in your community. If you would like program support regarding service site development, please contact JMGF!

Some examples of CBOs:

- American Red Cross
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- Chambers of Commerce
- Food Banks
- Girls Scouts of America
- Historical Societies
- Hospitals
- Human Resource Councils
- Humane Societies
- Kiwanis Clubs
- Local Fire and/or Police Departments
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana National Guard
- Museums
- National Honor Societies
- Native American Agencies
- Optimists Clubs
- Public Libraries
- Public Schools & affiliated programs
- Rescue missions
- Senior centers
- Various city and county departments
- Veteran groups

Section II- Enrollment, Service Activities & Exit

How It Works

JMGF AmeriCorps is open to all qualified high school students and recent graduates.

The following briefly outlines criteria & action points for a student to enroll in the JMGF AmeriCorps Program. Eligible applicants are age 17-24 *and* in high school *or* recently graduated having a diploma or GED. Community and School Representatives should explain the program and assist students in the application process.

1. The Community/School Personnel works with the applicant to submit the Application, Position Description, Member Agreement and required identification documentation to the JMGF AmeriCorps Program Office.
2. Upon notification of acceptance of the Member Application, the Community/School Representative should meet with the student to prepare the Member Development Plan for documenting their goals and objectives. An onsite orientation with the Service Site Supervisor or Program Director should also be completed.
3. After successfully completing Enrollment & Orientation process, students recite the AmeriCorps Pledge and officially become inducted as AmeriCorps Members.

Each month the Member must submit a Monthly Time Log. Site Supervisors are expected to verify Monthly Time Logs and monitor the Member's service experience. Monthly time logs are due into the JMGF Program Office in Helena by the 7th of the following month.

Once a Member completes the 300 hours of service and submit all exit paperwork in a timely manner, they can expect the Education Award voucher in the mail within 6-8 weeks.

Program Documents and Form Review

Essentially the paper work occurs at the onset and the completion of the program. Once enrolled, the Monthly Time Logs are the primary submission. An explanation of the JMGF AmeriCorps Program forms is provided below.

Member Application/Enrollment Form-Requires applicant & parental signatures for 17 year olds
Member Contract -Reviewing the Member Contract provides information about program expectations and participant responsibilities. Requires applicant & parental signatures for 17 year olds

Member Development Plan (MDP) -A tool to help the Member identify specific goals under the following categories: personal, professional and service related. Members complete the MDP at the end of their Service, to document progress towards their goals.

Member Disciplinary Documentation -this form documents disciplinary steps due to rule infractions.

Monthly Time Log - Members are required to turn in monthly report on the hours spent on direct service and member development. AmeriCorps requires the program to maintain records supporting these hours. If the Time Log is not submitted, Members risk forfeiting the Education Award.

Position Description - In collaboration with the Member and Service Site; work to design a detailed description of the Member's service activities. In signing this form the service site representative agrees to monitor the Member's compliance with AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities, and assist in completion of paperwork in a timely manner, *especially Time Logs*.

Additional documents:

Member End of Term Evaluation - Provides the opportunity for Members to provide feedback regarding their service experience; this document is part of the required exit paperwork.

Community Volunteer Survey - Survey used to gather information regarding the volunteers' service experience.

Site Supervisor Evaluation - Survey used to gather Service Site feedback.

Member Enrollment & Orientation:

The following is a brief description of JMGF AmeriCorps Member enrollment process.

1. An applicant must complete and submit a signed Member Application;
2. The Member must provide proof of identity, such as a copy of a valid driver's license (or other valid picture ID), and copy of birth certificate or copy of a valid passport;
3. The Member and School Representative review & submit a signed Member Contract
4. A Position Description is prepared for *each* service site & submitted the JMGF AmeriCorps Program Office;
5. The Member must complete and submit a Member Development Plan;
6. The Member must pass a criminal background check and a check on the National Sexual Offender Public Registry (NSOPR).

