

Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Administration for Community Living (ACL)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
and
AmeriCorps

This **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)**, is made by and between the Corporation for National and Community Service, operating as AmeriCorps (“AmeriCorps”) and the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“ACL”) (collectively “Parties”). The Parties agree to the following:

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this MOU is to facilitate the development of collaborative activities between ACL and AmeriCorps to help modernize the way public and private non-profit organizations, such as community and faith-based organizations, utilize volunteers – especially older adults and persons with disabilities. The goal is to significantly increase the number of volunteers engaged in service activities; to bolster the ability of Americans across the lifespan to be able to live at home with the supports they need and participate fully in society; and to support communities in need throughout the United States.

ACL and AmeriCorps will maintain open communication on the activities of their respective programs, and to increase, where possible, collaboration and integration of their respective networks. ACL will work with AmeriCorps to help leverage federal investments toward achieving community integration for all.

According to the 2022 Volunteering and Civic Life in America Report, older adults formally volunteered 1.9 billion hours in 2021 for an estimated economic value of almost \$56.7 billion. This is based on Independent Sector’s estimate that the average value of a volunteer hour was \$29.95 in 2021.

In total, 23.7 percent of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) volunteered while 18.0 percent of the Silent Generation (born 1925-1945) volunteered. Despite the number of people who share their time and talents through service, the COVID-

19 epidemic highlighted tremendous gaps in services that exacerbated the needs of our communities that surpass the number of people who currently volunteer.

According to the Population Reference Bureau report, “Aging in the United States,” the number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to more than double—from 46 million today to over 98 million by 2060—and the 65 and older age group’s share of the total population will rise to nearly 24 percent, up from 15 percent.

Older Americans are in an excellent position to support the missions and goals of ACL and AmeriCorps. In many cases they have the time, the experience, and the expertise to volunteer in a variety of community-based activities. In addition, AmeriCorps research findings from longitudinal studies of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers demonstrate a positive relationship between improved health outcomes and volunteering.

Service and volunteer programs need to be proactive to ensure that everyone—including individuals with disabilities—have the opportunity to serve and be active participants. Volunteerism can provide a great opportunity for older persons and persons with disabilities to gain important work-based skills.

Background

The Administration for Community Living (ACL)

The Administration for Community Living (ACL), within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), supports cross-cutting initiatives and efforts focused on the unique needs of individual groups. ACL’s mission is to maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers. ACL promotes policies and practices that allow all people, regardless of age and disability, the opportunity to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in society.

The structure of ACL provides policy and program support for cross-cutting initiatives and efforts focused on the unique needs of older adults, and individuals of all ages with disabilities. ACL integrates the expertise of a number of program divisions, for example:

- **The Administration on Aging (AoA)** provides expertise on program development, advocacy, and initiatives for older Americans and their caregivers and families. Working with states and Tribes, AoA directs programs authorized by the Older Americans Act (OAA) and other legislation that supports older adults. AoA is led by the Assistant Secretary for Aging and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging.
- **The Administration on Disabilities (AoD)** works with states, communities, and partners in the disability networks to increase the independence, productivity, and community integration of individuals with disabilities. Under authorities provided by the Developmental Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Help America Vote Act, the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, and the Public Health Service Act, AoD works to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **Center for Innovation and Partnership** leads ACL's administration of consumer access and protection programs, as well as programs and initiatives that promote the use of self-directed and person-centered service models, for both older adults and people with disabilities, as well as their caregivers and families.

In coordination with AmeriCorps, ACL works to support the use of volunteers throughout its programs and provides expanded opportunities for older adults and others to get involved in their communities.

AmeriCorps is an independent Federal agency in the Executive branch of the U.S. government. The mission of AmeriCorps is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps provides grants, training, and technical assistance to developing and expanding organizations. AmeriCorps also provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve communities across the country by addressing critical community needs through its AmeriCorps Seniors and AmeriCorps programs. In addition, AmeriCorps explores, develops, and models effective approaches for using volunteers to meet the nation's human needs and conducts and disseminates research that helps develop and cultivate knowledge that will enhance the overall effectiveness of national and community service programs.

