student conservation association

Conservation Internship Program Partner Handbook

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Welcome to The Student Conservation Association (SCA)

As an SCA partner, you are critical to the success of our mission to create the next generation of conservation leaders. We are grateful that you have chosen to partner with the SCA, and we are committed to working closely with you and your intern to ensure a successful, productive and impactful internship experience.

This guide provides important information and advice that will assist you throughout every phase of the intern hosting experience, including:

- Establishing a personalized SCA account in our online system (ADP Workforce Now)
- Completing and submitting an Intern Request
- Interviewing and selecting your intern
- Preparing for your intern's arrival and understanding SCA processes and policies
- Familiarizing yourself with the SCA's relationship with AmeriCorps
- Supervising your intern and managing logistics and safety concerns
- Seeking support and council from SCA staff if/as necessary

Whether you are new to working with the SCA and hosting an intern for the first time, or you have hosted interns for years, we encourage you to read these pages carefully and familiarize yourself with its content. Likewise, please refer to this manual when questions arise. Always remember, however, that an SCA staff member is available to assist you if any issues, concerns, or challenges emerge throughout the duration of your intern's service.

Our **Partner Resources** webpage has an informative series of Intern Supervisor Training Videos. We invite you to watch the videos as a supplement to this handbook.

SCA - Who We Are

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is the largest provider of hands-on conservation programs for youth and young adults. Program participants protect, restore and interpret national parks, marine sanctuaries, historical landmarks and community green spaces across the country.

The SCA collaborates with our partners to provide high school, college, and adult program participants with hands-on conservation service opportunities, from tracking grizzlies in the Grand Tetons to restoring fisheries across the U.S. Founded in 1957, the SCA is committed to building the next generation of conservation leaders dedicated to the lifelong protection of the land and communities we serve. For more, visit **www.thesca.org**.

Our Mission

The SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our lands and the communities we serve by engaging young people in hands-on service.

Conservation Begins Here

Thousands of conservation professionals, from park superintendents to urban planners, can trace their start to the SCA. At the SCA, program participants connect with nature, render hands-on service, gain new skills and perspectives, build new relationships and professional networks and launch a lifetime of stewardship activity.

SCA National Programs

From basic trail work to visitor engagement to field research, the SCA provides a conservation service force with the knowledge, skills and abilities to complete the work that you need doing. Our program participants are passionate about learning and provide the opportunity for you to help mentor a new generation of conservation professionals. Our proven services are easy to access, effective, and affordable. Our two basic program models are as follows:

SCA Conservation Internships

SCA Conservation Interns are 18 years and older and are nationally recruited by the SCA (or locally recruited by our partners) to match the position requirements established by our partners. Interns can serve at any time of year for durations lasting eight weeks to 12 months. Partners provide funding, challenging and enriching positions, training and direct supervision, professional development opportunities, housing (or cost of housing), on-the-job transportation, performance evaluations, and safe workspaces. Internship opportunities exist in every facet of land management and conservation stewardship.

SCA Team-Based Programs

Depending on the project specifications, the timing of your project, and/or your budget, the SCA can field a team (e.g., Conservation Corps or Crew) of SCA members to accomplish your project needs. SCA team-based programs are comprised of SCA members supervised by trained SCA Leaders for periods ranging from three weeks to 10 months. SCA teams undertake specialized, site-specific, or geographically dispersed projects such as large-scale ecological restoration, wildlife habitat improvement, trail development and assessments, fire and invasive species management, vegetation monitoring, and GIS mapping. Teams can be certified in Wilderness First Aid, S-212 Chainsaw certification, S-130/190 Fire Certification, and pre-trained in rigging.

Leave No Trace, risk management and safety, and leadership development. Teams are typically "field ready" and provided with the tools, vehicles, and experienced leadership needed to plan, manage, and implement significant projects without the direct, daily supervision of agency staff. Additionally, SCA teams can be mobile and complete projects of shorter durations at multiple locations within broad geographic areas. Since the structure, duration, and cost of SCA teams vary significantly depending on the project, it is best to contact an SCA Partnership staff member to discuss your specific project needs in greater detail.

Your SCA Contacts

Our team is here to support you during the entire partnership. Staff members are located regionally throughout the U.S. and are generally available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. within their time zone. As a nationwide organization, there are many people throughout the country at the SCA that will be supporting this partnership. Your **Partnership Contact** and your **Program Contact** are **two key** staff members that you will get to know from the creation of your position through the duration of hosting your intern. In this handbook, these two staff members will often be referred to as your "SCA Contacts."

Other SCA staff members you might encounter during the partnership are individuals from Agreements, Recruiting, Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management, Evaluation and Communications. Your Partnership contact and/or your Program contact will help connect you with the right people when needed. We are here to support you!

Partnership

At this point, you should be familiar with your **Partnership Contact**. Your Partnership Contact is your main point of contact at the SCA. Your Partnership Contact will assist you with completing program requests, providing cost estimates, facilitating the agreement process, and assisting with general inquiries across the organization. When in doubt about who to connect with, your Partnership Contact will be able to assist.

Program

After you submit your internship request, your Partnership Contact will introduce the Program Contact (also known as the National Program Coordinator [NPC]) for your position. The NPC also serves as the Intern Advisor. Your Program Contact will assist with intern onboarding, engagement, and matters such as date changes, incidents, time logs, AmeriCorps and other direct intern support items.

Your Partnership and Program Contacts will collaborate to ensure that all aspects of the partnership and program work smoothly. We look forward to working with you.

Overview: Intern Program Request

In general, there are three main components to partnering with the SCA and hosting an SCA Intern:

1. **Completing/Submitting an Intern Request**
   Please send an email to agency-help@thesca.org or to your current SCA Partnership contact with the following information:
   - Desired internship location
   - Basic information about what the intern position includes
   - General period you would like to host an intern

An SCA Partnership staff member will be in touch with you to begin the process of building your internship, including a detailed position description. Once we have identified pre-screened candidates for your position, we place them in your SCA ADP Recruiting Management (ADP RM) account for your review, ranking, interviewing and selection. After you select a candidate, the SCA will oversee the enrollment and onboarding process.

You can also recruit and select your own candidate. You would need to send the SCA the candidate's contact information so we can guide them through the application and enrollment processes.

We typically ask for at least 12 weeks (90 days) between the time you submit the position request and the targeted start date.

2. Developing/Finalizing a Quote

SCA intern quotes are developed through our standard cost and pricing structure. Quotes include direct and indirect costs and are determined by the number of service weeks and the established incremental costs (i.e., benefits and allowance rates).

The primary information we need to develop a preliminary quote includes:

- **Length of Internship:** How many weeks would you like the intern to serve?
- **Living Allowance:** The minimum rate is $300/week for all position lengths. Partners can increase the weekly living allowance rate, noting that increasing the living allowance will incrementally increase the estimated position cost.
- **Housing:** It is assumed that intern housing will be provided by the site. If housing is unavailable, the SCA can administer a monthly housing allowance to the intern (an amount determined by you that reflects the local market rate for housing). In limited cases, SCA can establish a lease directly with a landlord. Once determined, the housing costs will be added to the position cost estimate.
- **Car/Personal Vehicle:** Will the intern be required to have a personal vehicle on-site during their internship? If required, the intern will receive a higher Travel Allowance than if a personal vehicle is recommended or not needed.
- **Commuting Allowance:** If housing is off-site, a weekly commuting allowance should be offered to the intern to help offset daily commuting costs. This is recommended for interns who drive 10+ miles one way and will be paid out along with the Living Allowance.
- **Duty-travel and other Reimbursable Expenses:** Will the intern travel during their service for work, training, or professional development opportunities? Will the intern need specialized personal equipment that they will need to purchase? Funds can be budgeted to reimburse the intern for work-related expenses.

Typically, in collaboration with your Partnership contact, there is a period of discussion and adjustment before a quote that meets both your needs and funding capacity is finalized.

3. Agreement

An Agreement (or contract) between the SCA and your organization must be developed and finalized before any position can begin. For federal agencies, all funding documents are tiered off a National

Cooperative or Participating Agreement. For state, local, and non-profit agreements, including Friends Groups, the SCA can develop the agreement and submit it to you for legal review, or you can utilize a template of your own and submit it to SCA for review.

Timeline

At a minimum, an SCA intern request should be completed and submitted via your SCA account at least **three months** prior to the desired start date, noting that the more lead time available for planning and preparation purposes, the better. Consequently, if you are considering fielding a position that will start four months or more into the future, please do not hesitate to submit your request. Having sufficient time for recruiting, interviewing and selecting, onboarding (including background checks), and completing a fully executed agreement is paramount to successfully finalizing the administrative tasks required for an intern to begin their service on the desired start date.

