



# Strategies to Develop Your Recruitment Plan

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From polling and intensive research studies to collecting best practices and hosting field-wide webinars and conference calls, Service Year Alliance has worked with the service year field – programs, partners, state service commissions, and thought leaders – to gather advice about recruiting young people to do a service year.

Since we know that a successful recruitment strategy starts with a clear plan, the intent is for this guide to help you plan for recruitment as a year-round strategy. This includes thinking about how to build awareness among new recruits all the way through their start on day one of their service.

The guidance in this resource will help your organization develop strategies to create a new recruitment plan or add strategies to your existing recruitment plan to help you have an even more successful recruitment season. The Appendices contain a sample recruitment plan to help you get started.

We suggest revisiting this guide every year as a way to reflect on any changes from the year before and make adjustments based on your own learning.

In service,

**Kristen Bennett**

*Managing Director*

[ServiceYear.org](http://ServiceYear.org)

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## SAMPLE RECRUITMENT PLAN:



# STAGES TO BUILD YOUR RECRUITMENT PLAN



## STAGE 1

### GETTING STARTED

WHAT ARE YOUR PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND HOW DO THOSE IMPACT RECRUITING CANDIDATES?



## STAGE 2

### IDENTIFY TRAITS FOR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

WHAT TRAITS AND SKILLS ARE NECESSARY FOR CANDIDATES TO SERVE IN YOUR PROGRAM?



## STAGE 3

### FINDING YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

HOW WILL YOU FIND YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES?



## STAGE 4

### PICKING MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES



## STAGE 5

### ENGAGING SELECTED CANDIDATES FROM ACCEPTANCE TO START OF SERVICE

HOW WILL YOU ENSURE YOUR SELECTED CANDIDATES START ON DAY ONE?



## STAGE 6

### EXECUTE ON YOUR PLAN

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ACHIEVE YOUR PLAN AND WHEN? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES?





# GETTING STARTED

## WHAT ARE YOUR PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND HOW DO THOSE IMPACT RECRUITING CANDIDATES?

This guide runs through many strategies to consider as you develop your individual plan. Before you start diving into all of your necessary components we want to start off with five strategies to consider for your recruitment and reviewing your program model to make sure nothing has changed since last year.

### THIS STAGE REVIEWS:

- Incorporating five main strategies for your recruitment.
- Reviewing your service year program model.



### INCORPORATING FIVE MAIN STRATEGIES FOR YOUR RECRUITMENT

This guide walks you through many different strategies to consider as you think through what is right for your recruitment efforts. The following five strategies represent tactics Service Year Alliance has heard work effectively across the service year field. We encourage you to incorporate as many of these as possible.

### 1. Go Beyond Recruitment to Awareness

A lack of awareness remains one of the biggest barriers to serving, which makes collective efforts to build awareness all the more essential. Support awareness building efforts nationally and locally, [use shared language](#) to describe what a service year is, and tap into joint efforts such as the [#ServeLikeMe campaign](#) to engage alums in this effort.

### 2. Work Together with Other Programs

As with strategy 1, do not do this work alone. Many programs have seen better results when working with other service year programs in a similar geography or issue area. Service Year Alliance's [Impact Communities](#) have seen great benefit in coming together to recruit and engage corps members together.

### 3. Create Validators & Champions

Word of mouth is consistently cited as a top recruitment strategy. Not surprisingly, this means that your best advocates when recruiting new service year corps members are often your current corps members and alums. Make sure you have an alum engagement plan to keep your corps members engaged and supportive of your program beyond their service year. Additionally, programs have found that in-person

recruitment events can be more successful when coordinated with other individuals who are validators in a candidate's life (e.g. a classroom talk coordinated with a teacher or guidance counselor).

### 4. Adopt a User Friendly Application & Process

Programs that have the most success in converting leads into new corps members are the ones that have a streamlined application process and put adequate time into following up with their candidates in a timely manner. On ServiceYear.org, you can [use custom application questions](#) as a way to easily collect important information from candidates, and you'll receive notifications to help remind you to prioritize candidate follow up.

