

TNCC HIGHER EDUCATION VISTA MEMBER MANUAL



Tennessee | **Campus Compact**

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TNCC VISTA PROJECT GUIDELINES

I. Preparing the Selected VISTA Candidate

Once the VISTA member selection has been approved by TNCC & CNCS, a series of documents must be completed through his/her My AmeriCorps online account in preparation for the Pre-Service Orientation (PSO). The Trainee Registration Profile (TRP) must be completed by all VISTA members. The VISTA also completes a series of forms to include a W-4, End of Service Award Selection, Life Insurance, V-81 form, Direct Deposit, and other key information. If the VISTA is relocating from 50+ miles away, TNCC should be notified immediately.

II. VISTA Attends Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)

PSO is a regional training for new VISTA members. VISTAs will be asked to accomplish several items prior to attending PSO. VISTAs learn about poverty and what it means to be a VISTA. The VISTA member's year officially begins the day immediately following PSO, even if it is a Saturday.

III. VISTA On-Site Training

The institution should prepare a thorough on-site training for the VISTA member that includes information about office expectations, institutional culture, resources, technological information/training, and overall orientation to the project and objectives of the VISTA.

IV. TNCC VISTA Monthly Timesheets

VISTA members will be responsible for emailing completed monthly timesheets with signed supervisor approval to TNCC via the TNCC template provided. Timesheets should be emailed to TNCC each month within the first five days of the following month. For example, a signed timesheet for the month of August should be sent no later than September 5. At the end of the VISTA's term, the VISTA should submit the entire Excel workbook of timesheets.

V. VISTA Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs)

Every three months per deadlines provided, VISTAs and Site Supervisors will turn in QPR documents to TNCC. In addition, notable accomplishments should be submitted throughout the month. VISTAs should regularly submit short entries on accomplishments to TNCC for use on the website's blog/update feed. Establish consistent reporting measures and data collection methods for ongoing assessment and to assist in the completion of QPRs. In October, CNCS may also request a supplemental report that requires new information from the entire year prior.

VI. VISTA Days of Service

VISTA members should be aware that CNCS asks VISTA members to plan and participate in nationally designated "Days of Service" periodically throughout the year. The two main days are Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and the 9/11 Day of Remembrance. VISTA members are encouraged to work with their institutions to engage students in service on these days or to attend a community project to assist with direct service opportunities.

VII. VISTA Close of Service

Prior to the end of a VISTA member's service year, the VISTA & Site Supervisor will both be responsible for various forms detailing accomplishments:

VISTA Member Systems of Processing

- a) **Future Plans Form:** Available online approximately 3 months prior to end of service, the VISTA will fill out this form and indicate if he/she would like to reenroll or end service. After the Site Supervisor's evaluation is entered by TNCC, the VISTA will have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation and then to certify the final Future Plans Form.
- b) **Final Reporting:** Each VISTA is required to submit final reports utilizing the QPR templates to ensure that all data and information from the end of the service year is captured.
- c) **Letter to the President:** VISTAs should send a letter to the institution's president thanking them for the opportunity to serve and outlining the accomplishments of the service year.

Site Supervisor Systems of Processing

- a) **VISTA Performance Evaluation:** Supervisors receive this evaluation form from TNCC prior to the end of service. Supervisors will summarize the VISTA's accomplishments & rate the VISTA's performance. After submission, it will be entered by TNCC online and the VISTA member will be able to review and respond with any additional comments.
- b) **Final Reporting:** Supervisors should assist the VISTA member with the submission of the final reports and submit a final Site Supervisor report detailing the year's accomplishments.