In certain situations, especially with non-federal partners, the standard three-month turn-around time may be shortened. Partners should immediately contact their Partnership Contact to discuss the position details and the earliest potential field date.

In all cases, however, an intern can only start their position when a formal written agreement is fully executed (signed by both parties) and the intern's enrollment and onboarding paperwork is complete.

Financial and Worksite Agreements

As a national youth service organization, the SCA partners with various federal, state, and non-profit land management agencies and organizations. Accordingly, each partner type has a different "funding instrument" available for collaborating with the SCA and obligating monies to fund SCA programs and program participants at their site.

Federal Partners

The SCA currently has multi-year, national cooperative and participating agreements with a variety of federal agencies as identified in the following table:

Agency	Master Agreement #	Expiration
National Park Service (NPS)	P20AC00141	10/31/2026
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)	F24AS00129	Ongoing
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	W9126G2520004	1/31/2030
Navy and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune	N62470-20-2-2003	12/19/2029

For SCA positions to be fielded, it is necessary for federal host partners to establish and execute position-specific agreements. In many cases, these are tiered off the appropriate master agreements listed above.

Federal partners should connect early on with their grants and agreements colleagues to ensure they are following the requisite protocols to establish and execute these required agreements. If in doubt, contact your SCA Partnership and Agreements staff for general assistance.

Non-Federal Partners (State, Non-profit, Other)

For all non-federal agency partners, a single-project or stand-alone agreement/contract is required to fund SCA programs or participants with each individual partner site. The SCA can develop an agreement using our standard template and submit it to our partner for legal review (and signature), or a partner can submit an agreement/contract to the SCA for legal review (and signature).

Timing

To comply with the agreements governing our partnerships with federal agencies, federal partners must ensure that the requisite funds have been obligated and that the funding document has been received and fully executed before any SCA participant can start their service. The same holds true for all other partner types. Failing to have a fully executed agreement will result in a position being bumped out by a minimum of two weeks or until the agreement is fully executed.

Minimum Wage Compliance

To maintain compliance with state and local minimum wage laws, all partner sites must provide member compensation (the total of all allowances) equal to the current state or local minimum wage rate. However, there are a handful of situations in which an SCA position is exempt from meeting this requirement:

1. For federal partners, the utilization and citation of the Public Land Corps Authority (PLC) in the funding instrument (task agreement, supplemental project agreement, task order, etc.) alleviates the requirement to provide state minimum wage equivalent compensation. Presently, nearly every federal agreement cites the PLC Authority and therefore supersedes the minimum wage requirement.
2. For non-federal partners, if their SCA participant enrolls in the AmeriCorps Education Award Program (AEAP), the minimum wage requirement is alleviated. In these cases, mandatory enrollment in the AEAP is stated in the position announcement and must occur. Note that if the partner desires to compensate their SCA participant at the state minimum wage equivalent, the AEAP mandatory enrollment is not required (and sometimes not offered due to the higher compensation levels—see the AmeriCorps section for more details).

PLC 25% In-Kind Match Requirement

Applicable to most federal land management partners, when funding instruments are authorized under the 16 U.S.C. § 1723(c)(I) Public Land Corps Act, SCA is required to provide a 25% cost match for each position comprised of in-kind services and/or non-federal cash and/or other resources. The SCA's 25% cost match requirement is calculated as 25% of the total cost of the position (not the total partner cost as identified in the cost estimate). In most cases, the SCA's 25% cost match can be met by calculating the projected total in-kind service hours of the SCA participant, multiplying that amount by the current Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time hourly rate, and then subtracting the total compensation amount the intern will receive via allowances.

When calculating the required PLC 25% in-kind cost share, the SCA uses the current National Independent Sector's "value of a volunteer hourly rate" for internship positions, unless instructed otherwise by an agency partner.

For non-federal partners, it is important for SCA staff to identify on a case-by-case basis if and what match requirements may exist.

Public Land Corps Non-Competitive Hiring Status

For most federal partners, most SCA interns who serve at your site between the ages of 16 and 30 (including age 30) are eligible to apply for federal non-competitive hiring status if they have completed 640 hours (16-week position) of satisfactory service. For veterans, this age range is extended to age 35. The non-competitive hiring status remains in effect for two years after completing the intern's most recent service.

The PLC non-competitive hiring status program is a federal initiative administered and implemented by the DOI and USDA. Program policies and procedures are available via the individual DOI and USDA bureaus. We encourage you to contact your regional youth programs coordinator (or equivalent) to obtain further guidance and procedural information and verify if your intern is eligible for the program.

In addition to promoting the program as a valuable benefit to serving as an SCA intern at a federal site, in certain cases, the SCA's role in the process may include verifying the intern's total work hours (after the successful completion of their internship) by signing a federal "Participant Work Hours Verification" form received from the SCA intern coordinator at the host site.

The ADP Workforce Now Portal

ADP is our new online Human Resources and Recruiting system. ADP Workforce Now (ADP WFN) is the umbrella software that houses recruitment and time logs. ADP Recruiting Management (ADP RM) is where you will review applications from candidates, schedule interviews, and offer positions. Once your requisition is filled, you will use ADP WorkForce Management (ADP WFM) to approve time logs and complete other HR-related tasks.

Access to the ADP portal is located here. For new users, your Partnership Contact will have worked with HR to activate your account, generating an email that prompts you to create a username and password. If you are unsure if you have an account, please contact your Partnership contact. Existing users can log straight into their personalized accounts. If you do not remember your username or password, please reach out to your Partnership Contact who can assist with a password reset.

For a detailed explanation of how to create and use an account in ADP RM, please review the ADP User Guide found on our Partner Resources page.

Once logged in to ADP RM, you will see the following:

- **Task menu** notifies you of the impending tasks and breaks down into several sections such as applicants for review, phone screens, interviews to schedule
- **Requisitions menu** shows you the open requisitions you are managing

- **Viewed Requisitions menu** is the list of your most recently viewed requisitions
- **Candidate Slate menu** is where you will view the candidates on your Open Requisition
- **Viewed Candidates menu** is the list of your most recently viewed candidates

Requesting a New Position

To request a new position, reach out to your Partnership Contact or email agency-help@thesca.org and include as much of the following information as you know:

Position Description

The quality of candidates that apply to your position is a direct reflection of the work you put into crafting your position description. Please review *Time to Write Your Position Description* below this section for helpful tips on crafting a strong position description.

Length Of Service

SCA internships are typically between 12 and 52 weeks (about 12 months) in length, although in some cases we do allow shorter or longer internships depending upon the partner's needs and budget.

Weekly Living Allowance

Internships of any length have a minimum living allowance of $300 per week. **At the partner's request, the weekly living allowance rate can be increased above the minimum**, noting that it will also incrementally increase the overall cost. **Offering a higher living allowance will encourage a wide range of applicants.** In high cost of living areas, such as large metropolitan areas, we recommend providing a living allowance that is acceptable for the cost of living in your area.

All allowances for interns are taxed at the federal, and, where applicable, state and local levels.

To/From Travel Allowance And Vehicle Required Status

As a part of their SCA internship benefits package, interns receive a round-trip travel allowance to offset the cost of their travel to and from the host site at the beginning and conclusion of their internship. Interns are responsible for arranging and paying for their travel to the site in advance, before receiving their travel allowance on the first pay date after their position starts. Travel allowance rates are as follows:

- The standard travel allowance is $650 (before taxes).
- When a partner requires their intern to have a personal vehicle on-site during their internship due to a lack of public transportation to local amenities, the intern will receive an elevated travel allowance of $1,100 (before taxes).
- Internship positions based in Alaska, Hawaii, and other non-contiguous US locations receive a travel allowance of $1,300 (before taxes).
- Internship positions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will receive the travel allowance as a reimbursable amount, reflecting the actual costs based on distance (mileage) traveled and current federal per diem rates. Interns must submit an expense report to the SCA with documented round-trip travel costs for reimbursement. The requested reimbursement amount is capped at $650.

- Interns that live "locally" typically receive a commuting allowance (see below) in lieu of a to/from travel allowance.

Commuting Allowance

We encourage partners to provide a weekly commuting allowance to interns traveling over 20 miles roundtrip daily between their housing and the work site. The appropriate weekly commuting allowance rate is typically calculated using the federal reimbursement rate and then presented as a fixed weekly amount (i.e., $25/week commuting allowance). Commuting allowances are paid bi-weekly along with the weekly living allowance.