### 5. Highlight Talent Pipeline

In addition to learning about how they will make a difference during their service year, candidates want to learn the skills they will receive and the type of industries these skills connect with post-service year. Share about training, professional development, and skills you expect corps members to gain in your listing and interview process.





## REVIEWING YOUR SERVICE YEAR PROGRAM MODEL

Though this may sound simple, one of the most helpful strategies you can take when beginning your recruitment planning is to ask yourself the same set of questions each year to make sure you build a plan that aligns with what you want to accomplish with your service year program. Here are some high-level questions we recommend using\*:

- **What need is your service year program addressing in your community?** Is this the same need in the community that was identified last year? (This will help you determine the skills you need to recruit for.)
- **What are the deliverables or activities you hope your service year corps members accomplish?** Is your program achieving the desired outcomes you scoped? (This will also help determine skills you need to recruit for.)
- **How many service year corps members do you need?** What have your application numbers been in the past? (This will help you plan the number of applicants needed for each corps member position filled.)
- **How is your service year program striving to create a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment for your service year corps members?** Are there ways you can expand your selection criteria to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion? (This will help you challenge any bias in your current recruitment practices and expand recruitment where possible.)

*\*See the Appendices for the standard questions Service Year Alliance asks organizations to think through when starting a new service year program. These are more detailed than the high-level questions and can help you review the pieces of your service year program.*

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## QUESTIONS FOR CREATING A SERVICE YEAR PROGRAM:



As you answer these high-level questions, think about anything that may need to change in your position description or the set-up of your program based on your answers. The next stages will help you dig deeper into these questions to help you define your mutual fit candidates, then strategize around finding and recruiting them. Here are a few questions to ponder as the guide transitions to the next section:

- **What tasks will service year corps members perform?**
- **What skills will be required of them to be successful in their service year?**
- **How do you ensure a diverse group of corps members can serve?**
- **When do you need the service year corps members to start?**
- **Will you recruit corps members living outside of the local area?**
- **Who should be involved in helping select them?**
- **What support and benefits will you provide to corps members while they are serving? What additional support can be leveraged to ensure your program is prepared to support diverse candidates?**
- **What credentials or skills will corps members develop while serving?**

By the end of stage one, you should have a good understanding on how your program can incorporate the five main recruitment strategies and a high-level understanding of what you are looking for in your potential corps members. This will allow you to work towards stages two and three of identifying your mutual fit candidates and building a recruitment plan.





# IDENTIFY TRAITS FOR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

## WHAT TRAITS AND SKILLS ARE NECESSARY FOR CANDIDATES TO SERVE IN YOUR PROGRAM?

Now is the opportunity to identify traits of mutual fit candidates. By the end of stage two, you should have the traits of mutual fit candidates identified, and can create a recruitment position description that is tailored to them.

### THIS STAGE REVIEWS:

- What candidate traits are needed for your program to be successful? How will you know there is a mutual fit with your candidates?
- How can you develop a recruitment listing description that includes an overview of your program, its offerings and supports, and the intended service and goals?



**TIP:** Remember, applicants decide to serve for multiple reasons – from becoming change agents in their communities to developing new skills and knowledge that will advance their education and/or careers. Therefore, it is important to think about what and how you want to share information about your program, its offerings and supports to help encourage individuals to serve.



## WHO ARE YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES?

You will want to think through the characteristics of people that could serve in your program and ensure your program is equipped to create a sense of belonging and offer support to a diverse set of candidates. Work with your team to determine what your program can offer, how that aligns with your recruitment goals, and how you want to achieve them.

Narrowing in on traits that lead to mutual fit candidates is key to understanding how you will recruit, where you will recruit, and what your organization culture needs to be in order to support your corps members.





Here are sample questions to ask yourself as you identify your mutual fit traits.