AmeriCorps administers AmeriCorps Seniors, one of the oldest programs in national service that empowers adults ages 55 and above to support critical local challenges by volunteering in their communities. AmeriCorps Seniors is a grantmaking office that awards grants to community-based organizations to engage older persons in national and community service. Programs can be found in all states and several US territories. AmeriCorps Seniors programs include three signature programs and the senior demonstration program. The Foster Grandparent Program; Senior Companion Program; and RSVP program are the three signature programs. The Foster Grandparent Program is an intergenerational program that engages volunteers aged 55 and older in national service as one-on-one mentors and tutors who provide social-emotional support to children with special or exceptional needs, or who are at an academic, social, or financial disadvantage. The Senior Companion Program is a peer-to-peer program that provides independent living support and companionship to other older adults and adults with differing abilities. The RSVP program volunteers address a wide range of critical community needs that include: recruiting and managing other volunteers, mentoring and tutoring children, providing food security, supporting workforce development and training for job readiness and providing disaster preparedness and mitigation assistance. Additionally, AmeriCorps Seniors grants Senior Demonstration programs to test new models of service that engage older adults in meeting current and emerging national priorities.

AmeriCorps also administers AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps State and National, and AmeriCorps NCCC. AmeriCorps VISTA provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. AmeriCorps State and National offers opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national non-profit groups. AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time team-based residential program in which young adults serve to strengthen local communities.

Additionally, AmeriCorps administers the Volunteer Generation Fund, a program authorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to expand the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support, and retain individuals to serve in high quality volunteer assignments.

Authorities

ACL Authorities: 42 U.S.C. § 15082; Sections 202(c), 373(d), and 417 of the OAA, as amended; see 42 U.S.C. §§ 3012, 3030s-1, 3032f, 3058g.

AmeriCorps Authorities: 42 U.S.C. §§12501 et seq.; 42 U.S.C. §12651b(g)(10)(B); and 42 U.S.C. §§4950 et seq. Section 192A(g)(10)(B) – i.e., 42 U.S.C. §12651b(g)(10)(B) -- of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, provides that AmeriCorps may enter into agreements with other Federal agencies for the support of programs under the national service laws.

This MOU does not constitute or give rise to a partnership or joint venture between the Parties, nor does it constitute an obligation of funds by either party. Each Party shall operate under the terms of this MOU as an independent entity and not as an agent for but, when possible, in collaboration with the other. In addition, nothing in the MOU limits any of the Parties' independent authority to make decisions regarding the respective roles and responsibilities of that party.

Announcement of Collaboration

ACL and AmeriCorps, as they deem it necessary and appropriate, will provide media relations and other Public Affairs support for this endeavor.

Collaboration Framework

ACL and AmeriCorps enter into this agreement to address issues affecting older persons and persons with disabilities within the extent of each organization's mission and available resources. In no way does this MOU signify the obligation of financial resources; rather, it represents strategic collaborations between the agencies. ACL and AmeriCorps agree to work together through the activities described below.

Under this MOU, the ACL and the AmeriCorps will develop activities that create and support ongoing collaboration to recruit, engage, and support older adults and people with disabilities in national service and maximize the ability of all people to live in integrated settings in the community, across the lifespan.

Major goals of this collaboration include:

- Education – Explore opportunities for cross-sharing of knowledge with our respective programs and networks.
- Outreach – Promote the visibility of our respective programs and those areas where our programs collaborate or intersect.
- Program Development – Support efforts to better inform and connect our respective networks to leverage resources; and
- Evidence-based approaches – Support efforts to advance the use of evidenced-based approaches in our respective programs and networks.

Specific Areas of Focus

Supporting Families and Caregivers

ACL and AmeriCorps agree to:

- Support appropriate components of the National Family Caregiver Strategy through participation on the RAISE Family Caregiving Council and implementation of actions outlined in the Strategy specifically as it relates to supporting caregiver respite;
- Encourage the utilization of AmeriCorps volunteers by the aging and disability networks to support home and community-based services for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Through training and related activities, explore efforts to promote the use of volunteers in respite programs and other family and caregiver support services.
- Promote activities that enhance efforts to build natural supports for families.
- Support volunteer activities resulting from action through the Advisory Council for Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Enhancing Information and Education Opportunities

ACL and AmeriCorps agree to:

- Promote activities of mutual interest on appropriate channels such as websites, social media, and e-newsletters.

