

# SERVE LOUISIANA

Louisiana's longest running AmeriCorps program



## Partner Organization Handbook 2019-2020

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## 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.**

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## Overview and General Information

### Background Info

In 1991, Congress passed the National Community Service Trust Act, which provided funding for a small number of national service demonstration projects. Serve Louisiana, formerly the Louisiana Delta Service Corps was such a program. With its focus on the lower Mississippi Delta, one of the poorest areas of the country, Serve Louisiana began mobilizing corps members to address critical community needs. In 1994, new legislation was passed which supported a whole new contingent of national service programs across the country. Serve Louisiana applied for and became an AmeriCorps program. Formerly, part of a tri-state partnership headquartered in Mississippi, Serve Louisiana currently receives its funding through the LA Serve Commission which is housed in the Office of Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. Throughout the Delta region, Serve Louisiana members (who are AmeriCorps members) serve at local non-profit or government agencies for up to two years in exchange for a living allowance and a \$6,095 education award. Since 1992, over 1,500 members have served Serve Louisiana.

### 2019-2020 Service Year

35 members will serve 11 months and at least 1700 hours starting September 1<sup>st</sup>. Members serve full-time (average of 40 hours per week).

### Member Benefits

- Members will receive a living allowance of \$14,000 for the 11 months. They will be paid via direct deposit on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. The living allowance is taxed.
- Members may participate in our health-care program which covers major medical and Serve Louisiana pays the monthly premium. It is an 80-20% plan and does not include eye or dental.
- Members may receive childcare reimbursement based on income eligibility.
- 10 personal days to use for illness or vacation.
- 6 Federal Holidays off
- Personal and professional development training.
- Student loan deferment.
- Upon graduation they receive a \$6,095 education award. They can use it to go back to school or to pay off student loans and have 7 years to use it.

### Expectations

Your site was chosen for the quality of your application, geographic area, past performance, corps member evaluations, ingenuity of the project and mostly because of the promise of providing excellent mentorship and training for your members.

Partner Organizations must provide site specific training (at least 85 hours per the 11 months – 15 of which is orientation hours).

Corps Members should be highlighted in reports, on websites and any other publications. Members should be first noted as Serve Louisiana members serving within your organization. They are not staff of your organization.

Members must wear the AmeriCorps logo somewhere on their person every day at their site. They will receive name badges and lanyards which have the AC logo and Serve Louisiana name on them.

Members should be introduced to board members, partner organizations and community members. Remember that the better known AmeriCorps/ Serve Louisiana is the better quality of members we'll be able to attract. Volunteerism in general and AmeriCorps more specifically has been and will continue to be very important to the state of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Funding and acknowledgment of the continued need for volunteers will in some part depend on the reputation of all of our organizations.

Members should be expected to have a certain amount of autonomy in their positions. If the project is set in stone try to provide other avenues for their input to be valued.

Corps members need to maintain an average of 40 hours per week. If your organization is closed for a holiday and it is not on our training calendar you may have them serve another non-profit, take the day as a personal day or flex the day off. The corps member training calendar serves as a guide to ensure members serve the minimum 1700 hours in order to graduate. This year, by following a 40 hour week, taking 10 personal days off and the 6 holidays, members would have about 1750 hours. Members MUST serve all 11 months even if they finish their hours early.

Corps members are not cheap labor. They are there to support a specific project. They cannot take the place of a paid staff person.

Other restrictions:

The Corporation for National and Community Service prohibits AmeriCorps members from participating in a number of activities. AmeriCorps members cannot perform the following tasks:

- Displace paid employees;
- Fundraise for an organizations' overall budget (members may assist in fundraising efforts targeting the sustainability of their project);
- Influence legislation;
- Organize or participate in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assist, promote, or deter union organizing;
- Impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Register voters;
- Engage in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participate in, or endorse, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Participate in activities that pose a significant safety risk;
- Engage in religious instruction, conduct worship services, provide instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious education or worship, construct or operate facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engage in any form of religious proselytizing;
- Provide a direct benefit to a business organized for profit, a labor union, a partisan political organization, a non-profit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, unless the corps member is not used in support of those religious activities.
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services;

- Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

Serve Louisiana members must be engaged in capacity building activities for the majority of their service time. They may perform limited direct service as long as it is within the realm of their service project and can be no more than 33% of their time. They may also fundraise for their specific project (not the overall funds of the organization) but it cannot be more than 10% of their service time.