VIII. Reenrollments, Resignations, and Removals (Optional)

- a) **VISTA Reenrollment:** Reenrollment must be discussed with TNCC as early as possible in the service year if the VISTA is interested in serving another term. If an allocation is available, the institution and the VISTA member can discuss the possibility of a second or third year of service. If both parties agree, the institution may choose to submit a new Concept Paper and VAD for a VISTA reenrollment request. These documents must reflect new activities and goals.
- b) **VISTA Resignation:** In the event that a VISTA resigns, several steps must be taken to ensure proper exiting. The VISTA should provide notice at least two weeks in advance, at which time the Site Supervisor will report the notice to resign to the TNCC. An official resignation letter from the VISTA should be sent for TNCC records. TNCC will then inform CNCS of the situation and the "Close of Service" steps above will need to be completed by the VISTA and Site Supervisor, specifying the reason for resignation and the resignation date on the online Future Plans Form. It is important to note that VISTA members forfeit any end of service benefits by choosing to resign prior to the end of the term.
- c) **VISTA Removal:** If a TNCC member institution feels that a VISTA is not performing assigned responsibilities and a resolution cannot be agreed upon, the Site Supervisor may request to begin the process of removing the VISTA from the site. If this occurs, the VISTA member's benefits may continue for a period of time until s/he can find a more suitable assignment or until the CNCS State Office has closed out the VISTA member. The CNCS State Office will directly inform the VISTA of the alternatives and provide directions on ending the current assignment.

AMERICORPS VISTA PROGRAM

The AmeriCorps VISTA program is a national service program dedicated to “fight poverty with a passion.” VISTAs, or Volunteers In Service To America, commit to serve full-time for a year. The goal of VISTA service is to expand and create programs and capacity to ultimately bring individuals and communities out of poverty. Below are the four core principles of the VISTA program.

AmeriCorps VISTA Core Principles

Anti-Poverty Focus	The goal of every project must be to help individuals and communities out of poverty with a focus on long-term solutions.
Community Empowerment	The project must engage low-income community residents in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project.
Sustainable Solutions	Projects should be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTAs & maintain the ability of the project to continue without them.
Capacity Building	VISTAs should strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and more.

Due to the nature of the AmeriCorps VISTA program, there are very specific guidelines and policies that VISTA members agree to abide by throughout the service year. The most comprehensive resource related to specific VISTA policies is the VISTA Handbook that can be found on the VISTA Campus website: <http://vistacampus.org/mod/book/view.php?id=2093>. You will also find information on key VISTA policies and guidelines specific to the TNCC project throughout this manual.

Service Year Expectations

All AmeriCorps VISTAs are expected to work full time and be available 24/7. While it is unrealistic for a VISTA member to serve all day every day, each VISTA is expected to serve the equivalent of a full-time job at the minimum. It is not unrealistic for VISTA members to serve over the time requirements of a full-time job during their year of service. A minimum of 160 hours each month should be the goal, with the understanding that sick/personal/federal holidays are included. VISTA members are not allowed to have outside employment, but may take higher education courses if they do not conflict with the service commitment and they are approved by the Site Supervisor.

Roles and Supervision

Each TNCC AmeriCorps VISTA reports to the Site Supervisor(s) at their host institution and any community partners identified. VISTAs are expected to report regularly to their Site Supervisors. In turn, Site Supervisors are expected to provide guidance and direction to the VISTA. TNCC staff members are also available to provide administrative support to both Site Supervisors and VISTAs.

NOW THAT YOU ARE A VISTA

Who do I call when I have questions about my position?

- For questions about your position or your VAD, first talk with your Site Supervisor.
- For any questions related to site concerns, supervisor conflicts, reports, or to just bounce thoughts off of someone, please don't hesitate to call one of the TNCC staff members.
- For specific technical questions about your VISTA paperwork or the status of your VISTA benefits (education award, living allowance, etc.), call the national VISTA Member Service Unit at 800-942-2677.