Duty-Related Travel And Other Reimbursable Expenses

If you would like to set aside funds for duty travel, professional development, training opportunities (such as workshops and conferences), special gear or other duty-related expenses, please indicate this amount when you submit your position request. If the intern will be using a personal vehicle for duty travel, the site should plan to reimburse at the current federal mileage rate. Duty-related expenses are submitted for reimbursement using the online Program Reimbursement Form. More on the reimbursement process can be found in the "Supervising and Mentoring an Intern" section later in this document.

Housing

The SCA assumes that partners will provide on-site housing whenever possible. If housing is not available, partners will need to include a monthly housing allowance in the position budget. The site determines the monthly housing allowance amount based on the average rental cost (market rate) in the local area. Housing allowance funds are distributed directly to the intern monthly, and the intern is responsible for paying their own rent.

In limited cases, partners can pay the SCA to lease appropriate housing for the intern. Partners are responsible for locating the housing and confirming availability dates and costs with the landlord/management company before providing all this information to the SCA. This will ensure that the budget includes the appropriate funding for housing costs and that the SCA's Field Services Manager receives proper notification to arrange for the lease well before the intern start date.

Uniforms

The SCA has five uniform packages that our partners can choose from when completing their initial Intern Request. This allows our partners to best match the needs and type of position the intern will be serving in. Each uniform package includes standard-issue gear, including T-shirts, water bottles, trucker or winter hats, Hoo-rags, stickers and a name tag. All items bear the SCA logo, and some include the AmeriCorps logo (for interns enrolled in the AmeriCorps Education Award program).

In addition to the standard issue gear, the variances in the different uniform packages are as follows:

- **Field Work Package**: includes long sleeve shirts for brush, insect, and sun protection. Long-term interns also receive one heavy cotton work shirt.

- **Visitor Services Package**: includes polo shirts intended for office-based work. Long-term interns also receive a light, quarter-zip fleece.
- **Hot Weather Package**: includes light, Polypro wicking shirts, both short and long sleeves. Long-term interns also receive a nylon work shirt.
- **Cold Weather Package**: includes Polypro shirts for layering, both short and long sleeves. Long-term interns also receive a full-zip fleece.
- **All-Weather Package**: includes Polypro shirts, both short and long sleeves, Breezer collared shirt, rain jacket, quarter-zip tech shirt, and full-zip fleece. Note: this package costs partners more than the standard issue packages described above and must be budgeted accordingly. If interested, please discuss this option with your SCA Contact when you are setting up your position.

After you select the appropriate uniform package for your intern, the rest of the process is coordinated between the SCA and your intern with additional uniform information provided to the intern via the SCA Intern Handbook. The uniform package will be mailed directly to your site in care of your name.

Also note that, if interested, you or your intern may purchase additional uniform items directly from the SCA's uniform vendor using a personal credit card.

AmeriCorps Eligibility

Many internships that meet the SCA's mission to build the next generation of conservation leaders meet AmeriCorps eligibility requirements. Specifically, AmeriCorps eligible positions must have duties centered around:

- Education/Interpretation
- Resource assessment/mapping/monitoring
- Restoration (habitat and historical lands and structures)

To be AmeriCorps eligible, the position may **NOT**:

- Duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program
- Displace an employee or position, including partial displacements such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits
- Displace a volunteer

Positions can also be ineligible if a member is engaged in any of AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities, the most common of which is handling money at a Visitor Center. When completing your position request, please review the list of prohibited activities in the AmeriCorps section very carefully and mark "yes" on the "Partner Statement of Compliance" field if you have reviewed the position for prohibited activities and conclude that none will occur. To document a position's eligibility properly, please describe the context of the work and the critical need it will meet. The position must offer opportunities for educational development, list the approximate percentage of time the member will spend on each work activity, avoid prohibited activities, and be presented as a complete project.

Additional information on AmeriCorps can be found in the "SCA AmeriCorps and the Education Award" section of this document. There are also limits to the amount of direct compensation that members can receive from SCA if

they want their position to remain eligible for AmeriCorps. These limits are based on the length of service and are set by AmeriCorps annually.

Permissible And Prohibited Activities

Interns may engage in any activity that an employee may carry out except:

- **SCA interns may not carry out direct law enforcement functions.**
- **SCA interns may not engage in firefighting activities unless hired to do so and trained.**

Please note that you may temporarily hire an intern for firefighting or other duties. See the "Wildland Fire Duty" section further below in this document. Interns may assist in other activities, such as search and rescue, operating four-wheel drive vehicles, or using machinery and tools, provided they have received the training normally given to regular or seasonal personnel. Interns should also be issued protective clothing and gear for any activity requiring regular employees' use of such items.

Interns interacting with the public should be given information about your site and the surrounding area. If this information cannot be included in your regular, seasonal training, please provide other means of acquiring it.

Selecting an Intern

Pre-Selected Candidate

Sometimes, a partner may want to recruit local candidates themselves or have a pre-determined candidate to whom they would like to offer their SCA position (aka a "pre-select"). The SCA can enroll a pre-selected candidate into an internship provided the applicant is 18+ years old, completes the SCA Conservation Internship application, and passes the required background check.

To request a pre-selected candidate:

1. **Alert SCA Partner contact:** Ensure you share the candidate's contact information with your Partner contact (First name, Last name, email address, and phone number if applicable)
2. The Partner contact will notify the recruiter and the Program contact, and the Program contact will contact your candidate.
3. Once the candidate applies to the requisition, an SCA staff member will advance the candidate to the offer stage in ADP RM.
4. **Notifications:** Once the candidate is in the system, you will receive an email notification on their status. Please note that a government firewall may not allow the notification email to be sent. If you have questions, reach out to your Program Contact to confirm the candidate's status.

Candidates Recruited By The SCA

The SCA will only share the most qualified applicants who meet the skills and education requirements you listed in your position request. Any Partner designated as the Application Reviewer/Hiring Manager will have a task in their Task Menu on the ADP RM homepage for each applicant added to the requisition for review. If you need more applicants, please contact your SCA Program contact.

We strongly recommend reviewing applications as soon as you receive them or shortly thereafter. Applications are often posted to multiple sites, so reviewing your list and contacting and interviewing your top-tier applicants as soon as possible greatly increases your chances of securing one of your top candidates. Also, note that intern enrollment and onboarding can take up to three weeks (refer to the "Intern Preparation and Arrival Section" for more information).

Please see page five of the ADP RM Partner Resource for detailed steps on reviewing applications in ADP RM.

Remove From Consideration

If your preliminary assessment of a candidate's skills and abilities does not meet your expectations regarding being able to meet the position requirements, please dismiss the candidate by clicking the thumbs-down icon for the applicant and choose the most appropriate reason. Removing an applicant from your position does not delete them from our system, it simply indicates to us that you do not consider them as a viable candidate for your position. Candidates "removed from consideration" will receive an email notifying them of your decision.

Please see page 11 of the ADP RM Partner Resource for detailed steps on removing candidates from consideration in ADP RM.

Interviewing An Applicant

Once you have determined which applicant(s) you are interested in interviewing for the position, click the Advance or thumbs-up icon next to the candidate's name. This will create a new task in the Tasks Menu on the ADP RM Homepage.

Please see page seven of the ADP RM Partner Resource for detailed steps on scheduling interviews in ADP RM.

We advise applicants to view and approach the interview as an employment interview. Consequently, during your interview, please be sure to cover the following points:

- Clarify the details of the proposed work assignment, including specific job duties and expectations. Be sure to mention any changes in the job description that may have occurred since its publication.
- Discuss your desired start and end dates for the position and if there is any date flexibility. If you decide to change the start and/or end date from those you originally listed, you must inform your SCA Contacts immediately to ensure this is possible, given constraints related to the formal written agreement between SCA and your agency.
- Advise candidates of living and working conditions. Be honest and up-front, painting a clear and realistic picture of what can be expected.
- Discuss vehicle requirements (if any).
- Discuss any special clothing or gear requirements.
- Discuss the allowance and benefit rates. **These rates were established and confirmed by you or someone at your site when the position budget (cost estimate) was created and finalized. The allowance and benefit rates are in the formal cost estimate provided by the SCA. If you do not know the established compensation rates for your position, please contact your SCA**

Contacts before scheduling interviews. It is important to obtain this information before speaking with potential candidates.

Requesting More Applicants

If you do not have enough candidates to review and want to receive more, please contact your SCA Program contact. Your request will be sent directly to an SCA recruiter, and if there are more applicants they will show in the Tasks menu and the Candidate Slate menu. Your Program contact can also work with you to refine the skills and/or education requirements established for the position if you find you are not receiving the applicants that best match your needs.