- **What attributes exemplify a candidate that would be a mutual fit for your program?**  
(i.e., spirited, team-oriented, grit, curious, self-starter, empathetic, etc.) How will you identify these characteristics in candidates?
- **What age demographic are you targeting for your program?**  
Why this target age and what makes it ideal for your program? If applicable, how do you make sure your program is ideal for all ages when qualified candidates are accepted that are outside of your target?
- **What skills do your candidates need to perform in your program successfully?**  
What skills and knowledge will your service year corps members leave with at the end of their service year?
- **Do you want candidates from within your community or outside of your community?**  
Will you recruit locally, regionally, and/or nationally? Why this target and what makes it ideal for your program?
- **What education or work experience will incoming corps members need to be successful in their service year?**  
What is the rationale for setting this as a minimum requirement for your program? Can work and volunteer experience substitute for education attainment?
- **What, if any, physical activity will incoming service year corps members be expected to perform?**  
If applicable how do you ensure your program is inclusive of all people, including people with physical disabilities so anyone can serve in your program?

These example questions help you to determine a mutual fit for your program. After answering the questions, it is a good rule of thumb to circle back around and question why these traits make for a mutual fit candidate. As an example, consider the current requirements you list for skills and education level. If your organization currently utilizes a “some college” requirement for applicants, consider if having relevant work experience might be just as relevant. You could be limiting your recruitment pool if you make your qualifications narrower than they need to be.



#### *Additional Resources:*

- [Embracing Diversity](#), from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- [Best Practice Guide: Engaging Opportunity Youth in Service Years](#)
- [Engaging Opportunity Youth in Service Years Webinar](#)
- [Investing in Service Years: A Strategy to Ensure the Future Success of the Nation's Opportunity Youth](#)



**TIP:** Once you have your mutual fit characteristics identified, you will want to understand the diversity make-up of your service year corps. Keep in mind that creating a diverse service year corps involves more than setting and achieving quantifiable numbers. Service Year Alliance finds the service year programs who are best at enrolling and retaining a diverse set of service year corps members have set a strong organizational culture that is equitable and inclusive of people regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, and personal assets and barriers. The staff at these programs create caring environments and reflect the type of service year corps they are recruiting for. Sometimes it is also means looking for candidates in places you normally wouldn't. Do your choices in mutual fit and diversity impact the training/support that you will need to provide to your corps members to be successful during their service year? If yes, consider revisiting these program elements to have the infrastructure necessary for service year corps members to be successful and highlight these aspects in your recruitment efforts.

## DEVELOP A RECRUITMENT LISTING DESCRIPTION

Once you've identified traits for mutual fit candidates, you can start to craft a brief recruitment listing description that speaks directly to your intended audience and targeted outreach to candidates. In general, Service Year Alliance has found that messaging that incorporates the concept of "A Better You. A Greater Us." can be the most effective. This means that your messaging speaks both to the personal and professional growth that your service year corps members will experience through their service year, as well as the impact that they will be able to make in a community through their service year. Service Year Alliance often encourages programs to provide details that would help an individual understand the day-to-day experience someone could expect. The goal here is to provide enough information to inspire someone to want to join your program while not overwhelming them with too much text up front! By the end of this process, you should have created one or more listing descriptions and understand the different audiences you would like to engage when advertising your service year program.



### *Additional Resources:*

- [Service Year Alliance Recruitment Best Practices Toolkit](#)
- [ServiceYear.org Recruitment Help FAQs](#)
- [CNCS's Create A Position Description Tips](#)
- [Best Practices for Service Years Awareness, Recruitment, and ServiceYear.org Webinar](#)



**TIP:** It can be helpful to develop more than one recruitment listing description for different channels or targeted audiences. One thing may work well when presenting in person on a college campus, while another may work better when advertising online. When presenting to recent high school graduates, you may want to highlight the Segal Education Award (if you are an AmeriCorps program) as a benefit post-service. It is key to know who you want to recruit and what benefits your program brings to each of those candidates.





