

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a national network of national service programs that engage more than 50,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. AmeriCorps members serve through more than 2,100 nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations. They tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters. Created in 1993, AmeriCorps is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which also oversees Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America. Together these programs engage more than 2 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service each year.

AmeriCorps Polk Reads lies within the AmeriCorps*State division of the program, which makes up three-quarters of AmeriCorps grant funding. Members serve their country by tutoring students in Kindergarten through Third grade in Reading, and serve most of their hours during the school day at one of several select elementary schools in Polk County.

How much will I get paid?

Members receive a modest living allowance. You may not save much money during your year of service, but most members find the living allowance to be adequate to cover their needs. AmeriCorps members who complete a term of service also receive an education award.

Members can choose to serve as a full time or part time member. Full time members will receive an annual living allowance of \$11,400, while half time members will receive an annual living allowance of \$5,700. This living allowance is taxable, and will be distributed evenly over the term of service, paid twice per month. The education award amount for full time members is \$4,725, and the award amount for half time members is \$2,362.

How much will I have to work?

Full time members are required to complete a minimum of 1700 hours of service during their year term, which translates into roughly 40 hours per week. Part time members are required to complete a minimum of 900 hours of service during their year term, which is roughly 20 hours per week. The minimum number of hours must be reached to be eligible to receive the education award detailed above.

Will I receive any benefits?

Besides the education award and living allowance, AmeriCorps Polk Reads members are eligible for other great benefits. You'll receive limited health benefits for yourself (unfortunately, we are unable to provide family coverage). You may be eligible for deferment and forbearance on your student loans, and, if you're eligible, AmeriCorps will pay for the interest that is accrued on student loans for members who complete their service. You may qualify for child care assistance if you are a full time member. You will also have access to excellent career-building resources, as well as community networking and training opportunities.

What can I use my education award for?

The education award can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education or training, or to repay qualified student loans. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service has ended to claim the award.

What if I'm out of school and not interested in the education award? Can I get that money in cash?

Unfortunately, only members of the AmeriCorps*VISTA program may opt for a cash payment instead of the education award. Since AmeriCorps Polk Reads is not part of AmeriCorps*VISTA, our members are eligible only for the education award.

Can I join if I'm not a U.S. citizen?

You must be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S. to be an AmeriCorps member.

Is there an age requirement?

You must be at least 18 years old to be eligible for membership with AmeriCorps Polk Reads.

What skills do I need to have?

Qualifications must include good communication skills, patience, reliability, flexibility, and a desire to help youth. If this sounds like you, then you'll want to become an AmeriCorps member.

Will I get any training before I start?

Absolutely! All members receive training at the beginning of their service, as well as project specific training during service. Members are also eligible to receive subject-specific training available to employees of Polk County School Board.