

BEST PRACTICES IN STORYTELLING

"THOSE WHO TELL THE STORIES RULE THE WORLD." -PLATO

OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESOURCE

- Learn criteria for effective storytelling
- Learn the basics of how public narrative works
- Practice your own story of self and coach others

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource walks you through the necessary components of telling a compelling story based on the public narrative model. The worksheets at the end will help you to practice identifying effective storytelling by others and to begin crafting your individual stories based on the audiences you are connecting with. Use this guide in companion with:

[The Power of Storytelling Webinar](#)

[Service Year Alliance's YouTube Channel](#) (We use public narrative framework for our stories)

WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR, AND WHY?

Being able to tell your story is a fundamental part of being human. We need to tell our story in interviews, to funders, to our family and friends, on social media, and in all life matters in order to achieve our goals. Here are ways that effective and clearly-articulated stories can support everyone in the service year field:

- For program staff to learn how to effectively describe their program to funders, for recruitment, or to gain other support;
- For service year corps members to tell their service year story tailored to the audience listening;
- For alumni to tell their service year story and how it led them to their current role;
- For other service year supporters looking to gain support for this movement;

And more!

WE ALL HAVE A COMPELLING STORY TO TELL

Each of us has a story that can inspire others. When we do public work – as advocates, public servants, organizers, volunteers – we have a responsibility to offer an account of who we are, why we do what we do, and where we hope to lead. As you cultivate this skill, you will learn to tell your story of self, the story of the community you work with, and the strategies that may motivate others to join you on a similar path or understand your journey.

*"THE STORIES WE TELL LITERALLY MAKE THE WORLD.
IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, YOU NEED TO
CHANGE YOUR STORY. THIS TRUTH APPLIES BOTH TO
INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS."*

— MICHAEL MARGOLIS

PUBLIC NARRATIVE IS A PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is about accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Narrative is how we learn to make choices and construct our identities and purpose – as individuals, as communities and organizations, and as countries. What does public narrative have to do with this definition of leadership? You can't ask others to follow you if they don't understand what your intentions are and why you're called to lead.

PUBLIC NARRATIVE BLENDS A STORY OF SELF, US, & NOW

Story of Self: How you came to be the person you are

Story of Us: Expresses the values and shared experience of the community you are connecting to

Story of Now: The challenges this community now faces and the actions we must take

STORY OF SELF

By telling a "story of self" you are communicating the values that inspire you to lead. Being able to succinctly convey who you are, why you do and believe what you do, and how that relates to your actions is harder than you may imagine – without practice. Being able to tell your story sincerely and persuasively will help you to share your work with others and invite them to be involved. Generally speaking, people get involved or listen to a story not just because of the mission or the mere fact they like someone, but because a like-minded person persuaded them to get involved through a convincing story.

Take time to reflect on your own story of self. What was your call to serve, either as a service year corps member or as part of the service year movement? Consider all the events and milestones that led you to this moment. Focus on the challenges you faced, satisfaction and frustration you experienced. What did you learn from these outcomes? How do you feel about them today? What did they teach you about yourself, your family, your community, your movement?

STORY OF US

By telling a "story of us" you can convey the values that can inspire others to act together by identifying with each other, not only with you. Just like the story of self, think about key choice moments where values were shared. Telling a good story of us requires the courage of empathy – to consider the experience of others deeply enough to take a chance at articulating that experience.

Consider the service year movement: our diverse constituency is made up of over one million alumni, millions of people who have benefitted from someone's year of service, and countless Americans that believe service is a core value of our country. Think about our common past; then consider our common future. When did you realize that service was important to you? Do you participate in this community because of "fate" or a "choice" or both? What do you plan to achieve?

STORY OF NOW

By telling the "story of now" you can communicate the challenge we are called to face, the hope that we can face it, and the outcome we can create together. You create an action for someone to take or the specific takeaway you want a person to connect in your story. A story of now requires telling stories that bring the action or connection together. What is at stake? Why should I care? A story of now offers hope grounded in real progress, the courage of others' actions, and in the strategic vision of what we can achieve together.

WORKSHEET

LISTENING FOR STORY OF SELF, US, & NOW

One of the best uses of the story of self, us, and now is Barack Obama’s 2004 Democratic Convention Speech. It is not about the politics of Democrat or Republican, but the way he tells his story that is compelling. As you watch, consider the elements that you hear in the story using the listening worksheet and questions below. You could listen to anyone who you think tells a compelling story and use the framework to capture what they do best.

Video: [Barack Obama’s 2004 Democratic Convention Speech](#) (watch through to 8:00)

QUESTIONS (CAN BE USED TO EVALUATE ANY STORY)

What was the speaker’s purpose in telling this story? What was s/he moving people to do?

What values did this story convey? How?

What details or images in particular reflected those values?

What were the challenges, choices, and outcomes in the story?

SELF	US	NOW
<i>What experiences and values call this person to leadership?</i> <i>What choice points does the speaker include to show, rather than tell us her/his values?</i>	<i>Who is “us”?</i> <i>What are the common values the speaker appeals to?</i> <i>What challenges and hopes do we share?</i>	<i>What urgent challenge does this speak identify?</i> <i>How does s/he make the challenge real?</i> <i>What gives us real hope that we can do something?</i>

WORKSHEET

START YOUR STORY OF SELF, US, & NOW

Before you decide what part of your story to tell, consider first:

What will I be calling on others to do or take away from my story?

What values move me and may inspire others to take action?

What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that called you to leadership in service years? Use these prompts below to develop your story of self, us, and now.

FAMILY CHILDHOOD	LIFE CHOICES	SERVICE EXPERIENCE
<div>Parents / Family</div> <div>Growing Up</div> <div>Your Community</div> <div>Your Role Models</div> <div>School</div> <div>Beliefs</div>	<div>School</div> <div>Career</div> <div>Partner / Family</div> <div>Hobbies / Talents</div> <div>Faith</div> <div>Overcoming Challenges</div> <div>Beliefs</div> <div>Past Informative Events</div>	<div>Overall service year experience</div> <div>Events and interactions you remember the most / had the most meaning</div> <div>What conditions shaped your experience</div> <div>Connection to key people, organizations, books, stories...</div>

Think about the challenge, choice, and outcome in your story. The outcome might be what you learned, in addition to what happened. Consider drawing pictures instead of using words.

CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME
<i>Why did you feel it was a challenge?</i> <i>What was so challenging about it?</i>	<i>Why did you make the choice that you did?</i> <i>Where did you get the courage (or not)?</i>	<i>How did the outcome feel? Why?</i> <i>What did you learn? What do you want to teach us?</i> <i>How do you want us to feel?</i>

Now take all the of the things you outlined and build your story of self, us, and now. You can have multiple stories, so build out individual ones that are two and a half minutes or less. A good narrative should be short, digestible, and built for action / connection that an audience can walk away with.

SELF	US	NOW
<i>What experiences and values shape you?</i> <i>What will you show instead of saying?</i>	<i>Who is "us"?</i> <i>What are the common values you and others had together – a sense of service?</i> <i>What challenges and hopes do we share?</i>	<i>What action or connection do you want the listener to take away?</i> <i>How do you make the ask real?</i> <i>How do you convey hope for your story to be heard?</i>

OPTIONS FOR FREE & CHEAP CLASSES, EBOOKS, AND MORE!

In your service year and in your careers afterwards, it's always a good idea to brush up on your skills or learn something new. Being a continuous learner will help you increase your ability to achieve success. Instead of passing up on a new role or opportunity, be confident that you can learn new skills and build your capacity. Who knows, it might even lead to a new career! The list below are some recommendations for free or inexpensive online classes and learning resources to help you keep you sharp!

Note: We are not endorsing these websites or providers, we just tried to do some basic research as a starting place for you! Please research more on your own and talk to trusted advisors when making education and career plans.

ACADEMIC COURSES:

COURSERA.ORG

Classes covering a wide variety of topics are taught by instructors from well known universities and educational institutions. You can audit some courses for free, or pay to earn a certificate.

Cost: Some free, others are \$29-\$99.

EDX.ORG

edX partners with well-known schools to offer classes in Computer Science, Language, Engineering, and more. You can audit most courses for free or pay to take for a verified certificate. Levels range from freshman courses to Masters and MicroMasters.

Cost: Some free, others are \$25-\$99.

UDEMY.COM

Unlike the previous options, courses at Udemy are created and posted from professionals in the field, not necessarily professions. Course range from IT and Marketing to Pet Care and Yoga.

Cost: Classes range in cost, but you can often take your first courses for \$10.99.

CLASSCENTRAL.COM

Class Central allows you to search through top massive open online courses (MOOC) providers at once, making it an easy way to see tons of available courses for topics or from universities that you are interested in.

Cost: Free, though redirects to websites that may have a cost

ACADEMICEARTH.ORG

Academic Earth is a database of information about online classes and programs for many areas of study. You can't earn credits, but all of the content is free! You can see syllabus and course readings from classes at top universities.

Cost: Free

ALISON.COM

Alison has courses covering lots of topics, and everything is free access. You can pay a subscription for an ad-free version and pay to receive a certificate for courses you complete.

Cost: Free (or pay for ad-free versions or to receive a certificate)

LINKEDIN.COM/LEARNING

LinkedIn Learning links classes directly to your profile and are organized by skills and industries. It combines industry-leading content from Lynda.com with personalized course recommendations based on insights from LinkedIn's network.

Cost: Free trial month and then \$29.99/month or \$24.99/month with a year subscription

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

There are a ton of places to start learning coding for free online. Codecademy is a popular choice, as are coding classes in the academic sites we listed about. You can check out this article for a specific list of coding class options.

SERVICEPLUSTECH.ORG

If you are interested in coding, check out Service Year + Tech! It's a program specifically designed for service year corps members and alums to develop essential technology skills, discover pathways into tech careers, and leverage technology to solve society's most pressing challenges. Plus, it's completely free.

CAREER AND LIFESTYLE SKILLS

GETYOUEDGE.ORG

Edge exists to provide young people with engaging, impactful customer service training that creates a solid foundation from which to launch a career. These trainings are all available on any device, for free, to flexibly support job attainment, career advancement, and personal development.

Cost: Free

SKILLSHARE.COM

Skillshare offers short sessions (usually 45 min to 1.5 hours) to learn a new skill in the areas of Creativity, Business, Technology, Lifestyle, and more.

Cost: One month free; Unlimited access for \$15/month or \$99/year.

KHANACADEMY.ORG

Khan Academy has all free classes that follow traditional K-12 curriculums as well as test prep for college and grad standardized tests, career exploration, personal finance, and more. If you need a refresher, start here!

Cost: Free

+ACUMEN.ORG

PlusAcumen has courses that intend to support change makers all across the world. There are free and paid options in storytelling, social entrepreneurship, leadership, and more! Some classes are intended to be taken as a group, which could be a great way for your team to improve your skills together.

Cost: Free and paid options

GCFLEARNFREE.ORG

This site offers free classes to brush up on your digital skills with Microsoft Office programs, Google Drive, and other basics of tech.

Cost: Free

(Also, make sure to check out the sites in the "Academic" section, as many have career and lifestyle courses too!)

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

TED.COM

TED (which, fun fact, stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design) has tons of amazing lectures that are 18 minutes or less. Watch some when you want to get inspired or learn something new!

Cost: Free

KANOPY.COM

Kanopy lets you stream thoughtful entertainment to any device with no fees and no commercials - all you need is a library card! There is an amazing range of blockbusters, independent films, documentaries, and even a kid-safe section.

Cost: Free

UNPLUGTHETV.COM

This random video generator pops up interesting videos in all types of subjects. It may be almost like watching TV, but you might learn something new!

Cost: Free

EBOOKS & AUDIOBOOKS

LIBBYAPP.COM (the new app from Overdrive)

Did you know that you can download ebooks from your local library?! Libby is a lifesaving app that lets you get tons of popular new titles to your ereader for FREE! Sometimes there is a waitlist for a book, but that beats \$12 or more per title, amirite? Also, if Libby doesn't work for you, you can check out the original OverDrive site.

Cost: Free

LIBRIVOX.ORG

Librivox has free audiobooks of many titles that are in the public domain, aka published before 1923. You might not find the latest bestseller, but you can brush up on your classics!

Cost: Free

GUTENBERG.ORG

Like Librivox, Project Gutenberg provides access to titles that are in the public domain, though this site focuses on ebooks and downloadable formats. This site is curated by volunteers that are passions about access to literature!

Cost: Free, but they do accept donations!

BARTLEBY.COM

Bartleby has thousands of e-textbooks available for just \$4.99 a month. When you think of how much your last textbook cost you, it might be worth seeing if you can access any reading you need here!

Cost: \$4.99/month

PODCASTS

There are tons of podcast on a variety of content, but if you are looking for some learning on the good, [check out this list to start you out!](#)

DO YOU KNOW OF MORE FREE OR CHEAP OPTIONS FOR LEARNING? LET US KNOW!

Check out more resources to #ThriveInService

NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWS



Networking and interviews are both important parts of the working world. You'll have many opportunities to meet new people and you want to make sure you are always putting your best professional foot forward. This guide will help you with some basics of networking and interviewing to ensure that you shine now matter what situation you find yourself in.

HAVE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH READY

Whether you are getting ready for a networking event or an interview, it's a great idea to have your elevator pitch – or a few of them – ready to go. An elevator pitch should include a couple of sentences about you, what you are doing now, and where you want to go next. It should be pretty short – think about what you would say to someone you are traveling with for only a few floors in an elevator (get it?!). Especially if you are starting to look for a job, make sure to mention that when appropriate. People won't know what you are hoping for new – job or otherwise – unless you tell them about it.

There are many articles about why and how to get your elevator pitch ready, but here are some we like to get you started:

- [Service Year Alliance's Storytelling Guide](#) - *This might be too long for an elevator pitch, but could help you in figuring out the key points of your story!*
- [The 15-Minute Method to Writing an Unforgettable Elevator Speech](#)
- [I Walked into an Interview with No Elevator Pitch—Here's What Happened](#)

Once you have ideas about what to say, remember to practice! You may feel silly saying this out loud, but the more you actually practice, the easier it will be, and the more confident you will sound!

NETWORKING BASICS

For some people, networking is no big deal, and for others, hearing the word makes them want to curl up under a blanket and never come out. If you fall more towards the "this-is-the-worst" end of the spectrum, use our simple tricks to help you get started! Whether you love it or hate it, networking is an important part of building and keeping a professional group of contacts that will help you with current work and future opportunities. As with all things, practice makes it easier!

How To Find Events And People

For many people, their current job and contacts are the basis of their network. Each time you move to a new job, you carry some connections with you and your network continues to grow. If you are just starting out or are looking to expand your network beyond your work, here are some suggestions to get started:

- **College alumni groups.** If you are a college grad, there could be an alumni group in your city that you can join. If there isn't a group, your college still may have a list of alums in your area or a list of alums in the industry you are hoping to connect with. Many people are willing to be contacted for questions, so reach out to your alumni office to learn more.
- **Young professional groups.** If there is a particular industry you are interested in, do some research to see if there is a group in your location specifically to help young people build networks. For example, [Young Nonprofit Professionals Network](#) has chapters in different locations throughout the US.