# FINDING YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

HOW WILL YOU FIND YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES?

Now that you've outlined some traits of your mutual fit candidates, it's time to map out the logistics. This section defines how you will find your candidates and the steps you will take to get there. By the end of stage three, you should have a plan for how to find and recruit your mutual fit candidates.

## **THIS STAGE REVIEWS:**

- What are your recruitment goals?
- How will you find your ideal candidates?
- What type of events are needed to accomplish your goal?
- How can you create a web presence?
- What materials are needed to recruit for you ideal candidates?
- What is your timeframe for recruitment?
- What is your budget for recruitment?



## RECRUITMENT SMART GOALS 101

It's important to write your recruitment goals in a way that helps you act toward achieving them. A great way to make sure your goals are actionable is to use the SMART goals format, which commonly\* stands for:

- **Specific** -- Goals clearly define the desired outcome to solve a problem, take advantage of an opportunity, meet a challenge, and outline who the participants are.
- **Measurable** -- Goals demonstrate a tangible change expected and progress towards your desired outcome. There are usually short-term measurements built into a long-term goal.
- **Achievable** -- Goals must be attainable with the time and resources available.
- **Relevant** -- Goals measure outcomes within the scope of the work/project. Scope areas could include: the organization's mission and values, service year program, current project, your assignment, or your career pathway.
- **Time-bound** -- Goals specify when you want to achieve them.

Example recruitment goals could be: At our September XX, 20XX orientation, we will have XX corps members start our program -- or -- By July 31 20XX, we will have XX applications submitted to our program. Make the goals relevant to what you want to achieve and your service year program model.

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

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



## FINDING CANDIDATES BY FORGING RECRUITMENT PARTNERS

Build a recruitment plan that targets candidates with traits you are looking for. Consider where they spend time, who may be an influencer in their lives, what other programs may be targeting those individuals, and what barriers and/or particular interests that person might have in doing a year of service? As an example, great results can be seen by engaging parents, guidance counselors, or job readiness counselors as a way to engage potential corps members since these are trusted figures already existing in a young person's life. Or maybe you can go to a trusted place that your ideal candidates regularly visit, like religious services or volunteer opportunities. It is about aligning your program to the existing influencers in your candidates' environments.

Service Year Alliance also knows that many programs fill their opportunities through word of mouth from currently serving corps members or alums. That is why we created the #ServeLikeMe campaign to help drive traffic to your program's profile on ServiceYear.org and build awareness for all programs through word of mouth in your community and beyond. [Check out our resources for the #ServeLikeMe campaign](#) to start utilizing this strategy with your currently serving corps members and alums.

## WHAT TYPES OF EVENTS ARE NEEDED TO FIND CANDIDATES

After thinking through where to find your ideal candidates, you will next want to consider if events can help attract candidates to your program. This is a great time to utilize your currently serving corps members or alums (if applicable).

- **What type of in-person events will you host?**
- **What organizations, community-based groups, high schools, social services, workforce development agencies, social and professional clubs or associations, and higher education systems can you partner with?**
- **What existing events can you take advantage of?** (i.e., college fairs, high school fairs, nonprofit + volunteer events, career fairs, parish gatherings, community events, etc.)
- **What other service year programs can you partner with to hold joint events and/or share waitlist candidates with each other?** (One organization's waitlist candidate may be another organization's mutual fit candidate.)
- **Will you recruit locally and/or nationally?** Or both?

Make sure that all relevant events and partnerships fit within your recruitment window to optimize the selection of your mutual fit candidates. Be creative and really consider where your candidates will come from so that you can meet them there. Where you choose to target is all about finding the pipeline and relationships that are best for your program.