Member Responsibilities & Benefits;

To earn an Education Award Members must successfully complete the following tasks:

Submit a completed Application packet, including documentation of citizenship, including a copy of your birth certificate or copy of a valid passport

- o Also includes, Member Contract, Member Development Plan, and Leadership Self Assessment #1

Complete a minimum of 300 service hours. Submit completed Monthly Time Logs to the JMGF Program office in Helena by the 7th of each month;

Recruit a minimum of 1 community volunteer to contribute a minimum of 8 hours of service;

Have your volunteer complete and return the Community Volunteer Survey!!

Upon completion of your hours, complete and submit a Member Exit packet and final time log.

JMGF AmeriCorps Member Service Activities

There are two primary types of activities for which a Member may receive hours under the program, Direct Service and Member Development. Direct Service activities represent time spent at a Service Site performing the duties assigned under the Member's Position Description.

Direct service activities address local environmental, educational, public safety, disasters preparedness and /or other human needs.

Examples of service learning/direct service activities include, but are not limited to:

- Most volunteer service in the community; Service in the focus areas of Education, Public Safety, Homeland Security, Environmental Initiatives, and/or Human Needs;
- Service-learning experiences in conjunction with a credit- or non-credit-based academic course;
- Volunteer recruitment; and
- Coordinating service-learning or community service projects in the school or in the greater community
- Move and relocate books for the annual book sale for the community library
- Plan and organize a school wide event during Red Ribbon Week or other nationally recognized time of focus, e.g., African American History Month, Women of Achievement Month, etc
- Serve with a food drive for the community food bank
- Help with an annual blood drive
- Help with a paper/cardboard recycling program
- Read and mentor children in kindergarten/elementary school
- Environmental stewardship projects such as city beautification, parks projects, organizing a highway cleanup
- Help at the county fair or other annual community event
- Help at an annual Christmas giving program/Toys for Tots
- Help with a summer recreation program
- Serve meals at a homeless shelter
- Help at the local historical society or museum
- Help at the local senior center
- Help at the community hospital or nursing home
- Collect clothing and other items for children, seniors, disabled persons, and others in need
- Volunteer at the local humane society by collecting food and bedding items, and/or exercising shelter animals
- Volunteer at the fire and/or police department
- Volunteer with a neighborhood watch program
- Recruiting volunteers who will help you or who will serve with the service site after the AmeriCorps member has completed their Term of Service.

Examples of non-allowed Direct Service activities include, but are not limited to:

- Any PAID/STIPEND positions;
- Grant writing and/or fundraising for an agencies capital or operating costs (e.g., a grant for a new staff position);
- Travel time to/from the Service Site
- Hours sleeping or personal recreation time during an overnight retreat;
- Service outside Montana; and
- Any Prohibited Activity as described by AmeriCorps.

JMGF AmeriCorps Member Development

Member Development activities represent time spent in preparation and planning, training, documenting and evaluating the Member's Service Project. A JMGF AmeriCorps Member may spend up to twenty (20%) of the 300-hours (60 hours) engaging in Member Development activities.

AmeriCorps defines Member Development as:

- Pre-service orientation;
- Skill development opportunities that insure member success
- Participation in AmeriCorps training events
- Participation in National Days of Service events such as Martin Luther King Jr Day, All Member Gathering, National Youth Service Day, and Make a Difference Day
- Leadership & development training and opportunities
- Training and mentoring to improve member retention.

Examples of allowed "Member Development" activities include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a journal of service reflections;
- Attending conferences or training for personal or professional development;
- Grant writing or fundraising for nonprofit agencies that is directly applicable to the direct service of the agency (e.g., a grant for supplies for tutors); and
- Attending staff meetings, taking a language class, obtaining CPR certification, pursuing other personal/professional goals

Examples of non-allowed "Member Development" activities include, but are not limited to:

- Time spent completing academic assignments;
- Activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants or others;
- Travel time to/from a Service Site
- Hours sleeping or personal recreation time during an overnight retreat; and
- Any AmeriCorps Prohibited Activity

School instruction and/or projects that teach the importance of National Service, citizenship and/or help the Member achieve their educational and career aspirations are also appropriate Member Development activities.

JMGF Member Development Scholarship

JMGF is pleased to provide \$2,000 annually to JMGF AmeriCorps Members for Member Development Scholarships. These scholarships support professional and personal member development opportunities in the amount of up to \$200.00 per Member. These opportunities may include professional conferences, site-specific trainings, personal development workshops, and other service related events. For most members the Member Development Scholarship supports your first significant member development activity, enhances your service experience, commitment to AmeriCorps service and connects you to other people around that state with the same interests.