- **Service Year / AmeriCorps Alums chapters.** Of course, connecting with other service year alumni is a great way to build your network! Alums go on to do many types of work so they are a great source of advice and connections in a variety of industries.
- **Volunteering.** Finding a cause that is important to you and volunteering is a great way to connect with others that care about the same thing. Volunteering is great practice talking to new people – you'll build your networking skills while you do some good for your community!
- **Classes.** Taking in-person classes is a great way to brush up on some skills or learn something new while also networking. You can look for classes specifically in your industry, or something totally for fun – no matter what, you'll be meeting people and making new connections.
- **Newsletters and Listservs.** There are many lists you can join that will keep you updated about happenings in your area or about the industry you are in. It's a great idea to stay informed about your industry – news makes a great conversation starter when networking! Do some research and join some listservs to keep up to date on news and events.
- **Social Media.** Connecting online is a great way to find events that you can join. Follow people or organizations that you admire in a professional capacity to stay in the know. It's fine if you have different accounts for professional and personal use – just remember that what you post online lives on forever!

NETWORKING DO'S AND DON'TS

So you've gotten yourself to a networking event – great job! Now what? Don't stress – networking is just having conversations. Think of it as making friends, professionally! Below are some conversation tips and tricks to help you get over the initial jitters of talking to new people and give you a foundation to make connections.

Make sure to...

- **Dress for success.** Make sure to look your best at an event. See if there is a dress code listed for the event. If not, business casual is likely fine for an after work event. Wear something that makes you feel confident!
- **Ask people about themselves.** The easiest thing to do is ask open ended questions about someone to get them talking. Check out some ideas for conversation starters in the "Informational Interview" section. It's likely they will reciprocate with questions for you to keep the conversation moving – that's why your elevator pitch is important!
- **Be honest.** It is always smart to put your best foot forward when you are meeting new people. Make sure though, that you are being honest about yourself and your skills and experiences. Just like with a resume, you want to highlight what you are good at but not lie or embellish – it will hurt you in the long run!
- **Find connection points.** It's possible that you will talk with someone that has experience or skills that aren't in line with the industry you are hoping to get to, and that's okay! You never know when someone will have some wisdom to share or a connection for your future. Also, if you know someone else that is interested in that work, offer to make that connection. Even as you are starting to build your network, you can be a connection point for others!
- **Follow Up.** If you meet someone helpful at an event or otherwise, it's appropriate to ask for their contact information to follow up. Say something along the lines of, "It's been really great talking to you about _____, and I'd love to follow up with you to learn more. Do you have a business card?" If someone is at a networking event, they are also there to network, so they will likely be more than happy to share contact information. If you ask to follow up, make sure that you do. A quick email to say, "It was great to meet you at _____ and I look forward to staying in touch" is perfect.



Make sure you don't...

- **Focus only on your job search.** If you are looking for a job, it's fine to mention that. People won't know unless you say something! However, don't monopolize the conversation by only talking about your job search. Networking is about making professional relationships for the long haul, not just your next job.
- **Over-use your connection.** Whether you meet someone at a networking event or know them from a previous job, make sure they aren't the only person you are relying on to build your network or help you in your job search. Of course, trusted advisors are great to help you get started, but it's up to you to do the hard work for yourself. Also, if you reach out to a contact and they aren't getting back to you, you can follow up once, but probably not more than that in a short amount of time. People get busy and sometimes aren't available to follow up with you, and that's okay.
- **Only make asks.** Similarly to not over-contacting someone, make sure every time you contact someone, you are not only asking them for something. You can keep in touch with important contacts by sharing an article you think they will like, congratulating them on a work-iversary (LinkedIn has reminders for those!), or giving them an update about some current projects you are working on.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

A great way to kickstart a job search or follow up after meeting someone at a networking event is to ask for an informational interview. This is a chance for you to ask someone about their career path and get some advice on next steps for yourself. Here are some steps for conducting an informational interview:

- **Make the ask.** Send a brief email to start, and make sure to mention how you know them. Remind them of the networking event you met at, or if you got their information from a mutual contact, mention who it is. Ask for 20 minutes of their time to start – either talking over the phone or meeting for a coffee in person if that would be easier for them.
- **Prepare.** Get ready for this interview like you would a real interview. Research your contact (on LinkedIn or their work's website) and the organization they work for. Make sure you know some basics so that you don't waste your time asking them things you could find out by googling! Also, have your generic resume ready in case they ask for it. This isn't a job interview so there is no need to stress about being perfect, but practicing like it's a real interview will help you when you get to that stage.
- **Conduct.** Just like when networking, make sure that you ask open ended questions. Don't spend time talking about you or your journey – you are there to learn about them! Below are some conversation starters if you aren't sure where to begin. Also, make sure to be respectful of time – stick to the time you said you would, or ask if they have a few more minutes to spare.
- **Follow Up.** Make sure to send a thank you note or email after your meeting. They took time to help you, so thank them for it! Mention something they said that was particularly helpful. Also, if it seems appropriate, you can ask for others contacts that you might be able to speak with as well.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

If you aren't sure what to ask when networking or doing informational interviews, here are some ideas to get you started:

- *How did you get into your field of work?*
- *What has your career path been like to date? Is it representative of most people in this kind of position?*
- *What are the future prospects in this field?*



- What trends do you see developing over the next few years?
- What do you enjoy the most about your job?
- What advice would you have liked to have heard when you were starting out?

JOB INTERVIEWS

Congratulations! Making it to the interview round for a new position is a big deal. Preparing for a job interview is similar to preparing for networking or an informational interview (so read the info above!), just a step further in seriousness.

- **Prepare well.** Think through questions that might be asked in the interview and prepare your answers. Jotting down bullet points can be helpful. Also, make sure you aren't using the same example for each question – think through all of your different work, volunteer, and educational experiences and pull out accomplishments and lessons learned from each. Again, have your elevator pitch ready for that "Tell me about yourself" kick-off! Here's [Glassdoor's list of 50 common interview questions](#) to help you prepare. Finally, prepare questions to ask them!
- **Show up.** Make sure to dress appropriately – err on the side of being more professional and more conservative if you really aren't sure what the dress code is. Make sure your hair, nails, and shoes are neat and tidy - little details could matter! Give yourself more than enough time to get to your interview, and find a coffee shop or place to hang out if you are too early. Head into the interview about 10-15 minutes early, but be ready to wait if they don't start until the scheduled time. Bring a pen and notebook, a few copies of your resume, and a list of printed references. Remember to silence your phone!
- **Interview and Follow up.** Take a deep breath – you are going to be great! If you are given a complicated or multiple part question, don't be afraid to ask to have it repeated or to say it back to them and ask if you understood it correctly. Remember to share a variety of your experiences and not use the same example over and over. At the end, ask the questions that you prepared. Remember to make sure your questions aren't things you could have googled. If there is anything unclear about the job or a question that came up in the interview, don't be afraid to ask that as well. After the interview, send a thank you within 24 hours to each of your interviewers. An email is fine, but a handwritten note is also a great way to stand out!

PRO TIP: If you're a fan of the handwritten note, it can be helpful to bring a few thank you notes with you to the interview and find a nearby coffee shop to write your thank you notes immediately after the interview. You can buy stamps at a CVS and drop the letters in the mail on your way home.

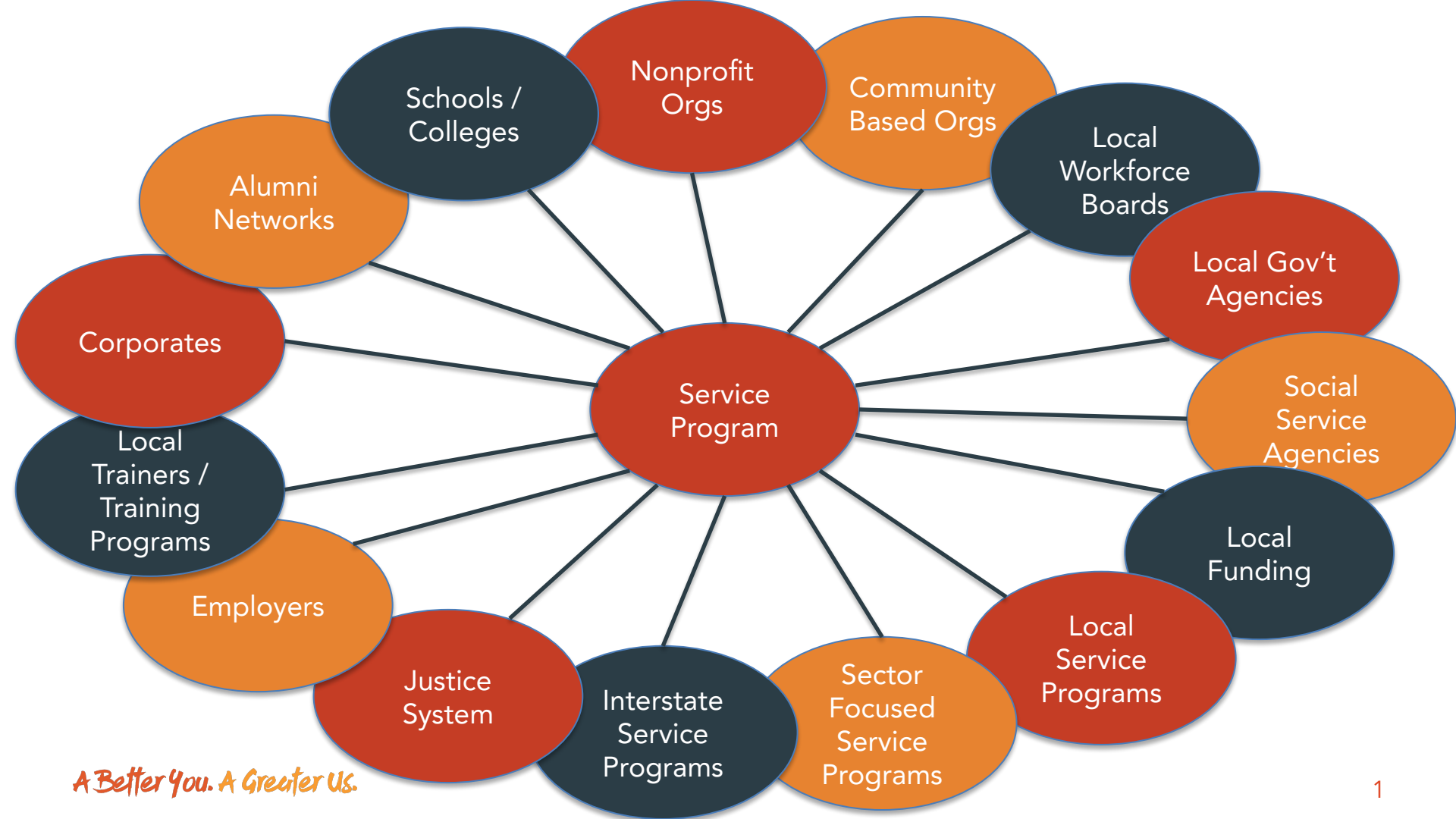
There are many articles you can read about preparing for interviews – check out [this one from The Muse](#) and this one from [The Balance Careers](#) to start. It is smart to prepare as best as you can, but be sure you [do some self care](#) and get some sleep as well to keep you cool, calm, and collected, and ready to ace your interview!

FINAL THOUGHTS ON NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWING

When it comes to job hunting, networking, and interviewing, you'll get a lot of advice and some of it may be conflicting, so go with what speaks most true to you and to the industry you are trying to get into. Here are the main points to remember, from our perspective, when it comes to networking and the job application process:

- Know your elevator pitch.
- Have a general resume ready for any situation (like networking), but tailor your resume for each job you apply to.
- Do your research on your job, industry, interviewers, etc.
- Put your best self forward while still being honest about your experience and your abilities
- And be confident! You'll be great :)







Working Definitions and Terminology

Belonging: is a feeling of acceptance that engages the full potential of an individual with an understanding that innovation thrives when diverse views, beliefs, and values are integrated into culture.

Bias: is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way that is considered to be unfair.

Culture: a social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

Diversity: includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. We also recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities.

Equality: is the condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted the same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

Equity: is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Implicit Bias: Social stereotypes and associations about certain groups of people that people unknowingly hold; also known as unconscious or hidden bias. Implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications. Implicit

biases have been shown to be favored above individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that people may profess.

Inclusion: is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

Microaggression: A brief and common daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental communications, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to a target person because they belong to a marginalized group.

Minority: A subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their lives than members of a dominant or majority group. A group that experiences a narrowing of opportunities (success, education, wealth, etc.) that is disproportionately low compared to their numbers in the society.

Power: is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access to and control over resources. Wealth, Whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates.

Privilege: Unearned social power including a set of advantages, entitlements, and benefits accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to the members of a dominant group. Privilege tends to be invisible to those who possess it, because its absence (lack of privilege) is what calls attention to it.

Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. There are no distinctive genetic characteristics that

truly distinguish between groups of people. Race presumes human worth and social status for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power. Race is independent of ethnicity.

Stereotype: Widely held beliefs, unconscious associations and expectations about members of certain groups that are presumed to be true of every member of that group, and that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgment. Stereotypes go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information and are highly generalized and/or inflammatory.

Targeted Universalism: recognizes racial disparities, while acknowledging their presence within a larger inequitable, institutional framework. It is an approach that is inclusive of the needs of all groups, but pays particular attention to the specific context of situation of marginal groups. Thus, any proposal or strategy for change is calibrated against specific outcomes - that is, the way it addresses the specific needs of the targeted group, not just the intent to provide blanket benefits to all groups.

SERVICE YEAR

Resource Hub

The Service Year Resource Hub is a searchable database to discover resources that will help organizations start, improve, and grow programs; help corps members and alumni during and after service; and help other interested stakeholders find relevant information. We are committed to bringing the service year field the best resources available, including those created by our partner organizations, such as this resource here.

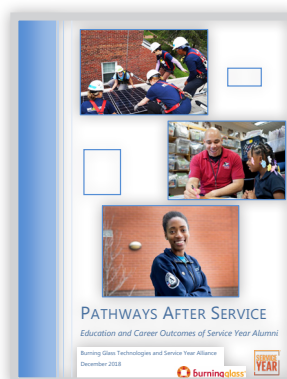
PARTNER RESOURCE

Pathways After Service: Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni

Authors: By Matthew Walsh, Dan Restuccia, Jikuo Lu, and Scott Bittle

DECEMBER 2018

Burning Glass Technologies and Service Year Alliance have partnered to address this question by analyzing the resumes of tens of thousands of service year alumni. Burning Glass has developed a database of more than 80 million resumes and 800 million job postings, and from this, identified over 70,000 resumes of service year alumni and a comparison group of 100,000 otherwise similar peer resumes. Burning Glass looked at how often service year alumni return to school to complete a bachelor's degree, what career areas they enter into after service, where they are working well after service, and what skills they cultivate throughout that journey.