### *Additional Resources:*

- [Service Year Alliance Campus Recruitment Guide](#)
- [Service Year Alliance Service Year Fair Guide](#)

## CREATE A WEB PRESENCE

Service Year Alliance highly recommends setting up a [ServiceYear.org](https://www.serviceyear.org) profile as part of your recruiting efforts since our coordinated national awareness and recruitment efforts help direct traffic to ServiceYear.org. You'll also have the option to utilize ServiceYear.org as a tool for accepting applications from candidates. If you have an existing application on another platform, you can also customize your application on ServiceYear.org to link candidates there.

If your organization is utilizing its own website for recruitment, you'll want to check that all of your information is up to date for the current program year. In particular, if you are using this as your location to accept applications, double check that your process for accepting applicants is clear, straightforward, and as simple as possible. As a way to continually improve your process, you could also consider asking your current service year corps members or alums what would make the experience better for future applicants.

Beyond your presence on ServiceYear.org and your own website, you will also want to consider setting up social media channels (Facebook and Instagram being the most popular) to help build awareness and increase traffic. The great thing about social media channels is that they can help with your alum engagement after service too (including leveraging [#ServeLikeMe](https://www.instagram.com/serve_like_me/)).



### *Additional Resources:*

- [ServiceYear.org Setup and Recruitment for Organizations](#)
- [Service Year Alliance Recruitment Best Practices Toolkit](#) (including social media tips)
- [ServeLikeMe Campaign](#)
- [Best Practices for Service Years Awareness, Recruitment, and ServiceYear.org Webinar](#)



## WHAT MATERIALS ARE NEEDED TO RECRUIT YOUR MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

What will you need for your online and in-person recruitment efforts? This is an opportunity to utilize your thinking on who your potential mutual fit candidates are and create marketing materials that will inspire them to apply to your program. Make sure your marketing materials highlight how to apply, basic qualifications needed, and skills they will learn. Remember: A Better You. A Greater Us. If possible, include brief alum stories and feature people in your materials who are representative of your potential mutual fit candidates. If you're creating digital ads, you can also link individuals directly to your recruitment listing on ServiceYear.org.

Check out Service Year Alliance's Recruitment Best Practices Toolkit to see how you can create content that both aligns with our collective awareness messaging and also provides tips on how to relay what serving with your organization looks like.



### *Additional Resources:*

- [Service Year Alliance Recruitment Best Practices Toolkit](#)
- [ServeLikeMe Campaign](#)

## WHAT IS YOUR TIMEFRAME FOR RECRUITMENT?

If you are an education and youth focused program or looking to recruit candidates ages 18-24, it may be beneficial to align your program year/recruitment cycle to when the highest volume of potential applicants will be starting to look for their next opportunity. Here is a general calendar of when people are in school; usually school (high school and college/university) starts late August or early September and ends in late May or early June.

Late Aug / Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May / Early Jun
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If your ideal candidates are between the ages of 18-24, that means you need to be ready to market your program in April/May when this demographic is looking to line something up for the upcoming year. For education programs, this also means you need to have all of your applicants enrolled and have orientation begin before the start of the school year.

We know that not all programs use the school calendar as guidance and many have alternative recruitment windows that make sense for what they want to accomplish. Always align your strategy to what you want to accomplish and how you will find your best suited candidates.

Service Year Alliance highly recommends an “always be recruiting” approach with the next application cycle occurring right after one cycle closes. At a minimum, consider starting at least six months before orientation, and ideally eight months before orientation (as a longer timeline gives a larger window for applications and interviewing). Here is a template for an eight-month timeline.

**Month 1:**

- Review all strategies in this guide and build your plan to be ready for the recruitment season, including a finalized calendar, benchmarks, logistics.
- Revise forms and systems including work plan, timeline, forms, templates, application process, sponsor recruitment packet, and any technical systems.
- Review recruitment listing descriptions and make any adjustments.

**Month 2:**

- Implement plan created in stages 1-5 in this guide.
- Post recruitment listing description(s) to your website and other recruitment sites in your recruitment plan, including ServiceYear.org.
- Start receiving and processing applications.

**Month 3:**

- Start attending recruitment events and building awareness.
- Continue to receive and process applications.