- Coordinate webinars, workshops and forums that outline opportunities to expand the impact of volunteer service by older adults.
- Through webinars, workshops, and other channels as appropriate, ACL will provide information and training to AmeriCorps leadership and volunteers on topics of interest to older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Promote funding opportunities that can be used to engage older adults in community service activities that help solve critical issues.
- Identify opportunities for ACL-funded technical assistance resource centers to support and amplify AmeriCorps efforts.

Strengthening ACL and AmeriCorps Seniors Networks

ACL and AmeriCorps agree to:

- Via instruction and technical assistance provided to states on the development of their state plans on aging, ACL will explicitly encourage the use of AmeriCorps Seniors and other volunteer-based programs, to the greatest extent possible.
- Through a variety of methods, AmeriCorps will actively promote and encourage its AmeriCorps Senior grantees to seek available opportunities to support ACL programs including the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) programs, Long Term Care Ombudsman programs, and Title VI Native American Programs. Retired attorneys and other advocates may be interested in available opportunities with legal assistance programs. ACL will explore providing technical assistance to AmeriCorps Senior grantees.
- Collaborate on identifying ways to jointly promote National Days of Service through both networks;
- Collaborate on identifying and promoting promising practices on volunteer recruitment and retention in ACL and AmeriCorps programs.
- Collaborate on identifying and managing risk in volunteer programs including review and assistance with revamping the ACL SMP/SHIP Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) policies and procedures. (Latest version of VRPM can be found here: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2020-07/National_VRPM_Policies_%28PDF%29%20-%20Sept%202016.pdf)
- Encourage local AmeriCorps programs and aging and disability network programs to partner and/or co-locate to expand opportunities and supports for older adults and persons with disabilities.

- Identify programs and activities that increase the impact of volunteerism at the tribal and local community level by utilizing evidenced-based approaches.
- During the development of funding opportunities, AmeriCorps and ACL will explore ways to support the priorities and goals of each agency.
- Collaborate to assist aging and disability networks in creating broader opportunities for older adults and persons with disabilities to participate in volunteer activities that enhance programming that supports local and tribal communities.

Protecting the Rights and Preventing the Abuse of Elders

ACL and AmeriCorps agree to:

ACL will explore technical assistance and support on elder abuse issues the AmeriCorps Seniors grantee community, i.e. recognizing the signs of abuse and when to intervene and when reporting is voluntary or mandated and how to respond when persons appearing to be experiencing abuse decline interventions.

- ACL will share information about ACL funding opportunities for elder abuse prevention and awareness activities including those with programmatic, research and/or education components.
- ACL and AmeriCorps will continue to work together, and with other Elder Justice Council agencies, to contribute to “promising practices” for volunteer interventions around elder abuse.

Entirety


This MOU constitutes the entire understanding of the Parties with respect to the roles and responsibilities of the Parties.

Duration, Modification, and Termination of Agreement

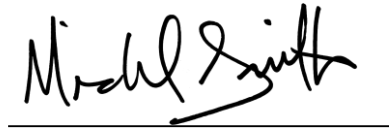
This MOU will become effective immediately upon signature of both parties from the date signed and remains in effect for a period of four years or until modified or terminated by the Parties. Both parties agree to review the progress of the MOU on a yearly basis to assess progress toward meeting agreed upon

goals. In the event that either Party desires to modify the agreement, the parties may do so by mutual consent.

If either Party desires to terminate this MOU, that Party will provide not less than a thirty (30) day written notice of an intent to terminate the MOU to the other Party.



Alison Barkoff
Senior official performing the duties of ACL
Administrator & Assistant Secretary for Aging



Michael D. Smith
Chief Executive Officer
AmeriCorps

December 1, 2023
Date

December 1, 2023
Date