Giving Feedback After An Interview

After an interview, you will see an alert for Interview Feedback in your Task menu. Fill out the feedback form and choose the appropriate option from the drop-down menu.

Please see page 12 of the ADP RM Partner Resource for detailed steps on how to give interview feedback in ADP RM.

Making An Offer

After you have interviewed candidates and submitted feedback, there will be an alert to give Interview Results in your Task menu on the ADP RM homepage. To make an offer, click on the thumbs-up icon next to the candidate's name and click Offer Request. There will be no pop-up notice, but your choice will have been sent to SCA.

The onboarding process begins once the candidate has officially accepted their offer via their ADP account. It is imperative that candidates begin this process immediately in order for all required background checks to clear prior to the start date. Failure to do so could cause a delay with the position start date.

Your Program Contact will review the offer within 24-48 hours (about 2 days) and then send a formal electronic offer to the applicant. The offer is sent to the candidate via their ADP account, and they receive an email notification that an offer is pending review. The candidate must log in to their SCA career site to accept or decline the position offer within five business days.

Once the applicant officially accepts the position offer, please follow up with any candidates whom you have interviewed but not selected. This can be done in the ADP RM system by dismissing each candidate, or a partner can contact unselected candidates directly. In turn, the SCA will email the selected intern directions for completing additional enrollment paperwork, such as a written confirmation of acceptance (COA), medical information with emergency numbers and a liability release form.

Please see page 13 of the ADP RM Partner Resource for detailed steps on making an offer in ADP RM.

Occasionally, an applicant accepts a position but later declines the offer. If an intern declines your position after initially accepting it, please inform your SCA contacts immediately to notify them of the situation so they can begin the process of finding a replacement. **Please do not assume that the applicant has notified the SCA.**

Selections Made Less Than Three Weeks before the Intern Start Date

Intern enrollment and onboarding paperwork can typically take several weeks to process. In situations where a position gets filled with less than three weeks remaining before the start date, the SCA's HR Department will work directly with the intern to try and expedite the completion of enrollment paperwork as quickly as possible. In most cases, please be advised that the start date must be pushed back one week or more to allow for enrollment paperwork.

SCA AmeriCorps And The Education Award

Overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), AmeriCorps is a network of organizations that offer opportunities for people to dedicate themselves to long-term service projects such as tutoring and mentoring youth, building affordable housing, cleaning parks and streams and recruiting, training, and managing community volunteers. In return, AmeriCorps members receive funds they can use for education.

The SCA receives a grant from CNCS to administer an AmeriCorps Education Award program for our members. Under this grant, interns who satisfactorily complete service can receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of approximately $1,565.08-$7,395.00, which can be applied to education-related expenses.

Please note that the SCA AmeriCorps program is a grant program contingent upon federal funding. The SCA receives a set number of allotments in the AmeriCorps program each year. Once those allotments have been used, no further awards will be available for the year.
Awards are handed out on a first-come, first-served basis at the time of offer.

Overview

1. The partner submits a position request that meets AmeriCorps criteria.
2. If allotments are available at the time of offer, the intern can apply to become an SCA AmeriCorps member.
3. Both the intern and the partner will need to complete paperwork and training before, during, and after the position.
4. Upon successful completion of the position and related requirements, the intern receives their award.

EAP for positions beginning October 1, 2026, to September 30, 2027

Term of Service	Min Hours	Award Amount	Max Compensation
Full Time	1700	$7,395.00	$40,800
Three Quarter Time	1200	$5,176.50	$28,560
Half Time – Full year	900	$3,697.50	$20,400
Quarter Time	450	$1,956.35	$10,608
Minimum Time	300	$1,565.08	$8,568

Education Awards

The AmeriCorps Education Award is a sum of money members can receive after successfully completing their service. Members can use this award to pay for expenses at qualified higher education institutions, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. Upon selection, members are offered an award relative to their length of service. Members who enroll in AmeriCorps sign an agreement confirming they will complete the minimum number of hours AmeriCorps required and the full term of service. The SCA AmeriCorps terms of service and corresponding awards are listed below. The hours listed are **MINIMUM** hours. Even after completing minimum hours, interns must honor their commitment to the site and serve the full term of the internship as agreed to at the time of acceptance, to qualify for the award. Many interns serve well over the minimum hours required.

In addition, it is important to understand that an AmeriCorps-eligible position is subject to a maximum compensation package. The total sum of allowances offered to an intern in an AmeriCorps position cannot exceed the amount listed in the above table. Be sure to discuss this with your Partnership Contact when setting up your position.

Partner Responsibilities With AmeriCorps

While members are responsible for meeting most of the AmeriCorps requirements, there are some expectations for partners who choose to participate in this program. Our relationship with AmeriCorps and the Corporation is an important aspect of our Conservation Internship Program, and we appreciate your support in meeting the compliance and evaluation requirements. As a partner in the SCA AmeriCorps program, please make sure you are willing to:

- **Set up your position's duties and activities to be AmeriCorps-eligible.** As a federal program, AmeriCorps has specific requirements and prohibited activities. If your position meets these requirements, it will be "AmeriCorps-eligible."
- **Complete the SCA AmeriCorps Site Agreement once per year.** This requirement under our federal AmeriCorps grant outlines the expectations for partners.
- **Participate in the SCA AmeriCorps webinar training once per year**. This training is available year-round as a pre-recorded video. The link to the on-demand video will be sent to partners with AmeriCorps-Eligible positions. Contact Americorps@thesca.org for assistance.
- **Verify your member's submitted timecards.** Approve your member's timecards in your ADP Partner Portal regularly. Timecards are requirements for the SCA and AmeriCorps service, so you should review them for completeness and accuracy weekly, regardless of your intern's AmeriCorps status. For more information, visit the *Timecards and Output Logs* section of this handbook.
- **Verify that member service hours do not include prohibited activities.** Members are not allowed to be involved with AmeriCorps prohibited activities. See below for a complete list of prohibited activities. Members may participate in these activities as private citizens on non-SCA/AmeriCorps time and should not identify themselves with the SCA AmeriCorps program or wear any of their logoed gear during participation.
- **Complete Mid-term and End-of-term Evaluations.** All SCA participants need completed mid-term and end-of-term evaluations on file. This requirement is especially important for AmeriCorps members as it

determines their eligibility for future AmeriCorps service opportunities. Evaluations will be available in your ADP Partner portal at the mid-point of the position and within one week of the end date. These evaluations are only available for 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) in your account, so if you need access to the link, please contact your SCA Program Contact.

- **Support participants to complete their service commitment and minimum hours.** Except in compelling personal circumstances (outlined below), program participants who leave the program early forfeit their education award. Leaving positions early for school, disinterest in the program, or paid work is not considered an acceptable reason for a member to leave early. Please encourage members to complete their service commitment.
- **Support members who want to attend national service events locally.** There may be AmeriCorps-sponsored events periodically in your state or region. Members are encouraged to attend if their schedule allows. These hours can be recorded on their time logs under "Training/Education."

AmeriCorps Health Insurance

AmeriCorps members serving 42 weeks (about 9 and a half months) and longer are offered health insurance by the SCA in accordance with AmeriCorps policy. The rate for health insurance is currently $687.38/month and will be added to the cost estimate for AmeriCorps eligible positions with position lengths 42 weeks and longer. This rate includes medical, dental, vision and accidental death and dismemberment. Health insurance costs are pro-rated for the first month (based on the intern's actual start date) and charged in full for the last month (regardless of the end date). An additional month of health insurance expense is therefore included in all cost estimates and billed as actuals once known. If your position is less than 42 weeks and you would like to provide a health insurance option, please speak with your Partnership contact.

The health insurance policy is renewed annually on September 1; the actual monthly rate may change during the length of service.

AmeriCorps Grievance Procedure

The SCA has both informal and formal grievance procedures for SCA AmeriCorps members and external individuals who bring grievances to the SCA AmeriCorps program. The full grievance procedure can be downloaded from our website here.

AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities

The SCA is committed to ensuring all partners and participants are knowledgeable of the activities prohibited by AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps prohibited activities include partisan political activities, political advocacy, protests, petitions, strikes, union activities, religious proselytization, for-profit business, abortion services and general fundraising. The complete list of prohibited AmeriCorps activities is available on our website here. Please contact your SCA Program Contact for questions about the SCA AmeriCorps Program.

Intern Preparation and Arrival

Congratulations on your candidate selection! Once you have spoken with the candidate and confirmed selection to the position, please send the candidate a written confirmation of what you've discussed.

Remember, the offer must be sent through your ADP RM portal for the SCA to make an official offer and enroll the intern.