**Month 4:**

- Use information from stage four in this guide to start your interview processes.
- Interview and place applicants; set aside time for background checks.
- Coordinate acceptance packet materials and send to accepted service year corps members.
- Engage accepted candidates with strategies from stage five in this guide.

**Month 5** (for six-month recruitment plans: combine with tasks in previous month):

- Continue interviewing and recruitment events.
- Engage candidates with strategies from stages 4-5 in this guide.

**Month 6:**

- Complete interviews and service year corps member placements.
- Create applicant waiting list.

**Month 7** (for six-month recruitment plans: combine with tasks in previous month):

- Engage accepted candidates with strategies from stages 4-5 in this guide.
- Prepare for orientation and corps members arriving.

**Month 8:**

- Day 1: Service year corps members' orientation.

## DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET

Based on your timeline, in-person events, marketing materials, and web presence, you will determine a recruitment budget for the year. Sometimes activities in 'month one' need to be done earlier to align with your organization's budgeting cycle. If there is a large gap between your budgeting cycle and recruitment period you may need to adjust spending based on any changes in rates once you start your recruitment period (for example, pricing could change for events or travel that need to be accounted for).





# PICKING MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES

## HOW WILL YOU ENSURE CANDIDATES CHOOSE TO SERVE IN YOUR PROGRAM?

The planning in this section is critical to ensure candidates feel valued throughout the application process and that they understand the responsibilities and benefits of a service year. By the end of stage five, you will have tips for following up with leads, interviewing applicants, and making sure that selected candidates will be a great fit for your program.

### THIS STAGE REVIEWS:

- Methods to keep your applicants engaged.
- Types of interview questions to find your mutual fit candidates.



## HOW TO KEEP YOUR APPLICANTS ENGAGED

It's likely that your candidates are also considering other opportunities while they are applying to your program. You'll want to make sure that your program stands out as a top choice, and the steps outlined below are best practices for keeping your applicants engaged throughout the interview and hiring process:

- 1. Keep your applications simple.**

A cumbersome application process could be a deterrent to prospective corps members. When and where possible, simplify your application and consider tailoring your questions, language, and format to the applicants you are targeting for recruitment. Remember, you can always ask your current service year corps members and/or alums what they would change about your application process.

- 2. Respond to candidates within a week of receiving their applications.**

Let candidates know that you are interested in them by following up quickly and while their application is still fresh on their mind.

- 3. Share a timeline with applicants of when they can expect to hear from you next.**

Consider adding a timeline outlining next steps and milestone dates to your application. This will give your applicants some sense of when they should expect to hear from you next! Make sure to stick to the timeline you shared or update your candidates if there are any changes.

- 4. Make yourself available at times that work best for your applicants.**

Consider the times of day and the days of the week that your ideal candidates are available. Schedule communications to fall within those time frames if possible. For coordinating interviews, also think of using an online calendar system like Calendly or Acuity to make setting up an interview easier for you and the candidates.

**5. Leverage communication methods that are best suited for your candidates.**

Everyone uses email and therefore it should be central to your communication. However, if the groups that you are targeting communicate best through text messaging, consider investing in a text messaging technology. Regardless of age, personal phone calls can also be effective when communicating.

**6. Encourage applicants to complete unfinished applications.**

If you notice that your candidates have incomplete applications, reach out to them and nudge them to complete their application. You can keep this friendly by also checking in to see if they have questions on next steps or about your program in general. Alternatively, adding a deadline can be a strategy to encourage them -- and if they don't complete it by the deadline or after reaching out, then you know to move on to other candidates.

**7. Offer opportunities to speak with alumni, currently serving corps members, or members of your staff.**

While your candidates are waiting to move to the next step in the process, help them begin to see themselves in a service year by connecting them with someone who has first-hand experience of what it is like to serve in your program.