About Service Year Alliance

Service Year Alliance is working to make a year of paid, full-time service - a service year - a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. A service year before, during, or after college gives young people the chance to transform their lives, make an impact in their community, and become the active citizens and leaders our nation needs. Expanding service years has the power to revitalize cities, uplift and educate children at risk, and empower communities struggling with poverty.



PATHWAYS AFTER SERVICE

Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni

Burning Glass Technologies and Service Year Alliance

December 2018



AUTHOR CREDITS

By Matthew Walsh, Dan Restuccia, Jikuo Lu, and Scott Bittle

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last two decades, service year programs have expanded as a powerful way to tackle the world's pressing challenges, and these programs satisfy both the call to service and the desire for meaningful work felt by those who participate. Service year programs such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, YouthBuild, Teach for America, and VISTA operate in local community organizations through schools, nonprofits, community centers, or other civic institutions, and participants engage in service to advance the mission of the partner organization. Service year alumni report high levels of satisfaction, and the programs attract many participants. As many as 66,000 Americans each year enroll in one of these full-time service year programs.

One goal of service year programs is to shape the next generation of leaders and prepare participants for success in a broad range of careers. However, limited large-scale research exists on how service year alumni progress through their careers. What are the education and employment pathways that service year alumni go on to achieve following their service?

Burning Glass Technologies and Service Year Alliance have partnered to address this question by analyzing the resumes of tens of thousands of service year alumni. Burning Glass has developed a database of more than 80 million resumes and 800 million job postings, and from this, identified over 70,000 resumes of service year alumni and a comparison group of 100,000 otherwise similar peer resumes. Burning Glass looked at how often service year alumni return to school to complete a bachelor's degree, what career areas they enter into after service, where they are working well after service, and what skills they cultivate throughout that journey.

The study revealed distinct patterns that differentiate service year alumni from their peers, both in the careers they forge and in the skills they develop. The following key findings emerged:

- **Service year alumni go on to complete bachelor's degrees at higher rates** than their peers. **Almost a quarter (24%) of service year alumni who do not have a bachelor's degree during their service go on to earn a bachelor's degree**, compared to 11% of the peer group who complete a bachelor's degree after two years of full-time work experience. Of those who earn their degrees, 75% complete the full four-year degree program after finishing their service year, suggesting they had little to no college experience before the service year.
- **Service year alumni are more likely than their peers to work in education, and community and social services occupations.** Following service, 31% of service year alumni begin their careers in these fields compared to 8% of their peers. After ten years, 23% of service year alumni remain in education and community and social services compared to 7% of their peers.
- **Service year alumni are more likely than their peers to advertise skills related to leadership and organization**, which are commonly developed in service year programs. Research as a skill is cited on 40% of service year resumes and 25% of peer resumes. Organizational skills; 40% compared to 24%. Planning; 25% compared to 23%. Service year alumni also advertise leadership and mentoring skills more frequently than their peers: 14% compared to 13% for leadership, and 9% compared to 5% for mentoring.

INTRODUCTION

Service year programs are a powerful way to tackle the pressing challenges of our nation and the world. Program participants engage meaningfully with causes like education, sustainability, public health, housing, economic development, and more. Service year programs are also grounded in local communities. Service year programs place participants with local organizations such as schools, nonprofits, or community centers, and participants serve alongside the partner organization to carry out its mission. Programs typically last between 10 months and two years, and the participant receives a living stipend for the duration of the program. Some of the largest service year programs are:

- AmeriCorps State and National: Participants serve across a large portfolio of national and community-based private and public organizations to meet community needs in a variety of issue areas—most often education, disaster relief and recovery, economic opportunity, and the environment.
- Peace Corps: Participants are immersed in communities abroad, where they provide technical assistance in a range of issue areas and promote mutual understanding between Americans and the populations served.
- YouthBuild: Participants—intentionally recruited from the population of young adults who are unemployed and without a high-school degree—alternate between time in an academic classroom, where they work toward their high school diplomas or equivalency credentials, and time learning the construction trade by building houses in their own communities.

For participants, service year programs provide an opportunity to answer the call to service while gaining meaningful work experience—and service year programs appear to be delivering on that promise. Service year alumni report high levels of satisfaction with their experiences,¹ and the programs attract more applicants than positions available. Since its founding in 1994, AmeriCorps, the largest national service program, has supported more than 1 million service year members.² Across AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, YouthBuild, youth corps, and other service year programs, there are as many as 66,000 active, full-time corps members each year.³ Service year programs value the work of these individuals, and they feel valued by their partners in turn.

Another aim of service year programs extends beyond service itself: service year programs aspire to shape the next generation of leaders and to prepare participants for success in a broad range

¹ For example, a report on AmeriCorps alumni outcomes found that 87% of AmeriCorps State and National, NCCC, and VISTA participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their service experience:
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/FR_CNCS_Alumni%20Outcomes%20Survey%20Report.pdf

² <https://www.nationalservice.gov/onemillion>

³ AmeriCorps: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-programs>

Peace Corps: https://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/about/pc_facts.pdf

YouthBuild: <https://www.youthbuild.org/our-impact>

of careers in the social sector and private enterprise. Unlike evaluating impact and job satisfaction during service, this outcome is difficult for service year programs to measure because it requires following alumni post-service as they progress through their careers. Burning Glass partnered with Service Year Alliance to shed a light on the career outcomes of service year alumni. Burning Glass identified more than 70,000 recent resumes of service year alumni and constructed a comparison group of 100,000 similar peer resumes without service year experience. The data pulled from these resumes illuminates the actual post-service career progression and educational attainment of these individuals.

This report picks up where the service year ends. The report answers four primary questions related to the success of service year programs in elevating their alumni into the skilled workforce and leading them to meaningful careers:

- How many service year alumni without a bachelor's degree return to school to earn a diploma, and do they do so at a greater rate than their peers?
- In what occupations do service year alumni begin their careers immediately following service?
- In what occupations are service year alumni working well after their service years?
- What are the skills that service year alumni cultivate throughout this journey, and how do these skills differentiate service year alumni from their peers?

In the report that follows, Burning Glass addressed each of these questions. The report begins with an analysis of educational attainment post-service. The second section reviews the occupations held and career areas entered into by service year alumni following their service experience. The third section considers service year alumni two, five, and 10 years after service—where they are working, and how much they are earning. The final section details the top skills advertised on the resumes of service year alumni and describes how these skills differentiate service year alumni from their peers.

This study has important implications for service year programs and partner organizations, as well as for service year alumni and those considering participating. Service year alumni enter the workforce with valuable skills and work experience. Identifying both the common career pathways of service year alumni and the skills they develop along the way will enable service year programs to better support their alumni after service. This report demonstrates that service year programs are a talent pipeline for skills that are in high demand across many occupations and professions. Finally, this report compiles the common vocabulary that service year alumni use to describe themselves. Service year programs are not only a powerful way to tackle the world's pressing challenges but also a first office for service year participants, an onramp into the workforce, and an experience with lasting influence on how service year alumni appreciate their own potential. This report facilitates greater understanding of the doors open to those who take advantage of service year opportunities.

PART 1: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

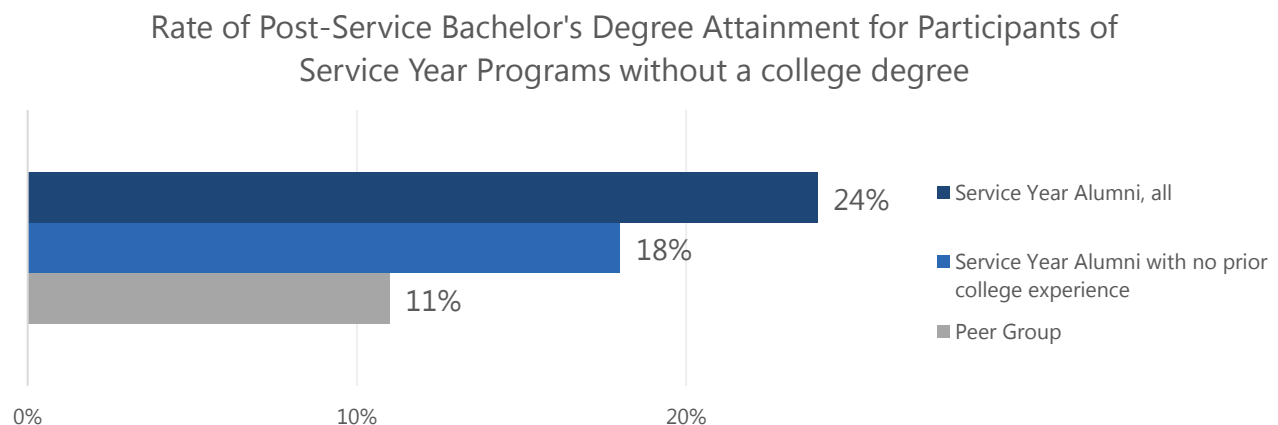
Service year alumni seek bachelor's degree attainment more often than their peers

Burning Glass and Service Year Alliance were interested in the extent to which service year programs correlate with completion of a bachelor's degree.

Do service year alumni return to school at different rates than their peers?

Service year programs promote bachelor's degree attainment. Those who participate in service year programs without a bachelor's degree are more than twice as likely to go on to earn their bachelor's degrees compared to a peer group with the equivalent years of work experience. Almost a quarter (24%) of service year alumni who serve without a bachelor's degree ultimately attain that degree, while 11% of an otherwise similar peer group earn a college degree after two years of work experience without a degree.

Burning Glass calculated college completion rates both for those who entered the service year with some college experience as well as for those whose resumes suggested little to no college experience before service. Nearly a quarter of the service year alumni who go on to earn a bachelor's degree begin their service program with some college experience. For these college graduates, the service year could be an introspective gap year or a meaningful practicum meant to focus a course of study—or it could be the decisive stimulus that motivates a struggling student to finish her degree. Three-quarters of service year alumni who go on to earn a bachelor's degree have no college experience prior to their service year. Service year programs likely play an important part in the decision of these individuals to earn a degree.



PART 2: FIRST JOB AFTER SERVICE

Service year alumni begin their careers in service-oriented occupations

Service year alumni enjoy a wide range of opportunities following the completion of a service year program. For many, the service year acts as a springboard into related careers in the social sector. For others, the service year helps them to develop a broad array of tools and experiences that can be applied to careers in the private sector. For still others, as detailed above, service years are followed by a return to school, either to complete a degree program or to begin one for the first time.

Burning Glass examined the careers the service year alumni pursue in the period immediately following their service years. Service year alumni enter the workforce predominantly in the social sector, pursuing careers in education, community and social services, and health care.

These early-career decisions build on the experience gained in service year programs and inform the career trajectory of service year alumni.

In what occupations do service year alumni begin their post-service careers?

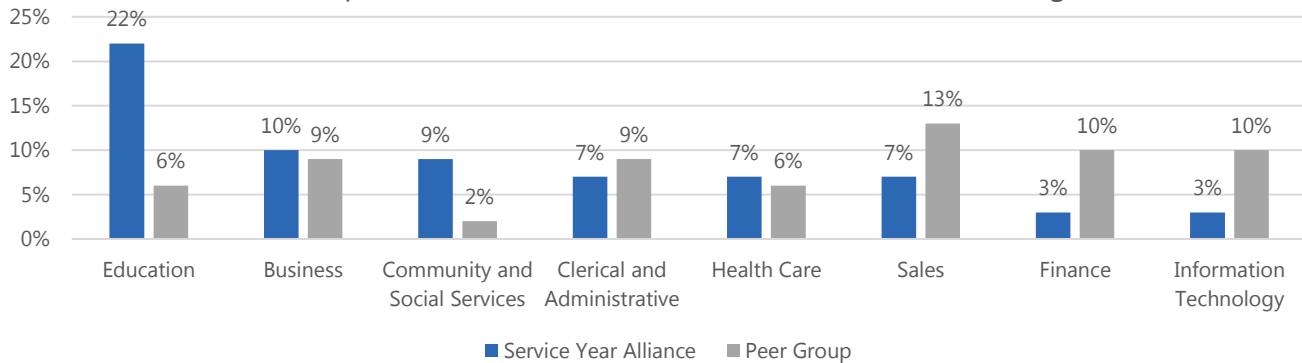
Service year alumni continue to serve. Service year alumni enter into professional careers that enable them to continue serving others. Among service year alumni with a bachelor's degree, 38% enter into service-oriented career areas—education, community and social services, or health care. Among the otherwise similar peer group, only 13% began their careers in those sectors. The peer group instead is more likely to begin their careers in areas like sales, finance, and information technology.

Service year alumni without a bachelor's degree also enter into service-oriented career areas more often than their peer group, at a rate of 30% compared to 12%. The continued mission to serve is the greatest difference in the early-career activities of service year alumni and their peer groups.

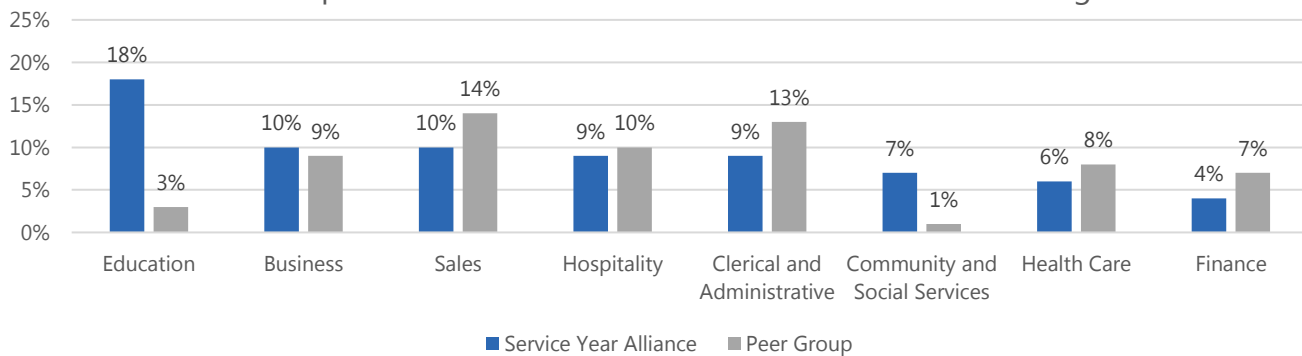
Service year alumni are drawn to the classroom. The largest group of service year alumni begins their careers in education, especially compared to a peer group that is distributed more evenly across a variety of career areas. Nearly a quarter (22%) of service year alumni with a bachelor's degree follow their service year with careers in education, compared to 6% of the peer group. For service year alumni without a bachelor's degree, 18% follow service with a career in education, compared to 3% of the peer group. Early-career service year alumni are also more concentrated in education than the peer group is in any career area, indicating how overwhelmingly service year alumni enter into education.

Pathways After Service: Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni

Next Step Jobs of Service Year Alumni with a Bachelor's Degree



Next Step Jobs of Service Year Alumni without a Bachelor's Degree



Does the service year experience lead to higher wages in certain career areas?

In many career areas, service year alumni start off in higher-paying roles than their peers. Burning Glass used publicly available data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to compare the average salaries for the occupations held by service year alumni with the average salaries for the occupations held by the peer group. Service year alumni who begin their careers in community and social services do so in occupations that typically have higher average salaries. For example, a greater proportion of service year alumni in this field work as social services managers, one of the highest paying roles in this career area, compared to their peers.