Things To Consider

Please consider the following questions prior to the arrival of your intern(s):

- How is the intern getting to your site: driving, flying, bus? Suggest a recommended means of transportation or the closest airport or bus station.
- How is housing being handled? If housing is not being provided on-site, see the SCA housing policy below.
- Does the SCA have the correct start and end dates for the internship? Always notify your SCA Contacts when there is a change to the start or end dates.
- Is your agreement (Task Agreement, Supplemental Project Agreement, Purchase Order, Assistance Award) being processed? **An intern cannot start until the SCA has a signed agreement in place 10 business days prior to the internship start date.**
- Does the SCA have the correct mailing address for sending the uniform?

General Information

The following additional information will help the intern be prepared for working and living at your site:

- A specific and complete description of job duties—be sure to note any changes from the original position description.
- A description of the housing facilities, including location (proximity to your site), internet and cell service availability, and whether cooking utensils and household items are included (see the Intern Housing Policy section).
- Personal equipment and clothing needed both on- and off-duty.
- Information on the proximity of stores and laundry facilities is helpful. What is the distance to stores, and how often will the intern be able to shop? Should the intern bring a small supply of food to get started until he or she can get to a store? What items are best brought from home due to high prices in the area?
- Suggest recommended means of transportation to the area. What is the most convenient airport? Is a personal vehicle required? Is there public transportation in the area?
- Include the name of the person who will meet the intern upon arrival. If no one will meet them, where and to whom should the intern report? Exchange contact information in case the intern needs to contact you with any changes in plans.
- Include general information about your area, especially the location where the intern will be working and living. Be sure to include information pertaining to weather and terrain if this will affect clothing or equipment needs. Indicate details of any dress or appearance standards.
- Discuss any potential safety concerns that could affect the social and emotional well-being of the intern.
- Is an ATM available at or near the site? Let the intern know if cash is necessary.

- Date changes must be communicated to your SCA Contacts (both Partnership and Program Contacts) to ensure that the intern receives allowance(s) at the appropriate time, that AmeriCorps award dates are correct, and that the internship is compliant with dates specified on the agreement.
- While it's rare, an intern can withdraw from a position prior to the start date, so we encourage you to remain in contact with your intern and be available to answer any questions prior to arrival.

Uniforms

The uniform package will be mailed directly to your site in care of your name prior to the intern's arrival. Please alert your mailroom to expect this package from the SCA. If you receive a uniform package for an intern who declined the position within a week of the position start date, please return the package to the SCA's uniform vendor using the return slip in the package. Please call/email your SCA Program Contact regarding any uniform questions.

Also note that, if interested, you or your intern may purchase additional uniform items directly from SCA's uniform vendor by using a personal credit card.

Background Checks

The SCA Background Check

All selected interns are subject to a criminal background check, which must be completed before the intern begins service. The check may take two or more weeks, so please plan accordingly, as it can affect when your intern starts the position. All information about the background check will be kept confidential and shared only with SCA HR staff in case of an unfavorable record. It is a best practice to make the applicant aware of the background check requirement during the hiring interview. A history of crimes against youth or other vulnerable populations, violent crimes, or crimes of moral turpitude may disqualify the applicant for an internship. Once the SCA is notified of an intern selection, an email will either be sent to the intern from hrdocs@thesca.org or directly from customer service at Easy Background Checks (for non-AmeriCorps interns) or Truescreen (for AmeriCorps interns). **Please note: The SCA's background check is separate from that required by your agency.** If your agency requires a background check for computer access, please begin your internal process immediately upon the selection of your intern.

Non-AmeriCorps Participants

For Individuals not participating in AmeriCorps, the following checks must be completed through our background check vendor, Easybackgrounds:

- Criminal History Background check going back 7 years (County and Multijurisdictional)
- National Sex Offender Public Website check (NSOPW)
- Motor vehicle Record (MVR) going back 3 years, required for all participants that are 21+ and required to drive for their internship

AmeriCorps Participants

Any AmeriCorps intern is required to undergo an additional federal background investigation through our AmeriCorps background check vendor, Truescreen. All of the SCA's AmeriCorps background check vendors meet

CNCS requirements. Regardless of their access to vulnerable populations or not, all AmeriCorps interns will be required to complete a three-part AmeriCorps check:

- Criminal History Background check for Resident State and Worked in State (e.g., Position State) (two-state background check)
- FBI fingerprinting done through our vendor, Fieldprint
- National Sex Offender Public Website check (NSOPW)
- MVR if 21+ and required to drive for their internship

The background investigation process for AmeriCorps interns is a federally initiated process and the SCA cannot perform a background check in lieu of the federal investigation. If your intern requires a federal background investigation, please be sure to allow time for the process to be completed, otherwise, the intern will not be able to start the position as scheduled. The intern will receive an email from hrdocs@thesca.org with information on how to complete the FBI background check.

Supervising An Intern

Compensation & Pay Schedule

Although this is a volunteer program, at a minimum, interns receive a living allowance (amount determined in the initial position request) for basic expenses and a travel allowance to assist with traveling to and from the site. The SCA disburses intern allowances and reimbursements via direct deposit to the intern's personal bank account on a bi-weekly basis – every other Friday – following the position's start date. Interns are expected to bring at least one month's worth of allowances with them to the site to cover expenses before initial pay is disbursed.

Login information for the SCA's payroll system, ADP Workforce Management, is sent out at least one week prior to the first pay disbursement or, in some cases, the week that the intern starts their position. Interns are encouraged to sign up for direct deposit in ADP as soon as possible. **Until direct deposit is set up, paper checks will be mailed to the intern's permanent home address.** ADP emails tend to get filtered to email spam folders. If your intern expresses concern over missing ADP emails, please advise them to first check their spam folders. Otherwise, they should reach out immediately to their Intern Advisor. Detailed information on ADP, pay schedules, and taxation can be found in the Intern Handbook.

Note: all allowances for interns are taxed at the federal, and, where applicable, state, and local levels.

As part of their SCA internship, interns will receive a round-trip travel allowance to offset the cost of their travel to and from the host site.

Interns are responsible for booking and paying for their travel to the site. SCA will issue a one-time travel allowance that they will receive on the **first pay date** following the start of their position.

Timecards And Output Logs

Members must submit both **Timecards**, which record their completed service hours, as well as **Output Logs**, which record the *kinds* and *volume* of work they are accomplishing.

You will view and approve timecards in ADP Workforce Management (ADP WFM), which is accessed through the same ADP Workforce Now software as the ADP RM.

Members are expected to complete their timecards on a weekly basis.

If access to technology is going to be severely limited, you should discuss the situation with your Program contact as soon as possible. Your Program contact can share critical information about the rules surrounding log submission and interim approved processes if interns absolutely cannot submit weekly.

Please let your Program Contact know immediately if there are expected date changes to a member's schedule. Failure to do so could result in under- or overpayment to your member.

Output Logs are completed as projects are completed. Interns will receive an email reminder with a SurveyMonkey link every two weeks. When working in groups, only one intern must submit an Output Log on the whole group's behalf This will ensure that we are collecting accurate and complete data for reporting purposes. The output log training video can be found in LearnUpon as part of the **Tracking Accomplishments** course in the Intern Academy and Leader & Member Training portals.

We expect interns to perform their duties to the same standard as regular or seasonal personnel. Interns are expected to work the equivalent of a 40-hour week. You may require interns to work on weekends and holidays, but you should arrange compensatory time off. The hours recorded on a member's timecard should be hours spent on active training or education or actual direct service hours. Partners may approve time off for members, when appropriate, but hours on time sheets should reflect actual hours served. **Interns should log ZERO hours on days not served, including time off.** Interns should select the Service option to record their hours in the timecard unless time has been dedicated to training. AmeriCorps members cannot exceed 10% of their hours with Training hours.

Timecards are verified or denied electronically through your ADP Portal. When an intern's hours are pending your verification, you will receive an email that the timecard is ready for your review. If you cannot view the logs, have questions, or need to change the name of a supervisor, contact your Program contact to help troubleshoot. ***Please let your Program Contact know as soon as possible about any date changes to your member's schedule. Failure to do so could result in underpayments to your member.***

For more information on approving timecards in ADP WFM, please visit this document available on our Partner Resources page.

Intern Travel

Certain positions require travel to complete fieldwork or to attend conferences or training courses. SCA interns should follow travel protocols as dictated by the partner organization. Funding for travel must be included in "Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses" in the cost estimate to fund intern travel. Please see the following section on reimbursement procedures.