Some important responsibilities of VISTAs:

- Agree on a clear policy regarding work hours with your supervisor. You are required to submit a timesheet to TNCC on a monthly basis. Please contact TNCC if you need a copy of the timesheet template. Make sure you have a plan for informing your supervisor about when you will be out of the office, when you are expected to arrive in the morning, taking leave days, etc.
- Keep good notes for reports and schedule time to work on them. Reports to TNCC serve as grant reports for your VISTA position, so they are very important to show the impact of your year and can impact your site's ability to receive new VISTAs in the future. Please contact TNCC if you need copies of the reporting templates. Reports are due on a quarterly basis and the due dates are listed in the template instructions.
- Go over your VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) with your supervisor on a regular basis. After completing and submitting your quarterly reports, it may be a good time for this refocusing process. You should consistently ask whether or not you are keeping your position's goals and objectives as priorities.
- Make sure you understand the AmeriCorps VISTA policies on political involvement.
- Again, get very familiar with the [VISTA Member Handbook](#). It can answer a lot of common questions about your role in your organization, VISTA policies, and the benefits you can receive.
- Remember that your goal is to build the long-term capacity of your site, which means leaving good institutional memory about everything you have done so that the programs you have started can be continued by other staff and volunteers after you leave. Agree on an organized filing system with your supervisor, take good notes, keep copies of all important documents, and train other site members on your procedures and activities whenever possible.

IDEAS FOR GETTING SETTLED

Upon Arrival

- Open a bank account near you and ensure that your direct deposit checks are being sent to the correct account. Logon at <http://my.americorps.gov> to track your paperwork online.
- If you have student loans, you can apply for deferment through <http://my.americorps.gov>.

Getting Started

- Update TNCC with your new work number, email, and address information as soon as possible.
- Set up your timesheet process via the TNCC template.
- Read over your VAD (VISTA Assignment Description) and go over it with your supervisor.
- Send a web-ready photograph of yourself and an introductory paragraph to your VISTA Leader by the end of your first month of service to be placed on the TNCC website.

Self-Orientation and Research

- Find out about the history of your site and project(s).
- If applicable, become familiar with any files left behind by previous VISTA members or related staff projects. Read all quarterly reports of any previous VISTA(s) in your position. If there are no copies of reports archived, contact TNCC to request copies from the TNCC archives.
- Confirm that files relevant to your position are clearly labeled and organized. Find out how to label and add to the files in a way that is accessible to others. If there is not an organized, sustainable system in place, talk with your supervisor about developing one.
- Familiarize yourself with the demographic characteristics of your site. Some of this information should already be recorded the Concept Paper that your site submitted when it applied for your position, so ask your supervisor for that document. If necessary or helpful, you may want to create a fact sheet on local demographics (poverty, housing, population statistics, etc.).

Additional Assistance and Benefits

- Apply for food stamps, if you are eligible – you can do this through any social services office. Visit <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10101.html> for general information on the Food Stamps program and how to apply. Start by finding out you how much you may be eligible to receive at www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov. Specific programs vary from state to state. A letter explaining your income situation as a VISTA is available at the MyAmeriCorps portal.
- Apply for housing assistance. Visit www.hud.gov for general information. Many programs have waiting lists, so be sure to check with your site supervisor to see if your site can offer any housing options or rental assistance.
- Find out about Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs in your state.
- The Resource Center (<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>) is a CNCS sponsored website that provides the service-related resources. All resources are free of charge and most require the use of Adobe Acrobat Reader, which can be downloaded for free online.

Project-Related Mileage Reimbursement

Once you arrive at your site, be sure to speak with your supervisor about the procedure that your site uses to authorize and reimburse any work-related mileage that accumulate when driving your own car to approved project activities. Sites do not reimburse VISTAs for their daily commute to work, but should reimburse you for authorized travel that you do while serving.

Tracking Hours

The AmeriCorps VISTA State Office requires that every VISTA keep a timesheet. To make sure that you are set up to track your hours, TNCC requires that each VISTA submit a copy of their authorized timesheet after the end of each month.

Office Environment

It is *very important* that you talk to your supervisor early on to establish clear rules and guidelines about the office environment and etiquette. Discuss what time you are expected to come to work, how you should notify your supervisor when you will be out of the office for field work, what to do if there's inclement weather, what are the dress expectations, how should you notify and get approval for leave time, etc. Good, early, and frequent communication about these topics can help you avoid conflicts or confusion later on in the year.

How Much Should I Be Working?

