



AmeriCorps as a Workforce Recruitment Tool for the Public Sector

AmeriCorps provides a meaningful and enriching experience for service members through a combination of purposeful service and civic impact. By working in diverse and collaborative teams, members build communication and interpersonal skills, as well as empathy, resilience, and adaptability in both personal and professional settings. Members acquire skills and, in some cases, professional certifications, along with exposure to work in the public and social sectors..

There has been a steady decline in young people entering the public sector. AmeriCorps builds the skills for leading and working with others, a top skill for employers according to the [World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs 2023 report](#), and provides increased exposure to professional roles in the public and social sectors. According to AmeriCorps' member exit survey ~25% of alumni want to find a job in the nonprofit or social service sectors after their service year and 21% are interested in a job in the public/government sectors. In fact, around 45% of alumni end up working in the public/social sectors, compared to ~20% of the general population.

Offering incentives to attract service members to apply for government positions in your state is a win-win that connects those completing their service years with employment while helping governments fill empty positions with folks already demonstrating job skills and a commitment to serving the public good.

Below are concepts governors and legislators have implemented to honor, recognize, or encourage service in their states.

Incentives for Service Alumni to Enter Government Employment

Non-Competitive Hiring for Classified Service

Governments at both the state and federal level have offered non-competitive hiring for classified service employment to service alumni.

Federal

[Non-competitive eligibility](#) allows a federal agency to hire an AmeriCorps VISTA alum who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job, without going through all the formalities of the competitive process. An AmeriCorps VISTA alum may be hired as a non-competitive eligible appointee after successfully completing at least one full year of VISTA service. This status lasts for 1 year following the completion of service. To establish non-competitive status, the applicant must include a statement of non-competitive eligibility with any federal job application. The federal agency, however, is not required to hire the alum, and they are not guaranteed a federal civil service job.



In early 2025, an [executive order expanded the non-competitive eligibility of AmeriCorps alumni to all qualified national service members](#). That order has since been rescinded.

Nevada

In 2023, Nevada's legislature moved to offer AmeriCorps alums a non-competitive hiring incentive to help fill staffing shortages in state government.

[SB 87](#) changed state code to allow a service alum to be hired to classified service without competition so long as the applicant:

1. Meets the minimum qualifications for the position.
2. Has completed at least 900 hours of service in AmeriCorps in the state within two years of applying for the state position.

The hiring manager must want to hire the service member. No state agency is required to hire a service member.

New Hampshire

In 2020, New Hampshire introduced legislation to require state departments to create a policy to provide an employment incentive including AmeriCorps, Peace Corps and other civilian national service alumni. [HB 1498](#) required each executive state department to create a policy that:

1. Requires managers to interview all applicants who are current or former members of service organizations who meet the minimum qualifications for the position for which they applied.
2. Allows departments to require applicants to submit proof of successful completion of a civilian national service program, satisfactory service, performance, and disciplinary record while engaged in the program, and a signed authorization for the release of information to the executive branch agency which may be necessary in the application process.

Purchasing Service Credit in State Retirement Systems

States such as [California](#) and [Wisconsin](#) provide individuals who have completed a service year and go into state service the opportunity to purchase retirement service credits in the state public retirement system.

In California, for instance, retirement credit can be purchased by Peace Corps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, or AmeriCorps alums. To buy the credit, alums must be able to provide the state with documentation certifying the dates of service. This is usually done via a certification letter from the [Peace Corps](#) or [AmeriCorps](#).

The following state offer some form of retirement credit purchase for national service or Peace Corps: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas,



Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia.

State Incentives to Retain Service Alums

Matching Education Awards

When AmeriCorps service members complete a service year, they are given an Eli Segal Education Award equal to the value of the Pell Grant. They can use this award for college or other workforce training. Those completing more than one year of service can receive up to two full-time education awards.

One-way states honor the contribution of service members is by providing a match to the amount of the education award, either partially or fully, thus increasing the educational and training opportunities available to service alums. This concept can take many forms including a direct cash match, scholarships, or student loan forgiveness. In any form, supplementing the value of education awards is a powerful way to incentivize service members and keep them in-state for their continuing professional and educational careers.