Reimbursements

The SCA will only approve reimbursements if Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses are included in the initial position request and as a line item on the estimate. **All expenses must be submitted via the SCA Program Reimbursement Form.**

Please note that **interns must provide a receipt as proof of expense when requesting reimbursement**. Interns unable to produce receipts at the time of request can receive reimbursement, but the reimbursement amount will be taxed. Interns should contact their Intern Advisor to confirm the best way to submit these receipts and then make a reimbursement request through their SCA account. When your intern submits their request for reimbursement, it will be sent to your SCA Program contact, who will include the reimbursement amount in the next pay cycle. **Reimbursement requests must be submitted and approved no later than the preceding Friday of the pay week, to be disbursed the following Friday.**

The current reimbursement process is as follows, but please confirm with your Program Contact in case the process has changed:

1. The intern should discuss the reimbursement with their supervisor to ensure funds are available and that the supervisor approves of the expense prior to submitting.
2. The intern will upload receipts and put the reimbursement request into the SCA Program Reimbursement Form. The intern will then notify their supervisor about reimbursement submission.
3. The supervisor will email their Program contact (National Program Coordinator) with the intern's name and the total dollar amount that is approved.
4. The Program contact will process the reimbursement for the next pay period after approval by the supervisor.

Call or email your Program contact regarding any questions about the reimbursement process or fund availability. **We find that it is not uncommon for interns to misunderstand that they are not eligible for reimbursements unless Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses funds were included in the original cost estimate.**

Holiday, Sick And Vacation Time

The standard expectation is that interns work full-time (averaging ~40 hours/week), with the number of available personal, sick and/or vacation days being determined by you and discussed with the intern at the outset. Since the intern receives a weekly living allowance and is not paid by the hour, they will receive the same amount each week. For example, if a federal holiday falls during the intern's work schedule and they will not be working that day, the intern will still receive their full weekly living allowance.

Sick time should be handled the same as it is for regular or seasonal personnel. If an intern has a long-term illness affecting their ability to work, you must contact your SCA Contacts to discuss options. Vacation time should be arranged and agreed upon between you and the intern. Ten days is recognized as the standard time off for a year of service. If time off will be for a consecutive week or more, please communicate with your Program Contact. A service interruption may need activation (see "Changes to Dates of Service Section" for service interruption information).

Intern Performance

Many situations/behaviors should be able to be resolved through verbal counseling or discussion with the member; however, some incidents may be severe enough to merit a formal written warning, suspension (without pay), final warning or termination. First, if there are concerns about your intern's behavior or performance, please notify your Program Contact immediately to discuss options and devise an action plan. If a member's behavior breaks or performance warrants intervention, we recommend engaging in the following steps, in assistance with your Program Contact:

Step #1: Verbal Warning
A verbal warning is issued as the first step in progressive discipline to clarify policies and expectations. Program participants will be informed that they are being issued a verbal warning.

Step #2: Written Warning
If the conduct addressed by a verbal warning is repeated or additional problems occur after a verbal warning is issued, follow up with a written warning.

Step #3: Creation of a Performance Plan
This is a formal written plan between the SCA supervisor and the program participant to modify recurring behaviors and/or performance issues that have continued after issuing both a verbal and written warning. The plan will be written in collaboration with the supervisor and program participant and signed by both parties.

Step #4: Breaching of the Performance Plan
An SCA supervisor will discuss the breach of the performance plan with the SCA's HR Department. They will determine if a new Performance Plan needs to be created to address new/different behavior. Once a decision is made, the program participant will be notified.

Step #5: Member Dismissal
If the program participant breaches the Performance Plan, dismissal from the program may be warranted, as decided by the SCA in its sole discretion.

Intern Evaluations

Intern supervisors are asked to complete Mid-term and End-of-Term Evaluations for all interns. The evaluations are completed in an electronic format via an online survey. They will be emailed to you at the appropriate times.

Failure to complete these assessments can affect the disbursement of the intern's AmeriCorps award.

Mentoring An Intern

Alongside your role overseeing an intern in their day-to-day duties, we encourage you to explore the career-building mentorship aspect of this relationship. If you have never managed an intern before, you will find that the expectations differ from those of an employee in some important ways. Interns are looking for someone to engage them in a challenging learning experience, provide them with critical feedback, and connect them with people who will build their career support network.

As an intern supervisor, you are more than a manager. You are a mentor. A manager supports a person in their job and provides feedback on job performance. A manager receives a short-term return on their investment in a person. A mentor, on the other hand, shapes a person's career trajectory and thinks outside the scope of the job. A mentor considers the personal and professional growth of the mentee in a mutually beneficial exchange of new ideas and skills.

Benefits Of A Mentoring Relationship

- Increase the likelihood of a successful SCA internship.
- Support participants in experiencing and connecting with careers.
- Support participants in identifying personal and professional goals.
- Provide professional development through experience exchanges and guidance.
- Gain fresh perspective and knowledge from participants.
- Feed off participant's optimistic enthusiasm.

Your First Meeting

Have a conversation with your intern early to set the tone for your mentoring relationship and get to know the intern and their working style a bit better.

Here are some discussion topics to get you started.

- What is something outside of work that you really enjoy doing?
- What time of day do you work best (morning, afternoon, evening)?
- Do you mostly like to work individually or in groups?
- How do you like to receive information (by email, text, phone, or in person)?
- How do you like to contribute your ideas?
- What helps you stay organized?
- What helps you feel motivated at work?

- How can colleagues cheer you up after a difficult day?
- Why did you choose to participate in this internship?
- What are you looking forward to in this internship?
- Is there anything that you feel nervous about in this internship?

This first meeting is also a chance to discuss some of the coordination and valuable information that interns need to know. Here are some topics for discussion.

- What will the workday schedule look like? What are the expectations for days off due to illness or personal needs?
- What are some important site rules and regulations?
- What should the intern do in an emergency? You can complete or review the Emergency Response Plan and identify fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and other emergency equipment.
- What is your favorite thing to do for fun at the site? Share some information to help the intern get excited about the site.
- What should the intern do if there is any concern, large or small? Reiterate that in addition to the support of staff on site, the intern should also communicate with their SCA Program Contact.

Weekly Check-Ins

Each week, you should touch base with the intern. Use this time to:

- **Reflect on the previous week**. How did it go? What are some new things you learned this week? How is work going with other staff? Any interactions to discuss? What was the highlight of the week? Are you facing any challenges?
- **Prepare for the upcoming week**. How are you feeling going into next week? What are your priorities? Do you have any questions or needs to discuss?
- **Make space for feedback**. Share instances where the intern performed well. Address any potential issues. Ask for feedback from your intern about what they might need to be more successful in their internship.
- **Check in on goals**. What progress have you made? Are you encountering obstacles? How can we work together to overcome those? Have a conversation with your intern early to set the tone for your mentoring relationship and get to know the intern and their working style a bit better.

Setting Goals

Early in the internship, you can help the intern set some goals for their time at the site. These goals can also stretch beyond their time with you. In one of your first check-ins, ask for the intern to come prepared with some things they would like to achieve during their internship – both professional and personal goals. You can then help the intern craft these goals into SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Based).

- **Specific**. The more specific you are with your goal, the more clarity you will have in what you are working towards. To help increase specificity with goals, ask the following questions: What exactly do I want to achieve? Where? How?
- **Measurable**. When goals are measurable, it means that you will know exactly when you will have reached your goal. To make a goal more measurable, ask: How will I know when I have reached my goal? What will this feel and look like?
- **Attainable**. When goals are attainable, it means that they can be reached. However, too easy of goals may make it difficult for individuals to sustain motivation, whereas too challenging of goals may make people lose confidence. Research supports that moderately difficult goals tend to evoke more effort than goals that are too easy or too hard.
- **Relevant**. When goals are valued, they are relevant. If a goal is not relevant for the person, then they will be less likely to invest time and effort into making progress on the goal. To increase relevance with a goal, ask: Why is this goal important?
- **Time-Based**. Timelines help people act. Planning out steps helps members reach their goals. Timelines that are realistic and flexible help interns stay engaged with their goals.

After you help your intern identify personal and professional goals, it is important to continue supporting the member with this process:

- Connect on goals at each weekly check-in.
- Encourage the intern to write down the plan. This helps members remember the details of a plan and serves as a reminder to revisit the goal throughout the program.
- Hold members accountable. If a member does not seem to be sticking to the timeline they planned, check-in and work together on revising the plan.
- Take time to celebrate. In addition to celebrating when goals are met, consider celebrating failures as well, as they often represent important opportunities for learning and growth.