According to the VISTA Member Handbook, part of being a VISTA is that “members remain available for service, without regard to regular working hours, at all times during the member’s service, except for periods of approved leave.” This provides flexibility for you to work on evenings and weekends to get your projects done and to interact with community volunteers who often aren’t available until those times. In practice, the State Office tells us that this means VISTAs are expected to work, at a minimum, whatever hours their sponsor organization considers to be full time (usually around 40 hours per week). Those of you who are working with small departments or organizations that have limited staff need to communicate clearly and often with your supervisor to create a schedule that works for both of you.

Some Useful Acronyms for VISTAs

TNCC – Tennessee Campus Compact

CNCS – Corporation for National and Community Service (Nationwide)

CNS – Commission on National Service (state entities managing state service programs)

CP – Concept Paper

VAD – VISTA Assignment Description

PSO – Pre-Service Orientation

QPR – Quarterly Progress Report

RFP – Request for Proposals

VISTA – Volunteers in Service to America

VMSU – VISTA Member Support Unit

FA – Feeding America

DIRECT VS. INDIRECT SERVICE

The AmeriCorps VISTA program was specifically designed to focus on indirect service projects, rather than direct service opportunities provided through other national service programs. This focus on indirect service means that the work of the VISTA member should be sustainable after the service year has ended. Since an AmeriCorps VISTA is not an employee, they should not be focused on performing many of the administrative and clerical tasks expected of your institution’s staff members.

A good rule of thumb is to always think about who will do the proposed activities and duties after the VISTA is gone. VISTAs should not engage in any activities if it means temporarily filling the space of a full-time staff member or student worker. Everything they do should be with an eye towards increasing overall program capacity rather than meeting short-term needs.

“In determining whether VISTA is the right match for your organization's needs, think about the kinds of activities you expect VISTAs to perform. The role of the VISTA is to build the capacity and sustainability of the project and community and to work themselves out of a position. The chart below lists some examples of the natural progression in the types of service performed by a VISTA. Except for training purposes, VISTAs should not perform direct services, such as tutoring, teaching, counseling, driving clients, painting, manual labor, or clerical work.” (VISTA Campus, 2010)

Here are some examples of possible activity options, but the ideal would be to focus on capacity building and sustainable endeavors.

Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Endeavors
Train direct-service providers	Write training curriculum or manual; train trainers	Develop training manual and train the trainer curriculum
Coordinate project	Develop procedure and system	Develop volunteer management system and procedural guide
Public speaking	Develop speakers' bureau	Develop community partnerships
Write press releases	Develop press kits, media database	Secure media partners
Organize fundraising events	Grant writing, develop database	Secure project staffing
Organize task forces & coalitions	Develop leadership structure of task force or coalition	Create infrastructure
Conduct outreach	Design brochures, posters	Create mechanism for evaluation
Recruit volunteers	Develop forms, volunteer assignments	Develop volunteer handbook

VISTA PROJECT REPORTING

Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs)

Every three months, VISTAs and Site Supervisors will turn in QPR documents to TNCC. These are gathered to assess the VISTA members' progress in completing their VADs, to ensure that the VISTAs are serving in a full-time capacity, and to ascertain site accomplishments and challenges. Once these reports are collected, TNCC submits an overall progress report to CNCS.

Site Supervisors and VISTAs are expected to turn in 4 Quarterly Progress Reports to TNCC by the end of the service year. Deadlines will be listed on the templates provided by TNCC. Please note, however, that you should never wait until a progress report is due to notify TNCC of major challenges or accomplishments because the CNCS State Office asks TNCC to notify them of highlights and accomplishments on a monthly basis.

QPRs require a great deal of quantitative data, so we highly suggest an early focus on building systems to track these numbers before the first report is due. You will also find these systems helpful for reporting to the National Campus Compact for the required Annual Member Survey and for the optional President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll application in November/December. Please ensure that your reports include specific details about events and accomplishments. Information should include dates, attendees, number of volunteers, or numbers that demonstrate the positive impact on the community and those in poverty. The goal is to be focused and specific with your outputs and outcomes. We are not looking for long reports, but content should include meaningful information that demonstrates your project's effectiveness. The milestones submitted with your Concept Paper should be specifically reported on when you submit the QPR using the template provided.

