

MONTANA CAMPUS NETWORK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Montana Campus network for Civic Engagement AmeriCorps State National Program - Host Site Partnership Proposal

Overview: We invite your campus to consider partnering as a host site for a statewide AmeriCorps Program designed to strengthen basic needs security and civic and community engagement among students and campus communities.

Through this partnership, a full-time AmeriCorps member would be placed at your site to expand capacity, coordinate services, and build sustainable systems that support individuals and communities. This proposal outlines the program focus areas, potential member activities, and what participation as a campus would look like.

About AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps is a national program that provides opportunities for Americans to serve in communities and whose mission is to make our people safer, smarter, healthier, and to foster civic engagement through service and volunteering, commonly understood as a domestic version of the peace corps. AmeriCorps places full-time members (40 hours/week) with community organizations, campus partners, and public agencies to serve directly with beneficiaries and meet critical community needs.

Within this program, AmeriCorps members serve as capacity-builders, coordinators, and connectors. Rather than replacing staff, members enhance and extend existing efforts by strengthening systems, partnerships, outreach, and engagement.

Campuses (Host sites) receive:

- The ability to place full-time (40 hours/week) 10-month paid AmeriCorps member (with healthcare benefits) dedicated to campus priorities (September-June)
- Support, training, and administration from MCNCE
- Increased staff capacity to expand services and strengthen community impact
- Connection to a statewide network of partners, annual site supervisor training, and participation in a developing site supervisor cohort receiving valuable training and professional development.

Why This Matters in Montana: Across Montana, many college students struggle to meet basic needs such as food and experience loneliness and lack of connection, challenges that are closely linked to lower academic performance, increased stress, and reduced degree completion. These issues are intensified by Montana's rural geography, rising living costs, and limited local service infrastructure. At the same time, civic and community engagement opportunities, while present, are often under staffed, limiting their impact on student development, sense of belonging, and workforce readiness. Research shows that when basic needs support is paired with sustained, well-structured community engagement, students experience stronger academic outcomes, improved well-being, increased sense of belonging, and deeper connection to their communities.

This program responds to these realities by strengthening both basic needs systems and meaningful civic engagement, supporting student success while advancing the strength of Montana's campus communities.

Program Focus Areas/ Design: Program focus areas and design were developed through a statewide needs assessment, conversations with campus partners, and data gathered from MCNCE's affiliate campuses. During the statewide AmeriCorps Planning Retreat (January 22–23), campus partners reviewed, refined, and selected the program focus areas identified below.

Campus host sites must address and collect data for both focus areas below, ensuring that AmeriCorps member activities address basic needs while also strengthening civic and community engagement. These focus areas serve as guiding frameworks for designing host site-specific projects. Projects should be tailored to each campus's unique priorities, needs, and student population. No two campus host sites are expected to have the same project. Each project should reflect the context and goals of your campus.

Focus Area 1: Basic Needs

This focus area addresses food insecurity and barriers to food access by strengthening campus and community food support systems, expanding pantry services, and increasing awareness of available resources.

How an AmeriCorps Member Could Support Your Site

1. Food Access & Resource Navigation

- Assist students or community members in accessing food pantry services and local nutrition resources
- Strengthen and streamline referral pathways to food assistance programs and partners
- **Food Pantry & Nutrition Support**
 - Support the daily operation of food pantries or campus food distribution hubs
 - Expand pantry hours by providing consistent staffing support
 - Track pantry utilization and participation data to better understand community food needs
 - Create or improve intake, monitoring, and reporting systems
 - Build and strengthen partnerships with food banks, farms, grocery stores, and nonprofits to increase food availability
 - Support community garden projects and free lunch programs
 - Assist in the coordination/support for food drives
- **Outreach & Awareness**
 - Improve signage and visibility of pantry and food access resources
 - Support outreach campaigns to reduce stigma and increase pantry participation
- **Education & Community Engagement**
 - Coordinate culturally relevant food education and awareness events
 - Support peer education workshops focused on nutrition resources and food security
 - Engage student volunteers in supporting the food bank on campus.