To be eligible for the JMGF Member Development Scholarship, you must meet the following criteria:

- Enrolled JMGF AmeriCorps Member, an active Member, meaning not exited in the JMGF Management database
- Current on all time log submissions
- Applying for a personal or professional development event that clearly connects to service
- Submit the JMGF Member Development Scholarship Application with details of the event and requested scholarship amount, not to exceed 200 dollars per member
- Each JMGF AmeriCorps Member is eligible for a total of one scholarship award
- Complete and submit the following application and budget

Member Fundraising Activities

A JMGF AmeriCorps Member may spend no more than ten percent (10%) of the 300 hour Term of Service (30 hours – 10% of the total 300 hours) performing fundraising activities. Fundraising activities do *not* count towards direct service hours, even if a Member spends time on fundraising activities at a Service Site; these hours *must* be reported on the Monthly Time log as Fundraising.

Examples of Member fundraising activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Soliciting donations of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers teach children to read;

Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support volunteer training;

Securing supplies and equipment from the community to increase an organizations ability to help build houses for low-income individuals;

Securing financial resources from the community to assist in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the community and those services are delivered through the members of the CBO;

Seeking donations from alumni of the program for the specific service projects being performed by current Members.

Examples of fundraising activities Members may *not* perform include, but are not limited to, the following:

Raise funds for an organization's general operating expenses or endowment; and

Write a grant application to CNCS or any other Federal agency.

Member Evaluation

The JMGF AmeriCorps Program is required to prepare a written evaluation of each Member's performance at the completion of the Member's term of service. The Site Supervisor Evaluation is typically prepared by the Site Supervisor.

At the minimum, the evaluation should rate the following:

Member completion of assignments, overall performance and observation of leadership confidence over the term of service

Member completion of any other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service.

Section III- Timekeeping & Great Stories

Time Logs

The Time Logs are a crucial piece to ensuring Members are properly credited for their hours of service. Please make sure Time Logs are completed, signed and submitted to the JMGF AmeriCorps Program Office by the 7th of each month. If you know your Time Log will be late, please contact JMGF.

JMGF strongly encourages you to keep copies of your monthly time logs.

At least 80% of a Member's total service hours should be reported on the Monthly Time Log as Direct Service. Up to 20% may be reported as Member Development.

Remember the following activities *cannot* be credited as direct service hours on the Monthly Time Log:

Time spent traveling sleeping during overnight retreats affiliated with the service site, or travel time to and from a service site

Administrative work, unless it benefits the JMGF Member's approved direct service activities, remember, such work (referred to as Member development) is limited to 20% of the JMGF Member's total service time, or 60 hours (20% of 300 hours).

The Member understands that Monthly Time log submissions that are more than 2-3 months late may result in those hours not being counted *and* may jeopardize your enrollment.

Great Stories

Great Stories are 1-3 paragraph written accounts of positive experiences you had while in service as a JMGF AmeriCorps Member. During the term of service, we ask that the member write and submit at least one Great Story, either during the Term or at the end of Service. Members are encouraged to use time writing your Great Story as an opportunity to reflect on your service experience and the impact you had in the community where you serve. Great Stories also help to demonstrate to the Corporation for National & Community Service, and the Office of Community Service, the positive impacts that JMGF and AmeriCorps Members are making in our state.

You may choose to email your Great Story directly to ssadowski@jmgf-mt.org

Section V- Assurances & Glossary

Prohibited Activities

There are activities including lobbying or political, religious, or advocacy activities that JMGF AmeriCorps Members, and staff may not perform in the course of their duties, while charging time to the JMGF AmeriCorps Program, or at the request of program staff. Members and staff may not engage in any manner that would associate JMGF AmeriCorps with prohibited activities.

Since the JMGF AmeriCorps Program partners with local agencies the Member, School Representative, and Site Supervisor should all be aware of the Prohibited Activities. Care should be taken so that service activities do not ask the member to engage in any of the stated Prohibited Activities.