Salary premiums for Service Year Alumni in their first job after service

Career Area	Percent Difference in Average Salary between Service Year Alumni and Peers	
	BA+	Sub-BA
Community and Social Services	8%	35%
Education	0%	1%
Health Care	1%	10%
Business	3%	6%
Finance	12%	17%

Business and finance are other career areas that pay a premium to service year alumni over their peers with equivalent years of work experience. For example, a greater proportion of service year alumni in business occupy a project management role compared to their peers in the same field.

In education, however, where the largest number of service year alumni start their careers, there are also more rigid salary schedules. In this field, service year alumni begin their careers at similar salaries to their peers.

PART 3: CAREER PATHWAYS

Service year alumni enjoy a range of career pathways, though distinct trends emerge

Service year alumni enter the workforce in service-oriented career areas, and not surprisingly, many establish lasting careers in these fields. Others ultimately transition into other career areas. For example, the proportion of service year alumni in business and information technology is significantly greater 10 years after program completion than immediately following service.

Because service year alumni remain more concentrated than their peers in lower-paying career areas, they do not earn more than their peers in aggregate—at least for those with a bachelor's degree. Service year alumni without a bachelor's degree are employed in occupations that pay more than their similarly educated peers. Additionally, regardless of educational attainment, the estimated salary premiums that early-career service alumni experience in high-paying careers like business and finance persist well into their careers.

The career trajectories of service year alumni reflect a continued commitment to service as well as an ability to apply the skills gained through service to a variety of professional contexts.

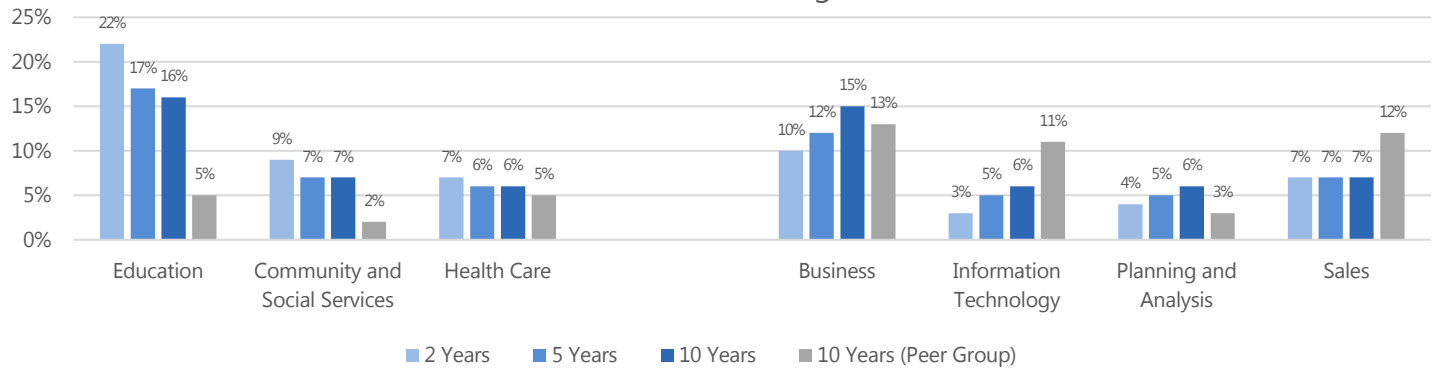
In what career areas are service year alumni employed well after their service years?

Service year alumni are more likely to remain in service-oriented career areas. Ten years after their service year, 23% of service year alumni with a bachelor's degree remain in education and community and social services compared to 7% of their peers. Further, education remains the career area that employs the greatest percentage of service year alumni, with 16% of alumni with a bachelor's degree and 14% of those without. A sizeable portion, 6% for those with a bachelor's degree and 7% for those without, also establish careers in health care. Health care is also a popular career area for the peer group. Taken together, 29% of service year alumni with a bachelor's degree remain in the social sector—education, social services, and health care—compared to 12% of their peers.

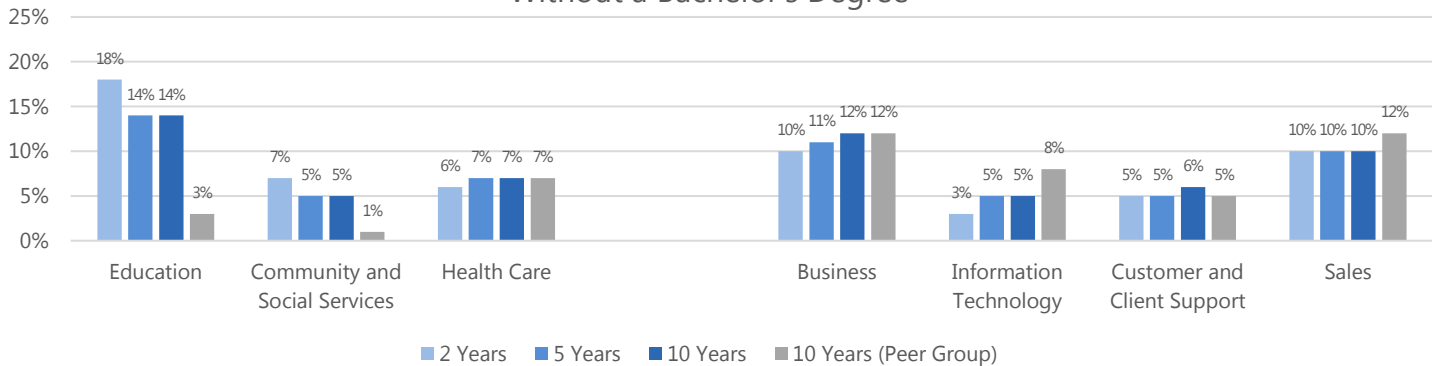
The fraction of service year alumni in typically higher-paying career areas increases by the 10-year mark. Ten years into their careers, many service year alumni with a bachelor's degree have transitioned into roles in business, information technology, and research or analysis. Service year alumni in these fields occupy professions paying on average 84% more than those in education, community and social services, and health care. Among those without a bachelor's degree, business and information technology are also popular landing spots, as well as customer and client services. Interestingly, 10 years into their careers, service year alumni are better represented in business than the peer group. The movement out of education and community services is an example of a broader trend among service year alumni: professional dexterity. Not including the transition following their service year, around 65% of service year alumni have changed occupations after seven years in the workforce, compared to 45% of their peers.

Pathways After Service: Education and Career Outcomes of Service Year Alumni

Career Areas Occupied Over Time by Service Year Alumni
With a Bachelor's Degree



Career Areas Occupied Over Time by Service Year Alumni
Without a Bachelor's Degree



How are service year alumni compensated compared to their peers?

Service year alumni without a bachelor's degree earn slightly more than their similarly educated peers. A greater proportion of service year alumni without a bachelor's degree go on to work in highly paid occupations—that is, occupations with average annual salaries of at least \$80,000—compared to their similarly educated peers. This finding holds five, seven, and 10 years after service. Higher-paying professions occupied by these service year alumni include operations managers, sales managers, and computer occupations.

Percent of Service Year Alumni Without a Bachelor's Degree in Higher-Paying Professions

Years Into Career	Service Year Alumni	Peer Group
5 Years	26%	25%
7 Years	28%	27%
10 Years	30%	29%

Service year alumni with a bachelor's degree remain more concentrated in lower-paying career areas. Among Bachelor's degree holders, a smaller proportion of service year alumni go on to work in highly paid professions compared to their peers. Ten years into their careers, 41% of college-educated service year alumni and 48% of the otherwise similar peer group occupy these highly paid professions. This discrepancy is due in part to the sizeable fraction of service year alumni that remain in lower-paying career areas like education and community and social services.

Salary premiums for service year alumni in business and finance persist, but in other career areas the results are mixed. Ten years into their careers, service year alumni in finance and business earn more than their similarly situated peers, regardless of educational attainment. Service year alumni and their peers are compensated in roughly even measure in most other high-paying career areas, with engineering and marketing as notable exceptions.

Salary Differences in High-Paying Career Areas, 10 Years into Career

Career Area	Percent Difference in Average Salary Between Service Year Alumni and Peers
Finance	6%
Business	7%
Law	1%
Planning and Analysis	1%
Information Technology	0%
Engineering	-2%
Marketing and Public Relations	-3%

PART 4: SKILLS

Service year alumni advertise their leadership, mentoring, and organizational skills

The skills advertised on the resumes of service year alumni describe the expertise they develop during their service year and refine over the course of their careers. The baseline skills held by service year alumni characterize them as professionals who build bridges, integrate into their places of work, and serve others. Service year alumni differentiate themselves by highlighting inclusive leadership, diligent preparation, and a knack for instruction. The specialized skills that service year alumni acquire are sector-specific and reflect their career pathways in education and the nonprofit sector.

What baseline skills differentiate service year alumni from their peers?

Service year alumni are bridgebuilders. The top baseline skills advertised by service year alumni, regardless of bachelor's degree attainment, include research, organization, and planning. Service year alumni advertise leadership, teamwork, and mentoring more often than their peers. These skills describe leaders who achieve goals through organization, diligence, and instruction. Service year alumni with a bachelor's degree are 1.9 times more likely to advertise skills in a second language, which speaks to their abilities to reach out directly to non-English speaking communities in which they may work.

Service year alumni are process-oriented. Once service year alumni have forged strong connections with their coworkers and project partners, they lead with diligence. Research, organizational skills, and planning describe the systematic way that service year alumni move from start to finish on the bridges they've built.

Top Baseline Skills for Service Year Alumni with a BA

Skill	Percent of Resumes Advertising Skill	
	Service Year Alumni	Peer Group
Research	40%	25%
Organizational Skills	40%	24%
Second Language	30%	16%
Planning	25%	23%
Writing	25%	14%
Teamwork	19%	17%
Creativity	15%	12%
Leadership	14%	13%
Editing	13%	8%
Mentoring	9%	5%

Top Baseline Skills for Service Year Alumni Without a BA

Skill	Percent of Resumes Advertising Skill	
	Service Year Alumni	Peer Group
Organizational Skills	33%	22%
Communication	24%	23%
Teamwork	17%	14%
Second Language	16%	11%
Research	14%	11%
Leadership	12%	9%
Writing	12%	8%
Creativity	9%	7%
Quick Learner	7%	5%
Mentoring	5%	2%

What baseline skills correlate with higher earnings?

Service year alumni can get ahead by continuing to develop some of their most common skills. Distinguishing skills are those held in greater proportion by service year alumni in highly paid professions than by the rest of the cohort. Professions are considered highly paid if the average annual salary exceeds \$80,000. Examples of highly paid professions held by service year alumni include education administrators, fundraising managers, lawyers, and managers in business and health services. The baseline skills that distinguish service alumni in these positions from the rest of the cohort include research, planning, teamwork, and leadership. Importantly, these are skills that service year alumni already hold in greater measure than their peers. These skills are part of the professional vocabulary of service year alumni. Development of these skills begins during service, and service year alumni are well-served by honing these skills over the course of their careers.

Top Distinguishing Skills Also Among Top Baseline Skills

Skill	Percent of Alumni in Highly Paid Professions Advertising Skill	Percent of All Other Alumni Advertising Skill
Research	47%	33%
Planning	34%	24%
Teamwork	23%	18%
Leadership	17%	14%

Do the specialized skills cultivated by service year alumni reflect their career pathways?

Service year alumni advertise skills gained in the education sector. The top specialized skills advertised by service year alumni with and without a bachelor's degree include teaching, tutoring, and lesson planning—skills that are particularly important in the field of education, where many service year alumni begin their careers. According to millions of job postings collected and analyzed by Burning Glass, these skills are also among the most frequently requested in education sector job postings.

Top Specialized Skills in Education Advertised by Service Year Alumni

Skill	Percent of Service Year Alumni Advertising Skill		Percent of Job Postings in Education Requesting Skill	
	BA Holders	Sub-BA	BA Holders	Sub-BA
Teaching	36%	19%	75%	69%
Lesson Planning	12%	6%	16%	12%
Tutoring	11%	7%	10%	12%

Service year alumni help keep the nonprofit sector moving. Some of the most common specialized skills for service year alumni with a bachelor's degree highlight their particular value in the social sector—as revenue generators. Fundraising, grant writing, and event planning are niche, high-skill competencies that are critical in the nonprofit

sector. Expertise in community development and program development ensure that those revenues flow efficiently to the projects and communities where they will be the most effective.

Service Year Alumni with a Bachelor's Degree as Revenue Generators

Skill	Percent Advertising Skill
Fundraising	12%
Grant Writing	11%
Event Planning	8%
Public Speaking	8%
Community Development	7%
Program Development	5%

OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this report suggest that completion of a year of service has strong outcomes for participants looking to advance their education and careers. The implications that follow highlight how expansion of service year programs and enhancements of the benefits offered to participants can be used as a national strategy for talent development. This analysis, and the strategies described, were developed jointly by the Burning Glass research team and the program staff of Service Year Alliance.

Service year programs can be an effective strategy for talent development. For youth and others who do not have clear career and educational prospects, service year programs can help them develop valuable skills and experience. Service year programs elevate workers into better paying jobs by encouraging bachelor's degree completion and by providing relevant work and skill-building experience. **Service year expansion can be considered as a strategy to meet the demand for skilled labor and to address skills gaps around leadership and organizational capacity in public, private, and nonprofit professions.**

Service year alumni gain valuable work experience during service. Indeed, many service year alumni follow their service with careers in related fields like education and community services. Some of the largest employers of these services are local, state, and federal governments. Service year alumni are a pipeline of talent who have the cultural and linguistic competencies that allow governments to effectively serve diverse constituencies. In some cases, government agencies have provided hiring preference for service year alumni as a way to take greater advantage of these benefits.

Given that service year programs correlate with bachelor's degree attainment, service year programs and government sponsors can draw a more explicit link between service year programs and higher education. Service year programs can further encourage their alumni to return to school by connecting them to resources like admissions officers, research grants, or scholarships, and by offering guidance with financial aid and admissions. **Policymakers can further encourage college completion by promoting the expansion of service year programs and increasing the number of scholarships for service year alumni or by reducing tuition or offering in-state rates for program participants.**

Service year programs and partner organizations can also facilitate upward career progressions by cultivating relationships with potential employers. **The skills and attributes that service year alumni offer are in demand across a range of occupations and are commonly reported by employers as gaps in their application pools.** By building bridges to employers, service year programs and partner organizations can facilitate placement of alumni into valuable careers.

The findings of this report—that service year alumni are bridge-builders, process-oriented, and professionally dexterous—suggest that service year programs can be an effective strategy for workforce development in the 21st century economy. Expansion of service year opportunities and funding for these programs can support the cultivation of valuable skills and also promote bachelor's degree attainment. Service years can be made more accessible by facilitating

transitions into service opportunities and developing more intentional pathways to college and careers after service.

There have been increased calls for the expansion of service as a way to bridge differences, reduce school debt, increase social cohesion, and solve local problems. This research provides a viewpoint that service can also effectively advance economic opportunity through degree attainment and build transferable and market-required skills for the emerging workforce.