Focus Area 2: Civic & Community Engagement

This focus area strengthens connections between campuses and communities by expanding volunteering, service-learning, and cross-sector partnerships.

How an AmeriCorps Member Could Support Your Site

1. Volunteer & Service Coordination

- Organize service days, volunteer fairs, and community projects
- Support recurring service programs that include reflection activities
- Recruit & support student volunteers and clubs/organizations
- **Partnership Development & Community Mapping**
 - Build and strengthen partnerships with nonprofits, community programs, K–12 schools, local government, and private sector partners
 - Map existing campus and community engagement opportunities to reduce duplication and increase collaboration
- **Campus–Community Programming**
 - Coordinate campus-community projects that involve multiple partners
 - Connect students to existing engagement and service programs
 - Support the development of cross-campus or community-wide events, programs, and workshops

Campus Host Site Eligibility & Expectations: To be considered as a host site for this AmeriCorps State National Program, campuses must meet the following requirements:

- Be based in Montana with a brick-and-mortar location
- Align with one or more goals of the MCNCE program
- Contribute to the required cost share for hosting an AmeriCorps member (cash and/or in-kind) (expected cost share approximately \$8,000/per full time member)
- Attend all required trainings, follow MCNCE and AmeriCorps policies and procedures, and maintain consistent communication with MCNCE staff
- Demonstrate a willingness to learn about, promote, and actively support the AmeriCorps program

Campuses play a critical role in supporting AmeriCorps members and ensuring a successful service experience. Campuses are encouraged to view this work as a partnership and remember that we are all part of one team working toward common goals.

Campus host site responsibilities include:

- Designate a Site Supervisor to oversee the AmeriCorps Member and serve as the site-level liaison to MCNCE
- Supporting and encouraging members in meeting their MCNCE service requirements and activities
- Attending orientation for site supervisors, which covers the core responsibilities and logistics of hosting an AmeriCorps member
- Actively engaging in the recruitment process, participating in the interview and selection of AmeriCorps members placed with your campus
- Providing ongoing guidance, assistance, and constructive feedback to the member
- Reviewing and signing weekly timesheets
- Providing necessary work accommodations, such as office space, a chair, phone, and computer access

- Meeting with the member at least once per week for supervision and check-ins
- Being available for regular check-in calls with the Program Coordinator
- Providing site-specific orientation and additional trainings as needed
- Conducting mid-term and end-of-term evaluations for the member
- Completing an end-of-term site review
- Participating in site visits with the AmeriCorps member and Program Coordinator

Next Steps for Campus Host Sites: Campuses interested in moving forward as a host site will be asked to:

1. Review and sign a Letter of Intent (non-binding and intended solely to document interest in partnership)
2. Review and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
3. Submit a site-specific AmeriCorps Position Description (End of April)

Each MCNCE AmeriCorps project includes a Position Description. Campus host sites are expected to further develop this description to reflect site-specific tasks and activities that align with the approved goals and objectives of the overall project. Position Descriptions include specific, measurable outcomes for both campus and community partners. Host sites will work alongside the MCNCE office to complete their Program Description.

Intended Outcomes: Through this partnership, campuses may see:

- Increased access to food and basic needs resources
- Improved referral and data-tracking systems
- Stronger campus and community partnerships
- Increased volunteer engagement and civic participation
- Sustainable systems that continue beyond the AmeriCorps term

The MCNCE office is grateful for the consistent and thoughtful engagement of our campus partners throughout the development of this program. Our hope is to build something that is truly responsive to campus needs, and by co-creating alongside the people doing this work every day, we can move closer to that mission.

We welcome any input, suggestions, or opportunities for conversation as this proposal continues to take shape. Thank you for considering a partnership that supports basic needs security and strengthens civic engagement at Montana campuses through national service.

Best Contact:

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