Other Reporting

- ❖ Notable accomplishments should be submitted throughout the month.
- ❖ VISTAs should regularly submit short entries on accomplishments to TNCC for use on the website's blog/update feed.
- ❖ VISTAs will be asked to submit specific information on National Service Day activities, including Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and the 9/11 Day of Remembrance.
- ❖ In October, CNCS may also request a supplemental report that requires new information from the year prior.
- ❖ In November/December, all TNCC institutions will be asked to complete an Annual Member Survey. It is also suggested that institutions consider applying for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll during the same timeframe.

VISTA HOLIDAY & LEAVE POLICIES

As service volunteers, VISTAs adhere to different holiday leave than what is common for educational systems. All hours served and leave days taken must be reported to the TNCC via the monthly timesheet document.

Personal Leave: VISTAs are entitled to 10 workdays of personal leave during their year of service, but must request and receive approval from the site supervisor a minimum of one week in advance.

Medical Leave: VISTAs are entitled to 10 days of medical leave during the one-year service term. As with personal leave, the VISTA must request time off for medical leave from the site supervisor a week in advance.

Holiday Leave: VISTAs are only given official time off for national and federal holidays recognized by their sponsoring organization. Any holidays that are not recognized by the sponsoring institution, such as religious holidays, must be requested off as personal leave.

Other Policies: As service volunteers rather than employees, VISTAs do not adhere to holiday breaks typical of K-12 schools. Spring Break, Winter Holiday, Summer Recess, and other “floating holidays” extended to staff members are not extended to VISTA members. VISTAs are expected to serve on assignment during these times unless the VISTA requests off for personal leave. If the school limits access to service site buildings, arrangements must be made for the VISTA to continue to serve from an alternative site during the break.

(VISTA Handbook via <http://vistacampus.org/mod/book/view.php?id=2093&chapterid=2137>)

VISTA RESOURCES & SUPPORT

As a VISTA, you have chosen to live for a year earning a living allowance based on the poverty threshold. This can be a difficult shift for many, but there are support systems available.

Pre-Service

The TNCC Central Office is on hand to assist with registration forms, as an advisor on matters like navigating the VISTA pay scale and choosing between the end of service award or cash stipend, and as a resource to connect VISTAs directly with other TNCC VISTA members, campuses, or site supervisors.

During Service

TNCC is a comprehensive resource for VISTA members throughout their service term. This includes and is not limited to the organization of annual conferences, regular correspondence with VISTAs, site visits, and network opportunities for VISTAs.

Post-Service

The AmeriCorps Alum resource is open to all VISTA alumni. Through this network, former VISTA members can help recruit new AmeriCorps VISTA members, share their stories of service, and develop new initiatives. They also provide information on events, opportunities, and benefits available specifically to AmeriCorps Alumni. Visit www.americorpsalums.org/ for more information.

Other Resources

The Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. The Corporation State Office is responsible for providing monitoring and oversight to support the sponsoring organization during VISTA service. VISTA support from CNCS is available through <http://www.nationalservice.gov/> and the state office.

VISTA Campus is a comprehensive site that provides limitless resources, including the VISTA member handbook, a comprehensive VISTA alumni page, and tips on building capacity and community development during VISTA service. Visit www.vistacampus.org.

The VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) is a fully staffed toll-free hotline with an AmeriCorps Help Desk that addresses VISTA health care, child care, and educational award questions and concerns, as well as general inquiries. 1-800-942-2677.

LIFE AFTER AMERICORPS

Completing a year of service sets a milestone in the life of an AmeriCorps member. It is a time of transition and new beginnings. The resources listed here have been gathered to help AmeriCorps members in this transition. Included are general resources, resources for job seeking, skills assessment, pursuing educational opportunities, and continuing an active life of volunteerism.