Providing Continuous Feedback

Continuous feedback builds a better workplace. Build in time during your weekly check-ins for feedback. Consider both providing and receiving feedback. This allows you to provide positive reinforcement, identify areas of improvement, build rapport with the intern, and stay up to date on the intern's experience.

Tips for successful feedback:

- **Schedule the meeting**. Prior to the check-in, ensure the meeting time and location is convenient, comfortable, and private.
- **Set an intention**. Determine the purpose of the feedback session and the outcomes you would like to reach. Share this intention with the intern and set a positive and welcoming tone. Prepare some notes with specific observations.
- **Identify strength areas**. Descriptive positive feedback gives the intern clarity about your expectations and reinforces behaviors that strengthen performance. When you take the time to celebrate the intern's successes, you build their confidence and help them to feel valued and motivated.

- **Identify growth areas**. Constructive feedback can be a powerful tool to support growth. Remain objective and own your feedback. It can be useful to focus on performance instead of personal traits. Prepare suggestions for tools, training and resources to improve. Great mentors encourage mentees to identify challenges and work with them to overcome them. At the end of each feedback session, interns should have an action plan that you will be able to discuss at the next check-in.
- **Build feedback into weekly check-ins**. Weekly check-ins ensure that feedback is timely and relevant. While feedback can be provided as a part of a formal evaluation, this continuous process during weekly check-ins allows for an open dialogue and encourages two-way communication.
- **Ask for feedback**. Set aside time in your check-ins for the intern to provide feedback to you. It can help helpful to ask specific questions in areas you would like feedback. While the intern shares, concentrate on active listening to understand and be receptive to innovative ideas. Ask for specific and detailed examples. Write down the ideas and discuss ways to implement the suggestions given. Each week, you can discuss your action items. Expressing gratitude for feedback will encourage this open communication.

Resolving Conflict

Conflicts may arise while hosting your intern. The SCA is here to help support and resolve conflicts. SCA programs use the VOMP model, adapted from a model by Crosby Kerr Minno Consulting, a proven method to help curve our natural reactions and enable us to react calmly and professionally. This tool is effective when a two-person conflict arises, or it can be used to facilitate a group conflict. These are mediated conversations, with a mentor or supervisor doing the mediating. Often these conversations require time and energy from all parties involved. It is important to ensure you have these three components: a willingness to participate from parties, time, and energy before starting this conversation.

- **Vent:**
  - Everyone takes turns listening to the other, while the other expresses their feelings.
  - Only one person should be talking, and the others should be listening
  - Make "I" statements that clarify your position, feelings or opinions.
  - Sentence starter "I feel_____when you."
- **Ownership:**
  - Everyone takes ownership of what the other has expressed they have done
  - Sentence starter: "I contributed to this by…"
- **Motives:**
  - Each person verbalizes their motivation.
  - Sentence starter: "This is what I think you were intending..."
- **Plan:**
  - The individuals work together to produce a plan to prevent a similar conflict from arising in the future.

Note: Repeat the V-O-M part multiple times until planning comes naturally.

Holding A Debrief

The process of debriefing is a reflection method to use after any physical, emotional, or social incidents or near-misses, or any you and your intern need to come together to step back and think about something that

has occurred. The debrief is a powerful tool that leverages experiences as opportunities for learning. Debriefs should take place regularly during the internship.

The basic questions we should ask in a debrief can be simplified as follows: What? Gut? So What? Now What? What?

- **What?** Observations
  - Getting the Facts
  - Based on what people see, hear, touch, smell, taste.
  - Discuss the facts of what happened, in detail (who, what, when, where, why, how, etc.)
- **Gut?** Reactions: Emotions, Feelings, Memories
  - Our emotional responses.
  - Feelings about the topic--angers, excites, frustrates, enjoys.
  - Give space for members to surface, share, and explore the emotional impact of the event.
- **So what?** Ideas: Meaning, Significance, Purpose, Importance
  - What people think about the topic.
  - What the topic means to them.
  - Identifies available options & possibilities for what might be done differently in the future.
- **Now what?** Decisions: Future Resolves, Next Steps
  - People decide what they will do with the information.
  - How they want to act after the debrief.
  - Identify specific actions steps for the future.

Changes To Dates Of Service

If the internship dates change for any reason, let your SCA Contacts know immediately. It is vitally important for the SCA to have this information as soon as possible so that we can adjust the payroll and other paperwork and ensure the position still falls within the terms of the agreement. Date changes can also affect the AmeriCorps award, resulting in a downgrade or entire loss of award funds.

Please let your Program Contact know immediately if there are expected date changes to a member's schedule. Failure to do so could result in under- or overpayment to your member.

Withdrawals And Early Exits

If an intern does not arrive at the agreed-upon time, declines a position after accepting it, or leaves the position early, **please notify your SCA Contacts immediately**. If you wish, we will attempt to replace the intern. You will not be billed a second time for the upfront costs of the intern if you choose to backfill the position.

An intern who leaves voluntarily, is terminated, or is hired at your site may forfeit an AmeriCorps Award and may be required to refund any allowance received for weeks not worked. Interns leaving due to illness or family emergency may be eligible for a prorated AmeriCorps award. See the *AmeriCorps* section above.

Service Interruption

Service interruptions enable the intern to be out of the field without accruing billable expenses. Service interruption cases include, but are not limited to:

- A member leaving the site for a long time (one week or more).
- Government shutdown (in cases where the federal partner will not reimburse SCA for billable expenses during the shutdown).
- If a member is called up to active-duty fire status.

If the agreement timeline allows, a service interruption allows the intern to continue serving beyond the original position's end date and use the remaining funds on the agreement.

Please keep in mind that during a service interruption, a program participant will not receive allowances and will not be eligible for workers' compensation. When an intern can return to the field, your SCA Program contact should be notified before the intern resumes the internship.

All SCA internships are billed weekly; therefore, if a member enters or ends an interruption mid-week, the agreement will be billed for the entire week, including payments to the intern.

Terminations

Occasionally, there may be situations where an intern is not meeting expectations or is violating agency rules of conduct. SCA encourages you and the intern to engage your Program Contact as early as possible to express concerns and discuss resolutions. If termination is the only option, the **SCA must be engaged before the dismissal of the intern**, and you must submit documentation detailing the reasons for dismissal. The SCA does a review of all terminations to determine whether the individual will be eligible to apply to SCA programming in the future. Your concerns regarding the intern will be considered in this review.

Safety

The safety of our program participants is of utmost importance to us. The SCA's remarkable safety record is made possible through exceptional diligence and an elevated level of commitment from you, the intern's supervisor.

With more than 60 years of experience, the SCA has developed standards and guidelines that promote a safe workplace. The SCA continually evaluates safety through hazard assessments and incident analysis to integrate the lessons learned into our protocols, procedures and training. In addition to being time and event-tested, the SCA's Risk and Safety Management Team thoroughly reviews (and revises, as necessary) our risk management protocols and procedures annually.

Emergency Communication And Incident Reporting With The SCA

SCA Conservation Internship 24-Hour Contact: (571) 895-1799

We rely on you to communicate with us in the event of an emergency, disciplinary action, or any other situation that impacts the physical or emotional safety of the intern. The SCA has a wealth of experience and resources available to you in managing challenging situations. We expect to work with you in managing any major accidents, illnesses, injuries, events involving law enforcement, or interactions with the media. If you are considering disciplining or dismissing one of our members, **we must be informed early in the process.** In a medical emergency or another serious incident, assistance is available at SCA's Conservation Internship 24-hour contact number: (571) 895-1799. This line has been established to support our members, staff, and partners and should be used for urgent communications only. It will ring an on-call SCA staff member directly 24/7/365. If you are reporting an incident during normal business hours, the first person you should try and contact is your SCA Program Contact, as they are best equipped to start the chain of events necessary for SCA to respond to the incident. However, know that the 24-hour contact is available if you cannot make an immediate and direct connection to your SCA Contact.

Non-Emergency Communication With The SCA

For general notification of minor incidents, please call your SCA Program Contact within 24 hours of the occurrence, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A few examples of minor incidents include an embedded tick, the potential early departure of an intern, unprofessional conduct, or a non-injury vehicle incident. Any information provided on the health and well-being of our interns is appreciated.

Workers' Compensation Coverage And Claims

The SCA administers workers' compensation for interns but must be notified within 24 hours of an incident to file a claim. Please report the incident directly to your SCA Program Contact during normal business hours. If waiting for normal business hours means waiting more than 24 hours (i.e., if an incident occurs late on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday when Monday is a holiday), please call the **SCA Conservation Internship 24-Hour Contact Line (571-895-1799)**. Immediately after the incident is reported, SCA will send an insurance form to the intern. Accidents that occur while the intern is "on duty" are eligible to be covered by worker's compensation. If you have questions about coverage, please reach out to your Program Contact, who can connect you as appropriate with SCA's HR Department.

