

VCSP INTERVIEW TIPS:

☉ It's a good idea to talk thoroughly with the member about the challenges of service, particularly the minimal compensation and taxable benefits. *Most attrition of members is because they start the position and only realize later that they can't make it financially.* This causes a good deal of hardship to the program and the site where the member is serving, as well as the member him/herself.

☉ It's a good idea to supply the member with as much information as you can about the position and AmeriCorps in general. That will enable them to accept an offer to serve quicker in the event of their selection. FT members will receive an annual stipend of \$12,825 for a full-time (\$6,790 for half time), 11+ month commitment. Full-time members will receive a \$4725 (\$2362 for half-time) education award upon successful completion of their commitment, and health insurance during their year. They may hold another job or go to school.

☉ My experience has shown that someone who gives "needing a job" as their primary reason for joining AmeriCorps will not last through the year. As soon as they get a job that pays minimum wage (which is equivalent to what members will earn in an annualized hourly way ...which is NOT how they are paid, by the way), they will leave. Of course, no generalizations are true all of the time, but your chances will be better if you find an applicant that is truly interested in community/national service. The motivation is much higher for people to stick it out if they believe they are helping and making a difference.

☉ **TAKE GOOD NOTES!** I can't emphasize this enough. Good clear documentation will help the process be more collaborative and will provide more information if the applicant or others have questions about the interview and selection process in the future. It will also minimize your risk in terms of liability. Additionally, VCSP will need copies of interview and phone reference notes for the applicant that is selected.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Interviewer(s): _____

Applicant's name: _____ Date: _____

For the interviewer: Is the applicant on time? _____ Describe the applicant's overall general demeanor. Are they professional? Cordial?

Sample Questions for the Applicant: (please feel free to edit or create your own)

1. What are ideas you have about creating stable affordable housing situations for people?
- OR
1. What are ideas you have about doing environmental education and/or stewardship?

2. From what you know already, why are you choosing AmeriCorps? Why community service? Tell us about someone you know (or heard or read about) who embodies your idea of service and why?

3. What is your comfort level working with a diversity of people...for example low-income people of different educational backgrounds, races, beliefs, sexual orientations or people living with disabilities?

4. What is your definition of community? Tell us about a community that you feel a part of.

5. What has been your best experience doing service and why? Have you had an unpleasant service experience? What made it so?

6. What do you think are the three most important qualities you will need to be a successful AmeriCorps member and why?

7. Are you able to work independently? Tell us about a time when you demonstrated initiative and problem-solving ability.

8. Give us an example of a conflict you were involved in. What was your role and how did you resolve it?

9. Possible Scenarios: (feel free to make up other/different scenarios)

* See 'conservation' options below

1) You are at a residents' meeting of low- and moderate-income tenants. One of the moderate-income tenants starts complaining about the "undeserving poor who are too lazy to better themselves". S/he seems to be pointing a finger at some people in the room, who become uncomfortable and angry. What do you do?

2) You are on a construction site. One of the volunteers keeps entering the hard-hat area without a hard hat despite repeated warnings. Something slides off the roof and nearly misses the volunteer. What do you do?

3) You unintentionally gave a homeowner some misleading information about a loan program they were interested in. They find out after considerable investment of time,

research and energy. They come to your office site and start yelling at you and other co-workers. The mistake was clearly your fault. What do you do?

10. What would be the most difficult part of fulfilling the year of service for you?

12. Are you able to serve full-time (half-time, etc.) for the full year?

13. What are your expectations of this service opportunity?

14. What do we need to know about your work style to support you most successfully?

15. Why should we select you?

16. What's your biggest weakness?

Interviewer: Please feel free to clarify qualifications, etc. that are specific to your job description for the applicant. This is your chance to find out what kinds of computer skills they have, how much experience they have with direct service. Ask as many questions as you need. Also, make sure to review their application/resume with them and ensure they have provided 2 written references, phone references, etc.

17. Do you have any questions for us?

* Alternate 'conservation' scenarios:

1) You will be removing invasive exotics on a piece of land (honeysuckle) and a volunteer becomes upset both about the removal of these "pretty trees" (comparing what you're doing to 'ethnic cleansing') and the fact that you are using an herbicide made by a huge multi-national corporation and you're supposedly representing an 'environment-friendly' organization. What do you do?

2) You have shared some information about phosphorous and other kinds of wetlands pollution with a group of schoolkids in the last week. You come into the office and an angry parent of one of the kids from your group (who happens to be a farmer) is waiting for you saying that you damn tree-huggers are disparaging farmers when you teach this kind of crap; he is very angry and wants an explanation. What do you do?

3) You are monitoring a camping site/lodge and come upon a group of drunk men throwing beer cans around and acting intimidating towards a couple of other potential campers who are interested in setting up camp for the night (one with a sore ankle). There are four of these men, and three are quite a bit larger than you. When you first begin to interact with them, one steps forward elbowing his friend saying “What are we gonna do with this wuss Charlie?; he’s gettin’ on my nerves!....” What do you do?