General Resources

“What’s Next? Life after Your Service Year”

This on-line tutorial is designed to help AmeriCorps and VISTA members transitioning from their year of service. Included are journaling activities to help members plan for their future regarding continuing education, establishing a career and continuing in service.

<http://encorps.nationalservicerresources.org/whatsnext/index.shtml>

“AmeriCorps: Next Steps – Life after AmeriCorps”

This workbook includes activities to help member reflect on their personal and professional growth as a result of their service, assess skills and accomplishments, weigh future options, and identify resources and strategies from transitioning from their year of service.

http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/filemanager/download/Next_Steps/NextSteps.pdf

“AmeriCorps: Next Steps – Life after AmeriCorps Workshop Materials”

This is a collection of materials useful for programs designing “Life after AmeriCorps” training sessions. Included are a PowerPoint presentation based on the “Next Steps” workbook, a calendar of activities for members to prepare for post-service transition, and links to other resources.

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/americorps-next-steps-life-after-americorps-workshop-materials>

“Training Brief: Closing Service and Opening New Doors”

Site offers Information for program staff from the National Service Knowledge Network on designing end-of-service activities and training for your AmeriCorps members.

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/training-brief-doors>

Information for AmeriCorps Alumni from the CNCS

Site includes information on becoming a VISTA or NCCC team leader, recruiting and supporting members, and a link to the My AmeriCorps Portal.

http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/alumni/index.asp

AmeriCorps Alums

A nonprofit organization dedicated to serving alumni of AmeriCorps programs. The site allows you search for jobs, stay aware of events and opportunities, and stay connected with fellow members.

<http://www.americorpsalums.org/>

Skills Assessment and Career Research

My Next Move

My Next Move is an interactive tool for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options. My Next Move has tasks, skills, salary information, and more for over 900 different careers.

<http://www.mynextmove.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook

From the U.S. Department of Labor, the profiles featured here cover hundreds of occupations. Each profile also includes employment projections for the 2010–2020 decade.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

ISEEK Skills Assessment

A self-directed skills assessment tool that matches skills you find important to occupations.

<http://www.iseek.org/careers/skillsAssessment>

Queendom Career Personality and Aptitude Test

This test is designed to assess your interests, values, and preferences and match you to a career.

http://www.queendom.com/tests/access_page/index.htm?idRegTest=3078

Testing Room

This site offers free personality, career interest, and career values test to help you identify careers that match your interests.

<http://www.testingroom.com/>

Job Seeking-General Information, Resumes, and Cover Letters

“Finding a job that builds on your service”

Site includes brief information from CNCS on job seeking, a link to employment opportunities with the CNCS, and information about the eligibility for non-competitive federal employment for former AmeriCorps VISTA members.

http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/current/job.asp

Career Path

This site offers advice and resources for those seeking employment. It includes skills assessments, job matching tools, resume writing tools, job searching, and more.

<http://www.careerpath.com/>

The Riley Guide

This is an extensive directory of employment, career, and higher education information sources. It includes information on preparing cover letters and resumes, researching employers and educational institutions, career matching assessments, and finding employment.

<http://www.rileyguide.com/>

Resume-Resource

This is an excellent resource for those seeking information on resumes and cover letters. It includes examples, resume builders, templates, and guides to writing resumes and cover letters.

<http://www.resume-resource.com/>

About.com – Job Searching

A comprehensive collection of resources for cover letters, resumes, and other employment related correspondence.

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumes/u/resumesandletters.htm>

Free Resume Test

This site offers a quiz and evaluates your resume based on your answers to offer guidance on improving your resume. It provides useful information for fine-tuning your resume to help it stand out in a crowd.

<http://www.freeresumetest.com/>

Job Seeking-Employment Opportunities

Idealist.org

This site offers a resource for locating volunteer opportunities and employment in the non-profit sector. Search for volunteer opportunities, jobs, internships, events, organizations, and more.

<http://www.idealist.org/>

Indeed.com

Search for employment opportunities worldwide with indeed.com. This site also allows you to save searches and create e-mail notifications of new opportunities based on those searches.