Job Hazards

There is inherent risk in much of what we do, but if we anticipate and prepare to manage this risk, we can prevent many incidents. We rely on your experience and expertise to evaluate and communicate risk at the worksite and in the local area. While Job Hazard Assessments are not a required part of a position description, any information you can provide related to your agency or worksite is welcomed. Completion of the JHA ensures that we are educating each other about potential risks and providing the necessary preparation and training.

Training and Supervision

As an intern's supervisor, you can prioritize a safe workspace through the training and supervision you provide. In our experience, training and supervision are essential in ensuring a successful internship experience. Most activities (traveling, working, hiking, swimming, etc.) have some inherent risk. Before the intern arrives, please assess the intern's duties and activities for risk management concerns. Incorporate your expectations for managing these risks into your training plan.

Interns should receive the training they need to complete their assignments while managing risk appropriately. Any training should meet your agency's highest standard and mirror the training you would provide to a staff member.

Attention should be given to interns utilizing mechanized equipment. The risk potential significantly increases when using equipment such as brush saws, chainsaws, chippers, and power tools. When it comes to assessing hazards and ensuring safety, interns should be instructed to make conservative decisions at all times, especially when operating mechanized equipment.

Emergency Response Plan

The SCA encourages partners to review the site's Emergency Response Plan with the intern(s), particularly regarding weather emergencies, such as a named storm, hurricane or wildfire. The SCA Intern Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of SCA's emergency procedures. The SCA recommends that interns complete an Emergency Response Plan upon arrival at the site and keep copies of the plan in several locations for easy reference.

Vehicles

Vehicle incidents represent the highest opportunity for personal, property, and organizational loss to the SCA and our partners. Not surprisingly, vehicle-related accidents are one of the most common types of incidents in the SCA's internship program, on or off work hours. Interns driving a motorized vehicle as part of their internship should receive the same or similar training as full-time employees. Specific recommended topics include using seat belts, following speed limits, and responding to local road and weather conditions.

Make no assumptions about an intern's abilities or vehicle experience. Most of us drive small vehicles and are not experienced in handling 15-passenger vans, large pickups, four-wheel drive vehicles, or trailers. For those interns operating vehicles off paved roads, special training may also be required. Consider whether your intern needs special training for any of the following road conditions: dirt, gravel, sand, mud, stream crossings, soft shoulders, or narrow or steep roads. Be sure to train interns on other hazards specific to your area, including wildlife or unusual weather conditions.

Off-Duty Safety

We have found that many incidents occur while interns explore the area during their free time. While we understand they are responsible for themselves during their off time, we encourage you to educate your intern(s) about the hazards of your area and recommend mitigation strategies.

SCA Policies

Intern Housing Policy

This policy establishes roles and responsibilities for partners and interns related to securing and paying for intern housing. It attempts to address common logistical, financial, and procedural concerns.

The safety and well-being of its members is of utmost importance to the SCA. All housing should be at least minimally furnished with a bed, table, and chair(s). The intern should be told in advance about any other items they are required to bring, such as cooking and eating utensils. Tents and bunkhouses are considered acceptable forms of housing. Members must have access to showers, toilets, and a telephone or two-way radio for emergencies. Housing must be clean, in good repair, heated in cold weather, and members must be able to prepare their own food. Partners should tell members what type of housing is available during their initial interview.

Housing should be as close to the work site as possible. The SCA expects that members using a personal vehicle or public transportation to commute more than ten miles one way from their housing to the work site will be reimbursed for that expense. See the "Commuting Allowance" section earlier in this document. Interns should not be expected to share sleeping quarters with other members or staff of the opposite sex.

If your site cannot provide housing for the intern, you should include a housing allowance in the budget for your position. Interns will receive that housing allowance monthly and use it to make rental payments directly to the landlord. Directing payments to the member does not diminish the responsibility of the partner to locate and secure housing. If payments are made directly to the member, they must include utilities and other costs associated with the housing. In this case, the member will be responsible for shutting off utilities at the end of their term of service.

In limited circumstances, the SCA may be named a leaseholder and issue rental payments to the landlord. This need should be discussed when the position is set up and included as a specific line item in the budget for the position. Partners are expected to identify the housing, secure move-in/move-out dates and rent amount with the landlord, and provide these details and all contact information for the landlord to the SCA within one month of expected move-in. The SCA Field Services Manager will set up and terminate any/all utilities associated with the lease. In circumstances where a landlord makes a claim of damage, the partner may be asked to inspect the damage and confirm the claim. If damage is confirmed to be caused by the member, it will be the responsibility of the member to make reparations. Exceptions to this policy will only be made where mitigating circumstances exist as determined by the SCA.

Wildland Fire Duty

Wildland firefighting gives interns a unique opportunity to gain valuable experience in conservation and preservation. Occasionally, partners have an urgent need for firefighters and request that interns be allowed to assist. It is the policy of the SCA to allow members to suspend their internship for a maximum of 14 days, including travel, to fight wildland fires. Per SCA Field Operations Standards, interns may not be involved in wildland firefighting

activities as a member of the SCA. However, they may engage in wildland firefighting activities as a member or employee of another agency. To fight wildland fires, the intern must be approved to take leave from their term of service. This approval must come from the partner, and your SCA Program Contact must be notified before suspension of the internship. Once on leave from their term of service, the member will no longer be covered by the SCA's liability or workers' compensation insurance policies. In addition, the partner must continue to cover the cost of some of the intern's benefits, including housing, health insurance, and related administrative fees.

Interns enrolled in AmeriCorps cannot accrue service hours for time spent in paid wildland firefighting activities.

Pet Policy

To avoid potential health risks and damage to property, it is the SCA's policy that pets are not to be kept in SCA-leased housing. When housing is provided by the partner, or if housing is not leased by the SCA, the intern must obtain written permission from the partner and/or landlord. SCA will not be responsible for any pet-related damage.

Alcohol Policy

The SCA understands that adults of legal drinking age may choose to consume alcohol after work hours and off program time during their term of service with the SCA. Instead of prohibiting this activity, the SCA strives to foster personal and professional responsibility where the consumption of alcohol by legal adults may be done responsibly. With this in mind, alcohol consumption while an SCA program participant is a privilege and not a right. If the consumption of alcohol becomes a management or safety issue, the SCA may revoke this privilege. In addition, participants are expected to adhere to the rules and regulations regarding alcohol use where they are housed.

Drug-Free Workplace

As part of the SCA's ongoing commitment to a safe and healthy workplace, as well as to comply with many of our agreements, we maintain a drug-free workplace policy. Any member who reports to work while under the influence of drugs or alcohol runs the risk of endangering his or her safety and the safety of others, destruction of or damage to personal or organization property, and a loss of productivity and workplace morale.

The SCA and its Partners are committed to protecting the safety, health, and well-being of all staff members, program participants, volunteers, and other individuals in our workplace. We recognize that alcohol abuse and drug use pose a significant threat to our goals. We have established a drug-free workplace program that balances our respect for individuals with the need to maintain an alcohol and drug-free workspace. For this reason, SCA Partners may require pre-employment and random drug testing for participants working on their programs.

All staff and volunteers of the SCA are required to understand and comply with the organization's drug-free workplace policy. Failure to comply with this policy can result in immediate employment termination.

Staff members and volunteers either in our offices or conducting business on behalf of our organization, regardless of location, are prohibited from all the following:

- Unauthorized use, possession, purchase, sale, manufacture, distribution, transportation, or dispensation of any controlled substance.
- Reporting to work while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. Controlled substances include, but are not limited to, narcotics (such as heroin and morphine), cannabis (marijuana, hashish), stimulants (such as cocaine and amphetamines), and depressants (tranquilizers) except by doctor's prescription, and hallucinogens (such as PCP, LSD, and "designer drugs").
- Use, possession, purchase, sale, manufacture, distribution, transportation, or dispensation of any legal prescription drug illegally.
- Reporting to work while impaired using a legal drug whenever such impairment might interfere with job performance, pose a threat to the staff member's safety or the safety of others, or risk considerable damage to organization property.
- If a member is arrested or convicted of a criminal drug statute violation, they must notify their manager and/or Human Resources within five (5) days of the event.

Program participants who violate the drug-free workplace policy may, at the discretion of the SCA, be required to attend a rehabilitation or drug abuse assistance program as an alternative to disciplinary action, including discharge. Members given this opportunity must satisfactorily participate in the program as a condition of continued service.