ANNEX: METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper were primarily extracted from Burning Glass Technologies' unique data assets: a database of more than 800 million job postings, which provided a detailed view into the jobs and skills that employers demand, and more than 80 million resumes illuminating the actual career progression of American workers. Burning Glass Technologies' resume database captures the detailed work history and education of millions of workers across the United States. The resume dataset contains information about an individual's location, level of educational attainment, the institutions at which he or she studied, the major, and any certifications held. The dataset also contains information about an individual's career path; for example, occupation and time spent in any workplace and role, years of experience, employer name and location, and industry. In addition, an individual resume may list skills and the years of experience with any particular skill. All personally identifiable information such as name, address, and contact information are encrypted and not available to researchers.

From this resume database, Burning Glass identified more than 70,000 recent⁴ resumes of service year alumni and constructed a comparison group of 100,000 peer resumes, which were similar apart from the fact that they had not participated in service year programs. Resumes of service year alumni were identified using the following approach:

- Burning Glass initially scanned its resume database for resumes that list service year programs such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, YouthBuild, or Conservation Corps as employers.
- Next, Burning Glass scanned its resume database for resumes that list positions typically filled by service year participants, such as front-line service positions at organizations that receive AmeriCorps grants. Examples include Corps Member at City Year or Teaching Fellow at Citizen Schools.
- Finally, Burning Glass received a number of resumes that had been collected by the Service Year Alliance through its job board for service year alumni.

To construct a comparison group, Burning Glass selected resumes from the resume database that were similar to the service year alumni other than participation in a service year. Burning Glass sampled the resume database using the distributions of age, work experience, and gender that were present in the group of service year alumni.

The analyses of career pathways and skills also took into consideration the educational attainment listed on each resume. Both the peer group and the service year alumni group were subdivided according to bachelor's degree attainment.

The skills and career pathways analyses also took advantage of Burning Glass Technologies' comprehensive taxonomy of over 18,000 unique skills and nearly 700 occupations. Occupations

⁴ Because AmeriCorps was founded in 1993, the sample includes only resumes where the service experience occurred after this date.

are categorized into 24 career areas: agriculture, business, clerical and administrative, community and social services, construction, customer and client support, design and media, education, engineering, finance, health care, hospitality, human resources, information technology, law, maintenance and installation, manufacturing and production, marketing and public relations, performing arts, personal services, planning and analysis, sales, research, and transportation. Burning Glass also used publicly available data to compare the average salaries for occupations held by service year alumni with the average salaries for occupations held by the peer group. Specifically, Burning Glass matched salary from the Occupational Employment Statistics program at the Bureau of Labor Statistics with the jobs listed on each resume.

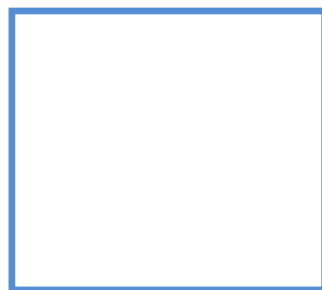
To measure the rate at which service year alumni earn their bachelor's degree after service, Burning Glass first calculated the college completion rate for service year participants who started their service without a college degree. This rate includes individuals who started their service year with some college experience but had not finished their degrees. Burning Glass also calculated the completion rate for service year alumni who complete college four years after their service year program ends. This second completion rate takes into account the four years that a service year participant with no prior college experience would need to finish a degree program. For the peer group, Burning Glass calculated the rate of eventual college completion for those who lacked a bachelor's degree after two years of work experience.

ABOUT BURNING GLASS

Burning Glass Technologies delivers job market analytics that empower employers, workers, and educators to make data-driven decisions. The company's artificial intelligence technology analyzes hundreds of millions of job postings and real-life career transitions to provide insight into labor market patterns. This real-time strategic intelligence offers crucial insights, such as which jobs are most in demand, the specific skills employers need, and the career directions that offer the highest potential for workers. Find out more at burning-glass.com.

ABOUT SERVICE YEAR ALLIANCE

Service Year Alliance is working to make a year of paid, full-time service—a service year—a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans. A service year before, during, or after college—or as a way to get back on track—gives young people the chance to develop their skills, make an impact on the lives of others, and become the active citizens and leaders our nation needs. Expanding service years has the power to revitalize cities, uplift and educate children at risk, and empower communities struggling with poverty. It can unite the most diverse nation in history, binding people of different backgrounds through common cause. Service Year Alliance is asking nonprofits, higher education institutions, cities and states, companies and foundations, policymakers of both parties, and people of all ages to join the movement. Learn more at serviceyear.org.



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Post-Service Year Preparation Checklist

Preparing your service year corps members for their next steps after service should start the moment that their service year begins. Use this handout to evaluate steps that you can take to make sure your service year corps members are ready to hit the world running!

Months 0-3 - Start Off Strong

Coach service year corps members on elevator pitches about your organization and their service.

Guide service year corps members to set short term and long term goals for their service year and for their personal and professional life beyond service.

Identify any training needs or requests from your service year corps member to help them be successful in their service and their post-service goals.

Share a program calendar of in-service touch points for the rest of the year.

Give your members a framework to record important data about their service activities (total hours served, houses built, acres gardened, etc)

Months 3-6 - Build Skills and Networks

Match your service year corps member with a mentor who will support them during service and advice on next-steps.

Provide connections to skill-building classes, online or in person, that relate to their service, personal interests, or career aspirations.

Educate your members on 21st Century Skills and how their service relates to workplace skills

See [Translating Service Year Skills](#) worksheet

Create opportunities for your service year corps members to network.

Send them to conferences, community meetings, and local events. Create process for corps members to find and request these professional development opportunities.

Have leaders from the community and/or alumni to host a "brown bag" to talk with corps members about how they got to their current career.

If your service year corps members are interested in pursuing higher education, help them prepare to apply.

Link to Standardized Test Supports (SAT, grad school?)

Link to Higher Ed Matches

How to best utilize Segal Education Award

Months 6-9 - Build Skills and Networks

Provide and/or check summary data of service activities (total hours served, houses built, acres gardened, etc).

Teach your members how to put their service on a resume or in job application.

See "[AmeriCorps on your Resume](#)"

Give members in-service hours to complete their resume, update their LinkedIn, register as an Alum, and other transition preparation activities.

Practice interviews and networking skills.

Invite your members to your next Board meeting and host a 15 min networking event where they can speak with Board members about their aspirations and interests. Your board will love to offer their advice and their network.

Be transparent about any opportunities to serve again or transition to a staff position. If your service year corps member decides these opportunities are not for them, support them to find the right next step.

Month 9-12 - Find the Next Step!

Continue to have open conversations about next steps for your service year corps members. Support your members in their job search. Explicitly offer to act as a reference.

Continue to support & refine corps members resumes.

Convene a reflection activity for the members to document their year, and discuss their personal growth and development

Encourage every member to have a story about “what they learned about themselves during their service”

Tap into your networks to let potential employers know that your service year corps members are skilled & looking for jobs.

Ping alumni network for help.

Are you in a small community? Build a resume book! Take all your graduating members' resumes and put them in a pdf with a short cover memo from your Executive Director -> email the pdf to all the nonprofits you work with plus board members of your org and other private sector partners. Your grads are highly sought emerging leaders!

Encourage your members to use the Employers of National Service network as a starting place.

SERVICE YEAR CORPS

MEMBER GOAL SETTING

A service year is a valuable, life-changing experience where you will learn a lot about yourself and new skills. Your service year host organization will give you many opportunities for self-growth and professional development through in service trainings and reflections. These trainings and reflection times will be more useful if you have an idea of the short- and long-term goals you want to achieve. A good practice is to do this beyond your service year and use these skills to plan yearly goals for yourself.

What do you want to accomplish in your service year? What do you want to do after service? How about about your future career and education plans? These may seem like daunting questions, but don't worry! Whether you have a 10 year plan or have no idea what you want to do with your life, showing that you set goals and achieved them during your service year will help you get the most out of your experience and set you up for success in your future. Getting in the practice of goal setting will help you stay on track for the career goals you do have - and if you're still figuring it out, it will help you refine your skills and thoughts on what to do next! Are some long-term goals that you want to work on to take to your next opportunity and beyond? Understanding what you want to get out of the experience is the first step in being able to take action and work on it during your service year.

GET IN THE GOAL-SETTING MINDSET

When you are making goals for your service year (or any job), it's helpful to start out with your position description to know what you are supposed to achieve. From there, you can also determine what sort of skills you will develop from your work or what skills or knowledge you will need to accomplish your service deliverables.

Once you know what you need to accomplish in your service year, you can also think about the skills that you want to get better at to help you in your future. Below are some questions that could help you tease out the the skills and information you will need, which will help you craft your goals. Grab some paper and start to brainstorm!

- What are the deliverables of your position?
- Are there other things you want to achieve during service that aren't in your position description?
- What are 3-5 professional skills you need to help your deliverables or other goals?
- What skills do you hope to develop through this position?
- What are your biggest strengths that will prove most effective during your service year and achieving your goals?
- What are areas or skills you want to improve?
- What do you know to know about your organization or issue area to be successful with your service year role?
- When your service year is over, what do you hope you can say you accomplished? Or what do you want to have learned or experienced?

Need more inspiration? Check out this set of TED Talks about goal setting to give you more ideas: <https://www.ted.com/topics/goal-setting>.

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS 101

Once you have some ideas of the deliverables for your service year position and of other skills you'd like to it's important to write your goals in a way that helps you take action towards achieving them. A great way to make sure your goals are actionable is to use the "SMART" goals format, which commonly* stands for:

SPECIFIC -- Goals clearly define the desired outcome to solve a problem, take advantage of an opportunity, or meet a challenge and who the participants are.

MEASURABLE -- Goals demonstrate tangible change expected and progress towards your desired outcome. There are usually short-term measurements built into a long-term goal.

ACHIEVABLE -- Goals must be attainable with the time and resources available. The appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities must be present by the individual or team or be able to learn in order to achieve the goal.

RELEVANT -- Goals measure outcomes within the scope of the work / project. Scope areas could include: the organization's mission and values, service year program, current project, your assignment, or your career pathway.

TIME-BOUND -- Goals specify when you want to achieve your goal.

*There are variations in what the letters of SMART stand for. We listed and defined the most commonly used ones and you can check out other variations.

EXAMPLES OF S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

By March 6, 2019, I will interview 10 nonprofit Executive Directors in Richmond, VA, to see what needs are unmet in the community.

I will finish an online project management course by January 31, 2019 to build skills for the communication and marketing plan project I will start on February 6, 2019.

EXAMPLE OF GOALS THAT ARE NOT S.M.A.R.T.

I will finish my current project and learn from the implementation.

I will have an impact on the students in my tutoring program.

Writing your goals in the SMART way allows you to track your progress and evaluate whether you are successful. It may take a little time to get use to writing your goals in this way, but the more more you practice, the better you'll get at it. Also, this is a skill that all employers value, so getting good at writing actionable goals during your service year will help you in future opportunities!

OTHER S.M.A.R.T. GOAL RESOURCES:

<https://www.smartsheet.com/blog/essential-guide-writing-smart-goals>

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-SvuFIQjK8>

GOALS

GET SUPPORT FOR YOUR GOALS

It's great to give yourself some time and space to think about what you want for yourself, but when it comes to your service year and career plans after, it's helpful to get advice from your supervisor, teammates, or other trusted advisors to make sure you are on the right track. Also, sharing your goals with others makes sure you are working towards the same thing and helps keep you accountable!

WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

Talk over your goals with your program supervisor to see how your goals align with the goals of the program. Your supervisor may even want to help you craft the goals for your position. Here are some questions you can ask:

- What do they see as the biggest deliverables for your position?
- Could your supervisor give you regular feedback and help keep you accountable to achieving your goals?
- What resources or training do they have available for you to build your skills and help achieve your goals?
- Are there any grants tied to the completion of these goals? (This is a big one in the nonprofit world - sometimes it can be helpful to hear the context of why certain goals are made!)

WITH YOUR TEAM

If you are working with other service year corps members as part of a team, it's helpful to know what goals you are working on together and what goals you each have for yourselves. Keep each other accountable to make sure you are always working with a purpose!

- How can working on a team help you reach your goals?
- Could team members give you feedback? What is the best way to do that?
- What skills and strengths do you bring to the team?
- What are areas of weakness for you where a teammate could help?

REVISIT YOUR GOALS OFTEN

Goals are no help if you write them once and never look at them again! Make sure to get in the habit of reviewing your goals often. Figure out what goals need weekly, monthly, or quarterly check ins.

Don't be afraid to edit your goals either! If you realize that a goal you had written no longer applies or isn't achievable, change up your goals so that they work for you where you are now. Goals are not set in stone, but rather they are a working, living guide to help you stay on track!

THRIVE DURING YOUR SERVICE YEAR

Once you've figured out how to [#SurviveYourServiceYear](#), you can start to build habits that will help you [#thrive](#). Check out these resources to help you in your service year, your future career, and in your life outside of your work!

[OPTIONS FOR FREE & CHEAP CLASSES, EBOOKS, AND MORE!](#)

In your service year and in your careers afterwards, it's always a good idea to brush up on your skills or learn something new. Being a continuous learner will help you increase your ability to achieve success. This guide has recommendations for free or inexpensive online classes and other learning resources to help you keep you sharp!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

[SELF-CARE + STRESS MANAGEMENT](#)

Though a service year is a valuable, life-changing experience, that doesn't mean it's always easy. Everyone has ups and downs while they're serving and encounters situations that are difficult to deal with. Learning to take care of yourself while you work through tough issues will let you thrive in your service year and prepare you for future success.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

[LIFESTYLE](#)

Doing a service year and living on a budget doesn't have to stop you from having fun! Have fun on the cheap in your community by joining a fitness group, going to local events, and hosting potlucks with your service year friends.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

[TELL YOUR STORY](#)

Being able to tell your story is a fundamental part of being human. We need to tell our story in interviews, to funders, to our family and friends, on social media, and in all life matters in order to achieve our goals. This resource walks you through the necessary components of telling a compelling story based on the public narrative model.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

[POST SERVICE YEAR PREP](#)

Preparing for your next steps after service should start the moment that your service year begins. Use this handout to evaluate steps that you can take each month to make sure you're ready to hit the world running! (Note: This resource was created for programs, but we think that it could be helpful for any corps member to see and use as a guide for their own preparation!).

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

[GOAL SETTING](#)

Whether you have clear career plans or have no idea what you want to do with your life, showing that you set goals and achieved them during your service year will help you in your future. Use our guide to help you think big picture, practice SMART goals, and work with your supervisor and your team to make achieving your goals a breeze!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

STARTING A NEW JOB



Just accepted a new position? Congratulations! No matter if you are starting a service year, internship, or job, your preparation and first day will feel pretty similar. Get ready to make a great first impression, fight your new job jitters, and learn how to make the most of your time before and after the job starts.

YOU JUST GOT A JOB OFFER! NOW WHAT?