### **If you are having problems with a corps member**

Make sure to clearly state all expectations. If a member continues to exhibit undesired behaviors contact our office and we will set up a meeting. Remember that during the first month or so it is best to make all evaluations of your members and if the match is proving to fail then we can try to replace the member. Sometimes it's just a personality difference or a bad match of skills and interest and the member may go to another site and be successful. Conversely, please make every effort to ensure that the conflict is not due to lack of communication or orientation/training.

If a member continues to be problematic at a site the Partner Organization may choose not to host that member any longer. In that case the member will continue to be an "employee" of Serve Louisiana and further placement or lack thereof will be at our discretion. If a member leaves or is let go by October 31st. Serve Louisiana may replace that member with a new person who will serve 11 months from the date they start. After October 31st members may not be replaced and the cash match will not be reimbursed.

## **Grant Terms and Requirements**

### **Grant Period**

Serve Louisiana's service term is from September 1, 2019 to July 31, 2020. Any time served after the end date must be done on a volunteer basis or as a paid employee, unless a corps member needs to make up hours. Both corps members and Partner Organizations may apply to participate in a second term of service, which will begin in September of 2020.

### **Grantee Match**

Serve Louisiana raises additional public cash and in-kind support to lower program costs. To demonstrate local support, all Partner Organizations will be required to pay a cash match for their corps member. Partner Organizations must pay \$10,000 for each corps member. The matching funds will go directly to the corps member's living allowance and are non-refundable. Agencies that are unable to provide the matching funds will not be accepted as Partner Organizations. The cash match also covers the cost of their members' workman's comp insurance which we will provide through Serve Louisiana. In addition to the cash match, Partner Organizations must be able to cover their members with their liability insurance. The cash match does not represent fee for service. If a corps member does not complete their year of service, money is not reimbursed. Corps members may be replaced if they leave the program either on their own accord or through disciplinary actions only through October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Serve Louisiana also requires that Partner Organizations provide an in-kind match in the form of training, supervision, access to equipment and materials etc. Partner Organizations must submit monthly accounts of the in-kind match to the Serve Louisiana office (including receipts, time sheets etc.).

### **School Breaks/Holidays/Summer Activities**

School based programs or seasonal programs must provide full-time activities for corps members during school breaks, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and summer vacation.

Corps Members have the following holidays off; Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the next day, Christmas , New Years, Mardi Gras (or Presidents Day), Memorial Day, and Independence Day.

### **Corps Member Hours**

Corps members may occasionally serve over 40-45 hours in a week but it should not be the norm. If a member is consistently reporting serving in excess of 40-45 hours per week without prior approval or a plan to flex hours off the Partner Organization will be contacted and give a verbal warning. If the situation continues the Partner Organization will be put on notice and a meeting will be held to surmise a plan. If the situation continues after that the corps member will be removed from the site and placed somewhere else. The cash match will not be reimbursed.

### **Serve Louisiana Focus**

Serve Louisiana members focus on capacity building activities in order to strengthen and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations in which they serve. This serves to promote intentional growth and sustainability in our partner organizations. We partner with organizations who are in need of capacity building and whose programming focuses on building healthy communities such as promoting nutrition, physical fitness, mental health resourcing, homelessness, and HIV/AIDS education and prevention as well as the environment and youth development. Members will serve no more than 1/3 of their time in direct service.

### **Paperwork**

In-kind supervisor time-sheets and cover sheets are due by the 5th of every month.

Supervisors will be sent a questionnaire prior to the bi-annual site visits.

Corps Member evaluations will be completed twice per year. Partner Organizations will also be asked to evaluate Serve Louisiana at the end of the year.

Partner Organizations are encouraged to review corps members' progress reports done quarterly to ensure accuracy.

The Partner Organization Agreement Forms, the Orientation Checklist, Board Resolution, outline of service hour plan, and the Cash Match are due on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Timesheets will need to be approved by a supervisor twice a month electronically.