Massachusetts

In 2025, [H.1421](#) was introduced to create the John F. Kennedy Scholarship which would award AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and Commonwealth Corps (Massachusetts' state funded service program) alums up to \$5,000 in student loan debt relief.

To be eligible for debt relief. The service member would need to:

1. Be a resident of the commonwealth.
2. Have successfully completed at least 1 volunteer program approved by the authority with the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, or Commonwealth Corp
3. **Be employed by the commonwealth, a municipal government within the commonwealth, an office of the federal government located in the commonwealth, or a nonprofit organization located in the commonwealth.**
4. Have an annual income equal to or less than the commonwealth's annual median income as determined by the authority.

California

Begun in Fiscal Year 2019, The [California For All Education Award](#) directly matches the federal Eli Segal Education Award so that the total amount a service member receives between the two awards is \$10,000 per service year completed. All full-time AmeriCorps members serving in an AmeriCorps State program funded by California Volunteers are eligible to receive the award, upon successful completion of their term of service.

Arizona

In 2025, [HB 2616](#) was introduced to create the Public Service Scholarship Fund which would be administrated by the Arizona Board of Regents. These scholarships would be available to national service alums and would match the value of their education award.



To be eligible for the scholarship, the service member would need to:

1. Graduate from high school in Arizona.
2. Complete a term of service in a federal national service program.
3. Perform their term of service in Arizona.
4. Receive a federal post-service education award.
5. Use the education award in Arizona.
6. Use the scholarship within three years of completing their service.
7. Use all their federal education award before using any of their state scholarships.

State Tax Exemptions for Education Awards

In many states service members incur an income tax charge if they use their education award. Because service members make little during their service years, many cannot afford to pay the tax. This leads to many awards going unused. As a result, several states with a state income tax have exempted these awards from state taxation. These states include Iowa, Wisconsin, Oregon, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

This exemption could easily be offered as an incentive to apply for state employment to those coming to the end of their national service commitment.

Nebraska

In 2020, Nebraska passed [LB477](#) which states that for taxable years beginning or deemed to begin on or after January 1, 2021, under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, federal adjusted gross income shall be reduced by the amount received as a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, to the extent such amount is included in federal adjusted gross income.

Minnesota

In 2015, Minnesota passed [SF 3567](#) - Subtractions from federal taxable income. For individuals, estates, and trusts, there shall be subtracted from federal taxable income... to the extent included in federal taxable income, the amount of national service educational awards received from the National Service Trust under United States Code, title 42, sections 12601 to 12604, for service in an approved AmeriCorps National Service program.

Wisconsin

In 2021, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers [proposed](#) exempting the Segal Education Award from state taxation in his executive budget and it remained when the final budget was passed. The exemption stated that for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2020, the amount of a national service educational award disbursed under [42 USC 12604](#) during the taxable year for the benefit of an individual. No modification may be claimed under this subdivision for an amount that is subtracted under sub. d or deducted under [26 USC 221](#).

Waiver of Tuition and Fees at State Colleges and Universities

West Virginia



Passed in 2022, [SB 228](#) provides a full-year tuition and fees waiver at state college and universities for each year of service completed in the state. The service member can receive one semester of waiver for a 600-hour term of service or a full-year (two semester) waiver for 1200-hour term of service.

The legislation requires that to receive the waiver the service alum must have:

1. Completed a term of service in West Virginia in an AmeriCorps State, National, VISTA, or Senior Corps program.
2. Filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and has accept all offers of state and federal financial assistance for which he or she is eligible.
3. Accepted the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

In-State Tuition

Maryland

Passed in 2017, [HB 0224](#) that provides for waiving the residency requirement for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state for any individual who has completed an AmeriCorps service year while residing in Maryland.

Arizona

Passed in 2016, [HB 2547](#) permits students who have served in AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps VISTA in Arizona to receive in-state tuition at Arizona public universities.

Preferential Admission to State College and Universities

New Hampshire

Introduced in 2020, [HB1499](#) would require New Hampshire's public university system to develop and adopt preferential admission standards for current members and alumni of a civilian national service organization, such as AmeriCorps.