- **Step one:** Celebrate! You worked hard and clearly impressed your new employer!
- **Step two:** Decide if you will accept, deny, or negotiate the job offer.
- **Step three:** Once you have decided, you will need to inform the employer of your decision:
 - An acceptance (or denial) letter often can be done via email and should include a start date, salary, benefits, job title, etc., and a written acceptance of the job offer.
 - Or, if an employer sends you an offer letter and it lays out the terms and conditions you negotiated and mutually agreed to, simply sign-off via their terms and conditions.
- **Step four:** If you are currently employed, remember it's customary to give at least two weeks notice before your last day. You will want to tell your boss and hand in a formal letter of resignation before you start letting other coworkers know that you are leaving your current role.
- **Step five:** Let people in your network know that you will be starting a new role. Make sure professional contacts know who they should follow up with if they still have business with your previous employer and update your social networks – like LinkedIn – so everyone can share in your celebration!

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME OFF BETWEEN JOBS

If you are able to, it's great to take a little time off before starting your new job. [Get organized, schedule appointments, and run errands.](#) Once you start your new job, you'll likely have to use vacation time to accomplish these tasks. Also, don't forget to relax! Starting a new job can be stressful, so take some time to do things that make you happy and spend time with the ones you love!

CONQUER NEW JOB JITTERS

It's normal to be both nervous and excited about your new position. Success on your first day starts with preparation the night before you start.

- Make sure your outfit is ready to go. Leading up to your first day of work, make sure to ask what the office dress code is. If you don't know, err on the side of being overdressed.
- Set your alarm for earlier than you normally would and plan on being early. Give yourself plenty of extra time for your commute because there's nothing worse than being stuck in rush hour traffic, or missing the last train that will get you there on time. If you get there too early, maybe treat yourself to your favorite breakfast sandwich or latte!
- Review your job description and do final research on your organization. You'll feel great walking in with a strong understanding of the organization, and fully confident about what your role is. Also, remember to bring any papers or identification you may need in order to fill out any remaining paperwork on your first day.
- Get a good night sleep and remember that you'll be great! They hired you because they see potential in you, and you accepted it because you want to work there too.

BE CONFIDENT ON YOUR FIRST DAY

Your lunch is packed, coffee is drank, and you remembered to lint roll your fluffy friend's hair off your new blazer.

You're already killing your first day! Set the tone of your new job by [staying engaged and confident on your first day](#).

You will adjust quickly, and you won't feel like the new kid for too long.

- Treat your first day like an extension of your interview. You want to put your best foot forward so that everyone is just as excited as you are about your new role at the office. Be your best professional, upbeat self.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and take notes the old school way – paper and pen. You'll have a ton of new information thrown at you: names, random acronyms, systems and passwords, etc. You won't learn or remember everything on your first day, and that's okay, but make sure to ask about things you don't understand instead of just nodding yes to everything. Bonus points: When you write it down you can look back later instead of having to ask the same question over and over again.
- Keep a list of questions throughout the day and refer back to them. Writing down thoughtful questions will show that you are engaged and are soaking up as much information as possible. Schedule a few minutes to check in with your manager at the end of your first day, or even at the end of your first week, and work to get those questions answered.
- [Make a great impression](#) with your new coworkers. Say hello and introduce yourself to everyone – even though you are new, they may not take the lead. Lunchtime is a great opportunity to get to know people. If there is a group in the break room, don't be nervous about asking to join! If you need to go get lunch, ask your new colleagues to go with you or to give you recommendations. You'll be able to try out the office's favorite lunch spot and you will feel more comfortable once you get to know a few people a bit better.
- Pay attention to your organization's culture and your coworkers' personalities. Start to learn people's titles and roles so that you know who to go to when you have questions. Listening is key – if you're nervous, just ask questions and listen, people love talking about themselves and they'll like that you're asking for your information!

BRING A DESK SURVIVAL KIT

Having a few things on hand will make sure you can handle any little emergency! You don't need to bring this on your first day, but once you know what your desk or locker situation is, it's a great idea to keep a little kit with essentials.

Things you might want to include in your survival kit:

- Deodorant
- Clothing Tape
- Stain Remover Pen
- Bandages
- Hair ties & pins
- Underwear and socks
- Non-perishable snacks/lunch
- Mints or gum

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [6 Mistakes People Make in the First Week at a New Job](#)
- [27 things you should do on your first day of work](#)
- [Your Guide to Your First Week on the Job](#)
- [Starting a New Job Tomorrow? Here's How to Rule your First Day](#)
- [Do these 5 Things on your First Day to Win Instant Respect](#)
- [So, you Landed a New Job? How to Get the First 3 Months Right](#)



STRESS MANAGEMENT AND SELF CARE

Though a service year is a valuable, life-changing experience, that doesn't mean it's always easy. Everyone has ups and downs while they're serving and encounters situations that are difficult to deal with. Learning to take care of yourself while you work through tough issues will let you thrive in your service year and prepare you for future success. Managing stress is a skill that will let you thrive in any workplace - and your life outside, of course! - so learning self-care strategies during your service year that work for you will translate directly to your career and well-being beyond.

WHAT EXACTLY IS STRESS?

Stress is part of our "fight-or-flight" survival mechanism. A threatening situation will trigger a stress response in our body, which releases hormones that prepare us to fight or flee a possible danger. Unfortunately though, the stress response is also triggered by tense situations where physical action is not an option, such as an unreasonable boss, heavy traffic, or financial problems. When these problems are ongoing, known as chronic stress, the continuous build up of fight-or-flight hormones in our bodies can lead to some serious physical and mental issues.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STRESS:

- [Understanding the stress response](#)
- [From burning bright to simply burned out](#)
- [Ted Talk: How to make stress your friend](#)

WHAT IS SELF CARE AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Self care is identifying your needs and taking steps to meet them, especially when you are feeling stressed out. It helps you manage all aspects of your life that affect your overall health – the physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual components of an individual's well being. Check out this [self care wheel](#) to see examples in each category, or look at this [Self Care Assessment](#) designed to give you a snapshot of where you are currently giving your attention, and to help you to think about other ways you can contribute to your wellbeing.

There is a ton of information out there about self care, but it's important to remember a few things when you begin to evaluate what self care looks like for you and others in your life:

Self care requires a lens of intersectionality. You may hear "self care" and think that it's only for Instagram-perfect white ladies doing yoga, but that isn't the case. Self care is for everyone – including men, people of color, people with lower incomes – but it won't and shouldn't look the same for everyone. As written by Rex Leonowicz in this great article about [intersectionality and self care](#), "We have to transform the way we understand self care because it doesn't exist in a wormhole, where the effects of oppressions and privilege have no bearing on how we are able to care for ourselves."

Self care isn't an excuse to ignore your responsibilities. Getting take-out when you've had a busy day could be self care. Getting take-out every night because you don't want to cook, go grocery shopping, or *gasp* do dishes is not probably not self-care – it's likely avoiding a basic responsibility of

adulthood. Be honest with yourself about when you need time to decompress and feel refreshed so that you are able to get things done later, and when you are just avoiding doing the things you need to. If you find you are having trouble maintaining some responsibilities, it might be time to seek out help (see below for more info).

Self care is about actually taking care of yourself. Everyone once in a while, a “[treat yo self](#)” shopathon might be just what you need, but more often than not, it’s about making time for activities and routines that help you truly take care of your mental, physical, and emotional health – and won’t require a big spending spree. Doctors appointments, eating balanced meals, and making time for your valued relationships are all part of self care.

Self care is about you! Only you can judge for yourself what are the right activities for you and when you need to carve out special time for self care. Along the same lines, it’s not your role to evaluate what is or isn’t self-care for someone else. Friends and family may help with your self-care - and you may help them - but ultimately it’s for every person to find what works for them.

EXAMPLES OF SELF CARE & STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Below are some proven ways that people manage their stress and take care of themselves in all aspects of their lives. Find the strategies that work best for you!

KEEP A JOURNAL

A journal is an easy and cheap way to start evoking mindfulness in your daily life. You can work out past frustrations, current hurdles, and record your dreams in a safe space meant just for you. Journaling has been shown to help with [achieving goals](#), [boosting memory](#), [improving communications skills](#), and [healing](#). It’s a great first step in self discovery and learning more about how you react to stress. Bonus – just by journaling, you’re taking time for yourself!

EXERCISE

There are plenty of studies that confirm that exercising in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. [It boosts your feel-good endorphins and distracts you from your daily worries](#). Take a walk (with or without a friend), go on a jog, do a few laps at the local pool, or throw your favorite workout on the TV. Maybe even try something new like boxing or spinning, or train for a marathon – whatever gets you going, keep moving for your physical and mental well being!

DO YOGA

Find a yoga studio in your area that allows you to take classes for a decent price, or try yoga at home for free! There are countless [benefits to incorporating yoga](#) into your daily life, and it’s a great place to start with [self care](#). Check out YouTube channels like [Yoga With Adriene](#) - [Yoga for Beginners](#) series for some of the basic moves, and then you can move up into more [advanced practices](#). Test out some different classes with different instructors and see what’s right for you!

MEDITATE

Learning to mediate can be a simple but effective way to reduce stress, boost your mood, and improve focus. It can feel difficult to figure out where to start, so looking into some meditation apps is a great

place to start. **Headspace** and **Calm** are two popular meditation apps that offer both guided and self-guided meditations that can be customized for what's happening in your life. **Starting with guided meditations** can be a valuable way to learn how to meditate to limit frustration that may come up early on by not knowing what to do.

SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES

Make time for the relationships that are important to you. Call your mom or have a movie night with your buddies. **Having friends present in our lives** lowers the stress hormones in our bodies. If a big gathering sounds like a fun way to de-stress, go for it! If you recharge by being alone, that's fine too, but make time for meaning connections with your loved ones – **even introverts need people!**

GET OUTSIDE

Being outdoors has some pretty amazing stress-relieving benefits. You don't have to be super outdoorsy – just a little time outside each day in the **sun has important health benefits!** If you don't get as much outdoor time as you'd like during the winter, or if you live or work somewhere without good natural lighting, you might want to **invest in a sun lamp** to help naturally elevate your mood.

FIND A NEW HOBBY OR ACTIVITY, ESPECIALLY A CREATIVE OUTLET!

Sick of zoning out in front of Netflix? Try finding a creative hobby! You don't have to be an expert artist to get a fun coloring book or a five-star chef to try a new recipe. Finding a new hobby, **especially one that has meditative, repetitive actions** like crafting or coloring, is great for your brain. And news flash: **knitting isn't just for grandmas anymore!**

OTHER IDEAS FOR SELF CARE AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **50 self care ideas**
- **45 Simple Self-Care Practices for a Healthy Mind, Body, and Soul**
- These activities to practice **Stoicism**

TURN OFF

It's important to take time each day to get away from social media and any electronics (I know, I know, waaay easier said than done). You may think that TV or scrolling through Instagram are helping you unwind, but in reality the blue light is keeping your brain from fully relaxing. Not to mention that social media can sometimes adversely affect your mental health. Use the tips above to help you find an activity that gets you off your screen, and try to turn everything off at least an hour before you'd like to fall asleep.

SEEK HELP

Always remember that seeking help from a licensed facilitator or professional is always an option and never a failure. You shouldn't feel ashamed for seeking therapy to work out issues that you're unsure of how to handle or need help with. At any point, anyone can decide that it's time to set up an appointment with a therapist, but some common signs that you should consider professional help include feeling like you can't control your emotions, relying on a substance to cope, and not enjoying activities that used to be important to you. Read more suggestions here about when it might be time to step up and seek help. If you need immediate help or are worried about your safety or that of a friend, you can call anytime, toll-free, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> to chat and find help.

CREATING A BUDGET

There are many tips to manage your finances, but while doing a service year, you will need some practical budgeting techniques to keep you afloat. Adopt these useful tips now to make the most of your stipend and learn skills you can use beyond your service year.

BUDGETING 101:

This may seem obvious, but here it is: if you don't know where you are spending your money, you don't have control over it. Whether you are earning a service year stipend or a six-figure salary, knowing all of your expenses and making sure they are within your income – aka, having a budget – is the foundation of a financially-sound life. The [Guide to Budgeting](#) from The Balance is a great place to start for newbies!

FIGURE OUT YOUR INCOME:

The first step of making a budget is figuring out your income. Apart from your service year stipend, you may have other forms of income from side-jobs or other sources. Remember that you should use your post-tax amount when planning for the amount you have to spend in your budget. Also, decide on the timeframe for which you are creating a budget. Many people have monthly bills but get paid bi-weekly, so keep that in mind when determining your expenses vs. income.

FIND A BUDGET SYSTEM:

There are many different ways to organize a budget, and one is not necessarily better than another – it's just important find the one that works for you! Here are some examples of budget systems, templates, and apps that might help you create budget.

APPS/WEBSITES:

- [Mint](#) (free)
- [Wally](#) (free)
- [YouNeedABudget](#) (low cost)

BUDGET SYSTEMS

- [The 50-30-20 Rule](#)
- [Six Ways to Budget Your Money](#)
- [Basic Budgeting Tips Everyone Should Know](#)

IF THIS ALL SEEMS OVERWHELMING, WE SUGGEST STARTING WITH A SIMPLE LINE-ITEM BUDGET:

- Start by figuring out your [post-tax income](#).
- List out your expenses each month - some are fixed like rent and loan payments, while others are variable like groceries and entertainment. Don't forget to add in savings!
- Check that your income is greater than all of your expenses. Adjust if necessary by lowering your estimates for spending on "wants."
- At the end of the month, see where you actually spent your money. Did you go over or under in a category? Surprised how

much you spend on coffee? Use this info to help you adjust your budget for the next month – it may take a little while to get the hang of it.

- Pat yourself on the back! Starting is the hardest part, so you're doing great!

EXPENSES YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN CREATING YOUR BUDGET:

ESSENTIALS:

These are expenses that you absolutely cannot live without, such as, but not limited to:

- Rent/Mortgage
- Utilities
- Food (groceries - not eating out!)
- Transportation
- Cell phone
- Minimum monthly loan and/or credit card payments
- Insurance (health, home, car, etc.)
- Any other essential bills
- [Child expenses](#)/family obligations
- Pet expenses

OTHER FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS:

Welcome to a crash course on #adulting! Before you get overwhelmed by all the money you should be saving, remember this doesn't all have to happen during your service year. Paying down debts and saving for future needs and wants should be factored into your monthly expenses in the long run, but consider starting now to save even a little bit per paycheck – you will thank yourself later.

- Tuition or Student loan payments (beyond the minimum amount in "essentials")
- Other Loan and Credit card payments (beyond the minimum amount in "essentials")
- Emergency fund (see details below!)
- 401K/IRA/Roth IRA (aka Retirement! It might not apply during your service year, but do some [research on the basics](#) so you'll know options for the future.)
- Health Savings Account
- Investments
- Savings for future housing purchases, travel, and vacations
- Savings for whatever else is important to you!

PERSONAL CHOICES:

These are expenses each month that help you have a comfortable and happy life, though you could live without when you need to save money. Look over your last month or two to see where you spend your money on average – it might surprise you how fast the little things add up!