The list of specific prohibited activities includes:

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

Please note: Members like any other citizens, may participate in any of the above activities on their own time, at their own expense, and at their own initiative. Except that Members may not wear any clothing or other paraphernalia (pins, hats, etc.) that might identify them as a participant in an AmeriCorps Program.

Glossary

AmeriCorps – a National Service program, often referred to as the “domestic Peace Corps” AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) along with the National Civilian Conservation Corps, (NCCC), Senior Corps and AmeriCorps*VISTA. AmeriCorps provides thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds with Education Awards in exchange for community service. Nationally, over 150,000 AmeriCorps members have helped to meet the nation’s critical needs in the area of public safety, education, health, homeland security and the environment. For more information visit www.americorps.org or www.nationalservice.org

Community Based Organization (CBO) – primarily a local non-for-profit, government, or quasi-governmental agency that serves human needs.

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) – CNCS provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through three programs, Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn & Serve America. Members and volunteers serve with national and community nonprofit organizations, faith based groups, schools and local agencies to help meet community needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security and other critical areas.

Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) – a school-to-career program for student in high schools, alternative schools, community colleges, and middle schools in the United States and the United Kingdom. JAG’s mission is to keep young people in school through graduation and provide work-based learning experiences that will lead to career advancement opportunities or to enroll in a postsecondary institution that leads to a rewarding career.

Jobs for Montana’s Graduates (JMG) – Montana based affiliate to JAG with the objective of assisting student participants secure a quality job and/or postsecondary education, that leads to a meaningful career.

Jobs for Montana’s Graduates Foundation (JMGF) – foundation established to support JMG’s mission and goals.

Member Contract- The Member Contract outlines the terms, conditions and benefits of the JMGF AmeriCorps Program. The Member provides a list of prohibited activities, the amount of the Education Award reasons to be released form the Term of Service, and grievance procedures.

Member Development Plan- Member Development is time allotted to a member to pursue professional, personal and service related goals that may not be met through direct service activities. Twenty percent of every service term can be dedicated to Member Development; 60 hours of the 300 hour term of service are allotted for students’ development outside of their direct service.

National Service Trust – The National Service Trust is the organization that manages Education Awards. If a member has questions or concerns regarding the Education Award, the National Service Trust can answer those questions.

Service Learning- The National Center for Service Learning defines Service Learning as having three main components;

1. Service learning constitutes activity that is focused on meeting a human need on the community where that need has to do with the well-being of individuals and/or the environment in which they live
2. Key academic and/or civic objectives to be achieved through combining service with learning have been identified prior too the activity.
3. Opportunities for students to reflect on their experience and its connection to specific academic/civic objectives are incorporated into the service activity.

Service Project – activity described in the Position Description the Member is expected to perform. Service projects can be individual or site inspired, and may be associated with a National Day of Service.

Service Site – a School or Community Based Organization that has agreed to partner with JMGF to offer student volunteers the AmeriCorps opportunity.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - The agreement that solidifies partnership between JMGF and a service site. An MOU is typically completed for each site where the student serves.

Site Supervisor – The site supervisor is the person who serves as the JMGF AmeriCorps Member’s supervisor at the service site. This designated person is the primary site contact for the member during the term of service, assists with on site orientation & training, provides on-going and professional support during service. The site supervisor must sign the Monthly Time Logs and communicate with the participant to ensure Time Logs are submitted to the JMGF AmeriCorps Program office monthly.

Term of Service –the required number of direct service hours, total service hours and other required tasks in order to qualify for an Education Award.

Time Logs- the Time Logs are an ongoing responsibility of the AmeriCorps Member. The Time Logs are a critical piece of documentation that must be submitted to the JMGF AmeriCorps program office on a monthly basis in order for the service hours to be counted.

Title IV – a Title IV higher education institution is one that has agreed to the Title IV program Participation Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education. Meaning, the school participates in the federal student aid programs; the school has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education whereby students at the school are eligible to receive Federal financial assistance to attend the school.

VISTA- AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) members help to bring individuals and communities out of poverty. Members serve full-time for a year and earn a \$4,725 Education Award.

Thank you for choosing to serve with the JMGF AmeriCorps Program!

Have a great Term of Service!