<http://www.indeed.com/>

Monster.com

In addition to searching for jobs, this site also offers resume writing services, career advice, company profiles, and more.

<http://www.monster.com/>

USAJOBS

This is the official job site of the US Federal Government. Search for open positions with the federal government and find help with resumes, interviewing, hiring trends, writing, and cover letter tips.

<https://my.usajobs.gov/>

Educational Opportunities

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

This page explains the AmeriCorps education award including the amount, how to use the award, tax implications of the award, and how to get interest paid.

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

FAQ's About the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

Answers to frequently asked questions about the education award from AmeriCorps Alums

<http://www.americorpsalums.org/?page=MBEdAwardQuestions>

Institutions that Provide Scholarships and Resources to AmeriCorps Alumni

This site provides a list of colleges and universities that offer education award matches or other scholarships to AmeriCorps alumni.

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

In addition, the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia offers a health care subsidy of \$2400 and a \$6000 fellowship for AmeriCorps alums.

<http://www.batten.virginia.edu/ameriCorps-peacecorps>

Peterson's College Compatibility Tools

Helps prospective students find a college based on many factors, including majors, size, location, and special programs.

For undergraduate programs:

<http://www.petersons.com/college-search/college-compatibility-tool.aspx>

For graduate programs:

<http://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx>

US News – Finding the Right School

Advice, tips, articles and search tools to help prospective students find the right college or university.

For undergraduate programs:

<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school>

For graduate programs:

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools>

Volunteering

All for Good

This site is an excellent resource to both find and share opportunities to volunteer.

<http://www.allforgood.org/>

United We Serve

United We Serve is an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service. This site links to various volunteer opportunities and contains many toolkits for starting service projects.

<http://www.serve.gov/>

Volunteer Match

This site allows you to find volunteer opportunities or recruit volunteers for your organization or project.

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

LIVING ON A BUDGET LINKS

Budgeting

<http://www.budgetworksheets.org/>
www.mint.com

Public Assistance

www.211.org
www.benefits.gov
[VISTA TCB](http://www.vista-tcb.org) (Protection of Public Assistance)

Home products

[Consumer Reports](http://www.consumerreports.com) (Make cleaning products)
www.coolsavings.com
www.craigslist.org
www.retailmenot.com
www.spoofee.com
[www.FreeCycle.com](http://www.freecycle.com)

Do it Yourself

www.instructables.com
<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Do-It-Yourself.aspx>
<http://www.dmoz.org/Home/Do-It-Yourself/>
<http://www.doityourself.com/>

Gifts

<http://www.do-it-yourself-gifts.com/>
www.giftypedia.com/Do_It_Yourself_Gifts

Food - Coupons

www.coupons.com
www.couponmom.com
www.shortcuts.com
www.smartsource.com
www.coolsavings.com
www.time2saveworkshops.com

Food – Eating Out

www.groupon.com
www.livingsocial.com

Food – Recipes

<http://bettesaidso.com/cookbook.pdf>
<http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>
http://frugalliving.about.com/od/foodsavings/Food_Saving.htm
<http://allrecipes.com/Info/living/budget-friendly-meals/main.aspx>
<http://www.delish.com/recipes/cooking-recipes/quick-cheap-healthy-meals-recipes>
www.hillbillyhousewife.com

Gasoline

www.gasbuddy.com

Health Services - Dental

<http://www.freedentalcare.us/>

Health Services - Vision

[EyeCare America](http://www.eyecareamerica.com)
[New Eyes for the Needy.](http://www.neweyesfortheneedy.org)

Miscellaneous

[www.Bizrate.com](http://www.bizrate.com) (Cheap price finder)
[www.Froggle.com](http://www.froggle.com) (the low-rate finder on Google)
www.tradepub.com lists free publications across a range of subjects.
www.craigslist.com

Reward Sites

www.mypoints.com
www.ebates.com
<http://www.curbsiderewards.com/> (Recycling Rewards)

Samples

www.freestufftimes.com
www.shop4freebies.com
www.totallyfreestuff.com