- Gym membership
- New clothes, shoes, or household goods





- Netflix, cable, music streaming, and other entertainment subscriptions
- Membership fees to Amazon or other subscription services
- Take-out & restaurants
- Coffee shops
- Alcohol & bars
- Social events & other forms of entertainment
- Gifts (reminder to factor in holidays!)
- Travel
- Electronics (we know you want that new iPhone!)
- Convenience services like Uber, house cleaning, grocery delivery, etc.

OTHER IMPORTANT FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

EMERGENCY FUND

If you don't have one already, set up an [emergency fund](#). Many experts recommend having an emergency fund of 3-6 months of paychecks in savings in case a major life event or emergency happens. While this often is difficult to do on a stipend, put away as much as you can now, and then continue to build it over time. It is also important to consider finances for your post-service year transition as you plan for potential gaps in employment, moving to a new place (or staying where you served!), or becoming a student.

TAXES

Tax season will most likely hit at some point during your service year, and taxes are typically due on April 15th. While taxes vary from state to state, here is a quick crash course to get you started:

- Check out the [free federal tax preparation](#) available if you made under \$64,000 last year.
- Seek out resources like the [IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#) which offer free tax help for taxpayers who qualify. Additionally, [AARP offers tax aid](#).
- If you have any concerns, set up an appointment to speak with a tax accountant about your finances.

SAVE WITH DISCOUNTS

Access member discounts if you join [AmeriCorps Alums](#) at Service Year Alliance after your service year. You can also check out an up-to-date listing of [Alums discounts](#). Some of these discounts are available to currently serving service year corps members, too.

If you are currently a student or if you are going back to school after your service year, always check to see if there is a [student discount](#) you can use before making a purchase! From tech companies to clothing stores, many places offer discounts just for being a student.

A FINAL NOTE:

Creating and sticking to a budget is not easy. Think about what you absolutely need – especially during your service year, you may have to make some sacrifices. Though it might not be fun to decline an invite to dinner or miss a concert you've been wanting to see, sticking to your budget will help you be less stressed, and so much happier, throughout your service year and after.

CHECK OUT MORE RESOURCES TO [#SURVIVINGYOURSERVICEYEAR](#)

COMMUTING

Have you ever heard someone say they love their commute to work? If so, find out how that person is commuting and do what they do! Commuting can be a stressful part of the work day, but it doesn't have to be that way! Learn tips for saving money while commuting on your stipend and making your commute more fun.

FIND YOUR WAY

Commuting options drastically differ in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Start by asking your program how their staff gets to work everyday. They will be your best resource for figuring out the most efficient public transportation routes, biking and walking conditions, or parking options for your site.

DRIVING

For many places, a car is a necessity. If you need to drive, do what you can to cut costs!

- Consider carpooling to split the cost of driving with your ride-mates.
- [Maximize your MPG](#). The longer you sit idling in traffic, the more gas you burn, so test out alternative routes to avoid heavily congested areas.
- Try to minimize A/C Usage. If you are cruising under 60 mph, open your windows to cool down. Speeds over 60mph create excessive wind drag, so it's better to turn on the A/C.
- Find the cheapest gas. Use an [app to find the best gas prices](#), and join rewards programs to accumulate points to use for cents off the gallon later!

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

If you are live in a place that has public transportation, utilize it! Look to see what buses, trains, and ride-sharing options are in your area. Even if you have a car, public transportation may save your more money when compared to gas and parking costs. See if you can access a pre-tax transit pass or discounts through your site or local organizations.

BIKING

If you own a bike and you live close to work, you can commute for almost nothing! If not, [buying a bike](#) is a one time cost (plus occasional maintenance) that will save you money in the long run. Get healthy, save some money, and help the environment by cycling to work – just don't forget your helmet and be sure you don't skimp on your bike lock!

WALKING

If your job is within walking distance, skip the car and public transportation and walk to work. It's a great way to get a low impact workout in! 30 minutes of daily walking has incredible health benefits.

LOVE YOUR COMMUTE

Rather than sitting angrily in traffic, [start enjoying your commute](#). Download your favorite music, audio book, or a podcast before you start driving to avoid the temptation of using your smartphone behind the wheel. There isn't much you can do when stuck in traffic or driving, but try to change your mindset and start getting whatever enjoyment you can out of it. It won't really save you money, but it will help save your sanity.

SURVIVING YOUR SERVICE YEAR

No matter where you are in your service year, it's never too late to learn tips for not only surviving, but thriving while living on a stipend. Life on a service year stipend can be one of the most challenging aspects of doing a service year, but with some discipline and these tips below, you can feel confident about your preparation and dedicate more energy to getting things done and making an impact!

CREATING A BUDGET

Though it may seem daunting at first, creating a budget and sticking to it as best as you can will help you make the best use of your stipend and will alleviate a lot of stress. It is also important to consider finances for your post-service year transition as you plan for potential gaps in employment, moving to a new place (or staying where you served!), or becoming a student.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

RELOCATION AND HOUSING

Housing is likely the largest expense you will face during your service year, often between 25% to 50% of your income. If your program does not offer housing and you cannot live with family or friends, consider roommates. Don't be afraid to ask your program for housing recommendations if you are relocating.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

COMMUTING

Transportation to and from your service year, as well as for your own personal needs, is another major cost. Having your own car is expensive – with maintenance, insurance, and payments – so consider using mass transit, carpooling, or ridesharing if they are available in your area. These options are also environmentally conscious to boot!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

EATING ON A STIPEND

Plan to cook your meals at home and bring your lunch to make the most of your money. Have a list and a meal plan when you go to the grocery store to make sure you only purchase items that you will use. See if you are eligible for SNAP benefits on your stipend, and if you are participating in an AmeriCorps program, bring proper documentation. Only eat out for special occasions, and limit drinks – they add to the tab fast!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

STUDENT LOANS SUPPORT

Many service years offer a student loans support through an education award, which can be applied to student debt or future education expenses. Additionally, many service year corps members are eligible for loan deferment or forbearance while they are serving.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

LIFESTYLE

Doing a service year and living on a budget doesn't have to stop you from having fun! Have fun on the cheap in your community by joining a fitness group, going to local events, and hosting potlucks with your service year friends.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

EATING ON A STIPEND



NYC
SERVICE
YEAR

Just because you are doing a service year doesn't mean you can't eat the way that you want! Learning how to make the most of your dollars when it comes to your meals is an important skill that will help you beyond your service year.

APPLY FOR SNAP BENEFITS

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families. SNAP distributes funds on a monthly Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that can be used like a debit card to purchase food at authorized stores. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, and other factors, and vary based on the state you live in. As a service year corps member, you can see if you are [eligible for SNAP](#) benefits and how to [apply](#) in your state. Applying for SNAP benefits takes some time, so if you decide to apply, do it as soon as you can. Often you can apply even before your service year begins. You may need to [bring proper documentation](#) if you are an AmeriCorps member.

OTHER SNAP NOTES:

- You can use SNAP benefits out of state, so remember that if you are traveling!
- Many food items at the grocery store are eligible to use SNAP benefits towards, but there are [some regulations](#). You cannot use benefits towards prepared food (like the hot bar in the grocery store), alcohol, or household supplies.

LEARN TO COOK AT HOME

Whether you're able to utilize SNAP benefits or not, learning how to cook at home is the biggest money-saver when it comes to food. Cooking takes practice, so whether you are the next Iron Chef or are still mastering Easy-Mac, give yourself some cooking goals! Start with what you know, and go from there.

- Learn some basic recipes to [get any beginner started](#).
- Check out [Good And Cheap by Leanne Brown](#), a cookbook to inspire you to plan healthy meals on a tight budget.
- Pinterest is a great source of cheap, easy-to-make meals— keep a board of recipes you'd like to try!

STOCK YOUR KITCHEN

Part of cooking at home is having the right tools to do so. Make a list of [essential kitchen supplies](#) you need, and then shop for the items you don't have. Splitting the costs of these items with roommates can help make furnishing your kitchen easier on all of you. If an item is more expensive, but you will use it every day, it's likely [worth investing](#) in a quality tool. Make sure to thrift for high quality used items before paying full price for it at your local box store!

WHERE TO SHOP

Shop at discounted grocery stores to save money! [Aldi](#), [Lidl](#), [WinCo](#), and [Walmart](#) are good places to get groceries at a reasonable price. You can even purchase grocery staples at your local dollar store. Trader Joe's also has some good prices!

- Check your areas to see if there are any [farmers markets](#)! Some have deals for SNAP recipients or have deals if you show up right before closing. Also, [some farmers markets, co-ops, and CSAs](#) allow you to volunteer and they will pay you with produce.
- [Shop seasonally](#)! Produce in season will always be the cheapest.

MORE TIPS TO SUCCESSFUL GROCERY SHOPPING TRIPS:

- Go armed with a list and stick to it. By planning ahead, you can make your shopping list based on what you already have and what you want to eat so that you know what you still need to buy. Don't forget a calculator or use your phone to track your running total.
- Always avoid shopping hungry! By shopping when you are full, you have a better chance of following your shopping list and buying fewer snacks or items you don't usually buy.
- Look at deals that your favorite grocery store has for the week and plan meals and snacks around what's on sale. Cut coupons from flyers or download apps to see the weekly coupons or sales.
- Many foods can be frozen and then thawed when you are ready to cook or eat it. By freezing food before it goes bad, you will be able to save money in the long run.
- Cook once, eat forever! Plan meals that make leftovers for lunch the next day, or freeze leftovers for a quick meal another day.
- Some foods may be cheaper for you to buy in bulk, like meat, cheese, and grains such as rice and oats.
- Have roommates? Pool your groceries and make bigger meals together. Even if it's just a couple days out of the week – a shared dinner can create a lot of leftovers AND save everyone some scratch!

EATING OUT

Eating out can be a special treat! Make the most of your money by looking for specials (happy hour food deals are a great money saver!), splitting costs with your service year friends, or using other tips to save money while eating out.

Since we do a lot of socializing around meals, it might feel like your only option to see people is by eating out. Try organizing a potluck instead! Everyone can chip in with supplies they already have at home, and you can make a cost-friendly meal. Also, it's totally fine to be honest that you are trying to save money, and suggest coffee or dessert or another activity instead of meeting up for dinner with a friend.

COFFEE

The average cup of coffee costs around \$0.16 to make at home, yet coffee can cost over \$3 if you buy it out. For the same cost of buying coffee out for a week, you could invest in a coffee maker or french press (check your thrift store first!) to make coffee for pennies each day. If hot coffee isn't your thing, try out making your own cold brew coffee. If you own a K-cup coffee maker, buy a reusable k-cup to save more money than using single use coffee pods.



LIFESTYLE



Live your best life when doing your service year! Being thrifty and resourceful doesn't mean you can't have fun!

FURNISHING YOUR SPACE

If you are moving and need some items for your new space, save money by purchasing necessities second-hand online or at thrift stores. Sometimes you can find high quality stuff at a much lower price and can even negotiate. Pro tip: travel to affluent neighborhoods and check out those thrift stores – you may find even nicer quality items! Sometimes, these nicer items even make it to the curb on garbage days. One person's trash can be another's treasure! For things you need to buy new, it might be worth investing in nicer pieces that will last you longer, but if that isn't an option, check your local dollar store to find essentials like mixing bowls or cooking utensils for a low price.

BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL WARDROBE

If you don't have a uniform for your service year and have to wear professional clothing, there are plenty of ways to save money when expanding your wardrobe! Look for timeless basics that can be worn with different outfits and that you can dress up or down.

- Make thrift stores your best friend! Using the same logic as with furnishing your space, you can often find great deals on items you would pay hundreds for elsewhere at places like [Goodwill](#), [Buffalo Exchange](#), and [Salvation Army](#). Make it a fun outing with your service year friends – if nothing else, you'll get some good laughs trying on some of the 80s prom dresses!
- If you prefer online shopping or don't have any thrift stores near you, websites like [Poshmark](#), [Tread Up](#), and [Mercari](#) are great options to buy clothes at a discounted rate.
- Check out off-priced retail like Marshalls, TJMaxx, and Ross. You can find similar items to those sold at normal retailers but for a fraction of the cost.

EXERCISE

We all know how important exercising is, and luckily, it does not need to cost much!

- Find free workout videos by searching on YouTube or Pinterest.
- Running and hiking is free to do and gets you outdoors! If you like doing these activities with others, you can often find groups to join who get together for these activities.
- See if your local Parks & Rec or YMCA has free or reduced classes or workout equipment to use.
- Lots of yoga and other fitness centers offer a free class or a free week to test out that kind of workout. You often can test out a bunch of different classes around your area without having to commit to a year long contract. You may also have access to public or free outdoor classes you can participate in. Yoga in the park, anyone?
- Looking for a tough workout? See if the [November Project](#) is near you! You'll meet new people and get a killer work out in as well.
- Don't forget to pick a great [Spotify playlist](#) to accompany you! If you don't pay for a music streaming service, [Pandora workout station](#) or [YouTube](#) both have free workout playlists, too.



ENTERTAINMENT

There are endless opportunities to find things to do at little-to-no cost. Be open to trying out new things!

SOME LOW-COST ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS:

- Join listservs to get notice of free concerts, festivals, and other events in your area. You can even go old school and read a newspaper for upcoming events. Your local library is a great source of information as well!
- Can't afford to go to that event or concert? Try volunteering for a shift. You help out for a bit, sometimes get free food or swag, and once you are done you can get in for free and be able to enjoy your time after your shift is complete.
- If you are a movie person, consider joining [MoviePass](#). For just under \$10 a month you are able to go to unlimited movies a month! Make sure theaters in your area allow you to use MoviePass before purchasing a membership.
- If you live in a college town, see if they have any fun free events! You may even be able to catch theater productions for very cheap.
- Some museums and zoos provide free or reduced admission several days throughout the month. If you're a frequent visitor, buying a pass might be a better option overall.
- Check out [Groupon](#) to save money on services, products, or events in your area.
- [Meetup](#) is a great way to find new people to do fun things, which is especially great if you relocated for your service year.
- Create your own fun. Invite over some friends and have a game night! Many libraries have board games that you can check out.

TREAT YO SELF

Though [going out to eat, grabbing coffee, and for going out for happy hour](#) probably shouldn't be regular part of your routine, sometimes you need a pick-me-up to get through a tough week! Make the most of your money by looking for specials, splitting costs with your service year friends, using coupons, or joining rewards programs or apps that earn you points for your purchases.

ANIMAL LOVERS UNITE!

If you are an animal lover but can't have a pet with you during your service year, consider different ways to get your dog and cat cuddles! [Volunteering at a local shelter or rescue group, pet sitting, or dog walking](#) are great ways to spend time with pets (and you might even make some extra money!).

PLAN A STAYCATION

If you are starting to get burned out and need of a vacation but can't afford to travel, planning a [staycation](#) might be the perfect thing for you. Find some time, maybe even take a three day weekend, to disconnect, relax, and prioritize all your [favorite things to do](#). That may involve having an all day movie marathon, hiking, or having a DIY spa day!

RELOCATION AND HOUSING



As another service year friend put it, "Relocating is always hard. You don't know anybody, you don't know what to do on a Friday night, and you have no idea how to get anywhere." Amen. Relocating looks different for everyone, but in no time you will be settled and #livingthedream.

GETTING THERE:

FLYING:

[Shopping for your flight](#) on a Tuesday and being flexible about your [travel dates](#) are both great considerations to keep in mind when booking travel. Tuesdays are the most inexpensive day of the week to buy flights! It also can help to use the [incognito mode](#) on your web browser to help score the cheapest deals. Consider using deal-finding apps and websites like [Hopper](#), [Skiplagged](#), and [Airfarewatchdog](#). [Google flights](#) is also a good way [save money when booking your flight](#).

CONSIDER OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:

Look to see what forms of public transportation can get you to your new location. If there are options to take a bus or train, that may be cheaper than flying!

DRIVING:

Driving your own car or renting may be the best option if you have a lot of belongings you are planning to move with you, or if it is cheaper overall. Use a [cost of driving calculator](#) to estimate the cost of your trip, and if renting, don't forget to factor in total miles, fees, and insurance into the cost of your rental.

MOVING YOUR BELONGINGS:

Research a few options to move your items. You can look into shipping boxes, paying for extra suitcases while you travel, driving everything with you, or using a service like [Pod](#). If you know of another service year corps member who is also relocating to the same area, see if you can split costs. Pack light! Instead of paying to relocate all of your belongings, consider storage or leaving things at home or at a friend's place. This may be worth it if you are unsure if you want to permanently relocate to your new location after your service year. Sometimes, instead of moving everything, it might be cheaper to sell your things and buy new ones when you get to your new location, especially if your items were purchased used or from a discount store in the first place (Here's looking at you, Ikea and Craigslist!). If you currently live or are relocating to a college town or a transient city, you may save time and money in the long run.

STARTING YOUR HOUSING SEARCH

As soon as you have committed to your service year, [begin searching](#) for housing. Ask your program if they have any housing resources or suggestions and if they can connect you with any current service year corps members or alums who can give you tips. These service year connections are a great place to start when looking for potential roommates. You can also look up housing or AmeriCorps networking groups on Facebook or other platforms to find others who may be able to support with housing. Whether or not you can connect with a service year network, starting your housing hunt early will help you form realistic expectations of the typical housing options in your area, and some options may be open well in advance of your move. Make a list of your desired amenities and the type of living experience you want. Are you willing to pay more to be in the heart of downtown? Would you take a longer commute to have yard space? Figure out your needs and wants and start your search there.

Make sure you know your stipend early on. This will help determine your price range for housing, and remember to factor in utilities within that cost. Ideally, your total housing should be around 30% of your income, and no more than 50% – use our [budget guideline](#) to help you plan this out! might help you create budget.

WHERE TO SEARCH

Check out websites like [Zillow](#), [Apartments.com](#), [Padmapper](#), [Hotpads](#), or [abodo](#) to start your search. [Craigslist](#) is also a common option to find housing, especially if you are looking to live with roommates. Pro tip: It's never out of the question to ask for pictures or videos of the space. While a lack of images doesn't necessarily mean a post is a scam, often the most legitimate ones tend to include several pictures of the space.

ROOMMATES

If you can't find others serving to live with, you might consider looking for houses or apartments with extra rooms. If you can't make it to your new location before you need to sign a lease, set up a video call to gauge how you'll get along with your future roommates. [Prepare some questions](#) to ask your potential roommates to make sure you would be a good match. Whether you're living with friends or people who you are just meeting, it's important to [set expectations early](#) about your shared living situation. Figure out how you'd like to handle shared expenses and keeping your new place clean. [Ask about habits](#) and talk about what your expectations are for social situations. Some people are looking for roommates to be their new friends, while others are just looking for people that they can split bills with, so be honest about what you are looking for. Your schedule and your finances are probably among the most important considerations you'll want to keep in mind as you screen potential roommates.

WHEN VISITING AN APARTMENT:

If possible, visit before signing a lease. Turn on the faucets, make sure all burners on the stove work, flush the toilet, etc. – you might feel a little crazy, but it's better to know before you move in if anything needs to be fixed! [Ask a ton of questions](#) and bring a notebook to write everything down to avoid mixing up the details if you are seeing multiple places.

If you can't do the tour in person see if a friend in the area is able to tour for you. Pictures and videos of the exact apartment are a must if you cannot visit it in person!

BEFORE YOU SIGN THE LEASE:

Actually take the time to read the lease and make sure that the rules, maintenance process, vacancy notice, and any other terms discussed are included. Understand exactly who is responsible for utilities and how they are paid. [If anything is unclear, ask](#). Once you sign this lease, it is a legally binding document, so address any potential issues ahead of time.

MOVING WITH A PET

If you decide to bring your furry friend with you, make sure to factor them in early to your moving plans. Pet friendly spaces are critical, no matter what kind of pet you have. Make sure to check the lease to see if there are any restrictions over how many and what kind of animals are allowed. Many places charge an additional monthly fee on top of the rent if you have a pet living with you.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Do you need to find a place with a backyard for your pet?
- Is your new place near a dog park?
- Do you have a car to transport your animal to the vet?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP IN MOVING A PET:

- [ASPCA: Moving with your Pet](#)
- [Moving with Pets: 10 Tips for Success](#)

UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS

Once you move, remember that you will need to [change your address in many places](#). It should be among the [first things you do once you make it to your new place](#). Some of these changes, like updating your bank information, can often happen before you move, where other things like updating your drivers license often must be done in person in your new state's Department of Motor Vehicles.

MAKE IT YOUR HOME!

Congrats on moving in! Now that you have a new place, make it a place that you want to be. Furnish it with things that make you happy, and start to explore your new neighborhood. [Check out our guide to living it up in your new community!](#)



CHECK OUT MORE RESOURCES TO [#SURVIVINGYOURSERVICEYEAR](#)

STUDENT LOAN SUPPORT



Student loans are the #worst. We've been there with you. Living on a service year stipend while you have student loans might seem impossible, but it's likely you are eligible for options that will help you manage your loans and let you focus on what really matters – your service year!

PAUSE YOUR STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS

There are two ways to temporarily pause your loans while you are doing your service year. By not having to pay towards your student loans while you are doing your service year, you'll have additional funds to help make ends meet.

LOAN FORBEARANCE

Service year corps members who have students loans may be [eligible for loan forbearance](#) during their service year. This is at the discretion of the lender. Student loan forbearance allows you to not make any payments on your student loans while you are serving. During this time, your student loans will still accrue interest. If you are an AmeriCorps member, you can make a forbearance request via your [AmeriCorps Portal homepage](#). If you choose to do multiple service years and are eligible for forbearance, you can opt to apply annually for loan forbearance.

LOAN DEFERMENT

Based on income, you may also be eligible for loan deferment. By deferring your loans instead of applying for forbearance, you will delay both your payments and interest accrual. This is at the discretion of your lender and you should contact them to inquire about the deferment option.

INCOME-DRIVEN PAYMENT PLANS

Based on your income, you may opt to sign up for a payment plan based on your income. Service year corps members living solely on the stipend may be eligible for very low, even \$0 loan payments. This is particularly helpful if you would like to meet the 10 year, 120 payments requirement of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS

If you work in public service, you may be eligible to have your student loan debt cancelled through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. While on this program, you make 120 monthly loan payments over 10 years, and then any remaining loans after that time are forgiven. Payments do not have to be consecutive. Loan forbearance months do not count, but loan deferment months do. There are [special rules](#) that allow borrowers who are AmeriCorps members or Peace Corps volunteers to use their Segal Education Award or Peace Corps transition payment to make a single "lump sum" payment that may count for up to 12 qualifying PSLF payments.

AMERICORPS SEGAL EDUCATION AWARD

AmeriCorps members are often eligible for the [Segal Education Award](#) upon successful completion of a service year. Contact your program to see if you qualify. You can use your Education Award for seven years following the end of your service year. [The Education Award amount](#) can change every year based on the amount of the Pell Grant. While [private loans](#) cannot be paid

through your Education Award, you can apply it to most federal loans, however there are [some exceptions](#). Eligible loans, tuition, and educational costs at most universities can be paid with your award. All [requests must be made after completion](#) of your service year.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SEGAL EDUCATION AWARD

- [Some universities will match your education award or provide additional scholarship because of your service year](#). Please ask your university's financial aid office if you qualify.
- [VISTA members may opt out of the Education Award](#) to receive a post-service year cash stipend in place of the Education Award. VISTA members may also be eligible for up to 15% cancellation on certain types of loans. AmeriCorps VISTA members who choose to receive the Education Award are not eligible for this cancellation. You can not switch from the cash stipend to Education Award, but you can change from the Education Award to the cash stipend as long as the change occurs before your 10th month of service.
- Remember, when you use your education award, you must [claim it on your taxes as income](#) in the year that you use it. Because of this, you may want to consult a financial professional about the best way and timing to use your education award. Remember, you don't have to use it all at once.
- If you are going back to school, you can apply your education award to future tuition. You may only use a certain amount of your education award in one semester. To figure out how this impacts you specifically, contact your university. If your Education Award exceeds the cost of tuition you owe in one semester, you may be eligible for a reimbursement check through your institution's financial aid office.

INTEREST REPAYMENT REQUEST THROUGH THE SEGAL TRUST

If you selected the Education Award, you may be eligible to make an "interest repayment request" via your [AmeriCorps Portal homepage](#) once you have successfully completed your service year. This repayment is paid by the Segal Trust, and payments are in addition to your Education Award amount is not deducted from Education Award. You do not have to have put your loans in forbearance to make this request, but if you did, then you can have the accrued interest paid for up to 100%. Like your Education Award, this payment is also taxable income in the year it was used. You must have successfully completed your service year for this option to be available to you.





TRANSITION AFTER YOUR SERVICE YEAR

Even from day one of your service year, you are probably already thinking about what you will do when your service year is completed. Will you be looking for a job? Going back to school? Maybe doing another service year with your same organization or a new one? No matter where your next steps take you, your service year is a great time to build your professional skills and be thoughtful about what you want for your future. This guide is especially helpful when you are in job search mode, but you can also work on these skills all year long.

POST SERVICE YEAR PREP

Preparing for your next steps after your service year should start the moment your service year begins. Use this handout to evaluate steps you can take each month to make sure you're ready to hit the ground running. (Note: This resource was created for programs, but we think it could be helpful for any service year corps member to see and use as a guide.)

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

GOAL SETTING

Whether you have clear career plans or no idea what you want to do after your service year, identifying goals you set and achieved throughout your service year is valuable information that can assist you in your job application and interview process. Use our guide to help you think big picture and make achieving your goals a breeze. Also, setting goals is a great way to keep your job searching on track!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

OPTIONS FOR FREE & CHEAP CLASSES, EBOOKS, AND MORE

During your service year and throughout your professional career, it's always helpful to brush up on your skills or learn something new. This guide provides recommendations for free and affordable online classes and other learning resources to help you keep you sharp. There are also specific courses such as job-searching basics like resume writing, LinkedIn, and more!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

TELL YOUR STORY

Telling your story effectively is an important part of the post-service year process. You'll likely tell your story during interviews and while networking so you want to make sure you know your story with ease. Who knows, your story may even encourage others to do a service year, too! This resource walks you through how you can tell a compelling story based on the public narrative model.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

TRANSLATING SERVICE YEAR SKILLS

We know that you are building important skills during your service year. We also know that sometimes it can be tricky to translate what you are doing and learning into terms that resonate with employers or translate into a potential job description. Use our guide to understand the framework employers use to evaluate your skills and how to translate your service year skills so that you can stand apart when applying for jobs.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

AMERICORPS ALUMS RESUME GUIDE

Curious on how you should list your AmeriCorps service year on your resume? Check out this guide that provides detailed instructions on formatting your resume and highlights tips and tricks to ensure your service year and previous job experiences make you look like the best candidate so you can land your dream job!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

NETWORKING & INTERVIEWS

Does the thought of networking or interviewing make you cringe? Don't fret! Whether you love it or hate it, talking to other professionals is an key aspect of any career or job search. Make sure you are covering the basics so you impress anyone you meet! This guide provides information to prepare you and give you confidence in any networking or interview situation.

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)

STARTING A NEW JOB

You've landed a new job – congratulations! Now it's time to make great first impressions, fight those new job jitters, and learn how to make the most of your time right before and right after your new job starts. This guide will provide you with all the information you need to begin your new job on the right foot!

[CLICK HERE FOR CONTENT](#)



Translating Service Year Skills

Service year corps members develop important skills throughout their service year. These skills have many names - 21st century skills, power skills, soft skills, etc - but with whatever name or frame work you use, they all indicate to employers that you have what it takes to succeed in the workplace.

A Framework for Skills

One framework for foundational skills that is useful comes from the [Common Employability Framework](#) from Business Roundtable. This divides skills into four buckets: Personal Skills, People Skills, Workplace Skills, and Applied Knowledge. Ultimately, the specific skills that you focus on will depend on your service experience, your strengths, and the priorities of the job, industry, or education program that you are applying to.

PERSONAL SKILLS	PEOPLE SKILLS	WORKPLACE SKILLS	APPLIED KNOWLEDGE
<p>These skills are what you are like as an individual. Personal skills show that you know your strengths and what you will bring to your job every day.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrity - Responsibility - Resourcefulness - Adaptability - Initiative 	<p>These skills indicate what you are like when you work with others, both with others at your office and with the clients you serve.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication - Teamwork - Respect - Cultural Competency 	<p>These skills reflect how you handle your professional responsibilities and ability to focus, be productive, and get the job done</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem solving - Planning and organizing - Using common tools and technology 	<p>These skills indicate that you have the basic foundation as well as the education to do your specific role. This will vary based on industry.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Math and science - Reading and writing - Applied technology - Critical thinking and analysis

Other helpful frameworks when thinking of skills shown to be valuable in the workplace:

- [Global Digital Citizen Foundation - 21st Century Skills Every Student Needs](#)
- [Partnership for 21st Century Learning - Framework for 21st Century Learning](#)
- [MHA Labs - Skill Building Blocks](#)
- [Envision - 13 Essential 21st Century Skills](#)

[This resource was adapted from Virginia Mentorship Partnership](#)

Translate Your Service Skills into Common Skills

Once you've evaluated the skills that you are gaining and the ones that are most likely to propel you forward in your specific career or educational goals, the next step is to show how your service activities build upon those skills.

1. Identify the actions and projects you regularly complete in your service.
2. Communicate the skills you've developed as a result of this work.
3. Explain how these skills can be applied to other types of work (ex. How would you list this on your resume?)

You should be able to discuss how your skills are applicable to work in different fields. Employers may not directly see the connection between your service year work and the job they're hiring for - it's up to you to be able to clearly and concisely explain how the skills you've developed are relevant to new job roles.

Use this table below to think about some service activities that have been most valuable to your development:

SERVICE ACTIVITY	SKILLS DEVELOPED	APPLICATION TO OTHER WORK/INDUSTRY
<p>Example: Host trainings and orientations for new volunteer Mentors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication / Public speaking - Planning and organizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching research-based practices - Customer service

This resource was adapted from Virginia Mentorship Partnership



A BETTER YOU. A GREATER US.