*Additional Resource:*

- [Best Practices for Engagement & Finding Mutual Fit Candidates Webinar](#)



Besides character questions, make sure you include interview questions that assess whether a person is best suited for the service they will be doing with your program. If a service year corps member will be in a school, ask if they have tutored or worked with kids in different capacities, to determine strategies they might already use to interact with kids. If your service year program is increasing capacity through a volunteer management position, ask the candidate about their own volunteer work and what they enjoyed about the experience, or about ways that they've helped coordinate projects or individuals. Go back to your position description to see what types of questions will be good to add for your unique service year program.

Finally, make sure to talk about the compensation and benefits in the interview process. These are unique to service year programs and making sure candidates understand this information will decrease issues once they accept their position or start the program.

Service Year Alliance has seen success from programs who create a rubric for their interview process based on the mutual fit candidates they are searching for. This way everyone interviewing the candidate can mark what they think based on the characteristics outlined. Ultimately, you may need to make a gut decision on whether someone is right for your program. If you're an existing program, ask your currently serving corps members and/or alums for questions they think would be good to ask potential candidates based on their experience in your program. You can also invite currently serving corps members to be in the interview process to help select the next corps and answer questions from candidates.







# ENGAGING SELECTED CANDIDATES FROM ACCEPTANCE TO START OF SERVICE

## HOW WILL YOU ENSURE YOUR SELECTED CANDIDATES START ON DAY ONE?

Here are some tips to increase the chances of your candidates accepting the service year position and starting on day one of the program.

### THIS STAGE REVIEWS:

- Acceptance package for service year corps members.
- Making candidates feel special and ready to serve.
- Continuous engagement and onboarding materials.
- The Virtual Companion.
- Start of Service.



## ACCEPTANCE PACKAGE FOR SERVICE YEAR CORPS MEMBERS

Make sure your offer has all the information that your candidates need to understand what it means to accept. For example, you might include position start and end dates, placement location, stipend information, and other logistics. Once the candidate accepts the offer, send them an acceptance package that gives them more information to get excited and prepare for their service year. Here are a couple questions to help guide you to the information you may want to send them.

- **Once accepted, what do your service year corps members need to know before they start their service year?** What help can you provide in this process?
- **If your service year corps members are relocating for their service year, what information do they need about your community (including finding housing)?**
- **What insight can you help your incoming corps members understand about their stipend?** Can you help them apply for SNAP before they start? Can you help them understand budgeting and transportation logistics?
- **How can they connect to others in their cohort or to currently serving corps members and alums?**
- **What should your service year corps member have prepared for their first day?** What dress code is expected? Do they need to provide any documents to fill out paperwork?
- **Who can they follow up with if they have questions before they begin?**

Service Year Alliance created a [‘Survive Your Service Year’](#) series that is a great supplement for you to send with the acceptance. This guide covers relocating, budgeting, and general tips and tricks for life on a service year stipend. Consider creating additional resources that are specific to your program and location as well!



*Additional Resource:*

- [Best Practices for Engaging Candidates from Acceptance to Start of Service](#)



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE ACCEPTED CANDIDATES FEEL SPECIAL AND READY TO SERVE?

Besides the acceptance package and sending logistical information, how else can you get accepted candidates excited about their service year? Think through how you can bring them into the fold of your organization, community, and program. Sometimes candidates accept months before starting their service year, so it is important to have a way for them to feel connected throughout that period until starting their service year.

One way is to create a group on social media or a messaging platform with currently serving corps members and alums so that accepted candidates can connect with each other and others who have served before them (i.e. [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Slack](#), [GroupMe](#), [Google Drive Team](#), [Email Group](#)). Also consider matching an existing service year corps member with an accepted candidate to act as a peer buddy. Think of creative ways to show the accepted candidates that everyone is excited for them to start their service year and also start bringing them into the service year experience before they actually start.



## CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT AND ONBOARDING MATERIALS

The final stage is to prepare your candidates for day one and becoming service year corps members. If you haven't done so already, send information about what they can expect on day one and whether there is anything they need to bring or prepare. Are there pieces of your onboarding process that could be done before they start? Are there articles you'd like them to read to learn more about the work they will be doing? Are there any reflections they can do before they begin their service year? Service Year Alliance finds that programs who engage their accepted candidates prior to their start date have higher retention and set their service year corps members up for success.

## THE VIRTUAL COMPANION

Service Year Alliance heard from programs that providing consistent support and resources to service year corps members all year can be a challenge – especially on topics outside of service year activities, such as self care and stress management, professional development, and post-service year job searching. Service Year Alliance launched The Virtual Companion to provide a standardized level of engagement on all aspects of the service year corps member experience, from the day they accept their position to the day they finish their service year. These “Virtual Companion” messages act as a foundation of resources for your corps members, and your program can create additional site, location, or position-specific resources to make sure your corps members have all the resources they need to succeed! The Virtual Companion uses the [Survive Your Service Year Series](#), [Thrive During Your Service Year Series](#), and [Transition After Your Service Year Series](#) as a baseline.

If a program wants their service year corps members to have access to The Virtual Companion, the program will need to first make sure that their corps members are officially accepted into their position on ServiceYear.org (Not sure how? [Read our step-by-step here](#)). Once you enter your corps member's start and end dates, The Virtual Companion system will divide their service year into quarters to make sure they are getting the right content throughout their year. Starting on the day they are officially accepted by the program on ServiceYear.org, service year corps members will get around one message every other week throughout their year with helpful resources and reminders to keep them on track. Officially accept your corps members on ServiceYear.org today so they can receive this benefit!



*Additional Resource:*

- [Officially Accepting Your Corps Members Guide](#)

## START OF SERVICE

Congrats on getting to orientation! We hope these corps member engagement strategies from awareness and recruitment through to acceptance will help your corps members feel supported and excited -- and ultimately show up ready to start serving. Beyond getting through day one and orientation, start thinking about the skills your service year corps members will attain throughout their service year and how that builds to their post-service year trajectory. Resources sent through The Virtual Companion will act as a great baseline for support and development all year. By supporting your service year corps members' overall personal and professional development, you are creating a stronger program that can lead to better awareness, recruitment, and retention for years to come. Best of luck with your service year program!







# EXECUTE ON YOUR PLAN

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ACHIEVE YOUR PLAN AND WHEN?  
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES?

Congratulations, you are in the home stretch. This section reviews how to bring all the pieces together to create your recruitment plan.

## THIS STAGE REVIEWS:

- Create your timeline and fill in specific events for your recruitment plan.
- Identify who is responsible for each of your recruitment activities.
- Common questions and guidance for promoting your program.



## CREATE A TIMELINE & RECRUITMENT PLAN

Take all your answers from stages 1-5 and draft your timeline and recruitment plan. Remember to include your recruitment goals, mutual fit candidate characteristics, listing description(s), timeline, events, web presence, marketing materials, and budget items. This will be your recruitment roadmap as you work to fill your service year positions. Remember to figure out the best ratio of number of applicants needed for each corps member position filled in order to make sure you have the right strategy and budget to fill all of your positions. Some programs need at least two per opportunity, while others may need five or more per opportunity to recruit their full corps.

## IDENTIFY WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OF YOUR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

Once you have all the pieces together, identify who is responsible for each of your recruitment activities. A system like [RACI](#) can help your organization's staff know who is:

- **Responsible** -- Owns the task / project and responsible for doing the work.
- **Accountable** -- Signs off on work being done effectively; also the person liable to remove any roadblocks to a project.
- **Consulted** -- Consulted on the task / project to get viewpoint of work or asked to do work for the project; also, kept informed as the work moves forward.
- **Informed** -- Given updates on a task / project but not asked to provide input on any of the work.

By identifying project roles, you can determine the necessary tasks to meet your recruitment goals. At the end of this section, you should have all of your recruitment plan pieces and roles needed to fill your service year positions. When all the pieces are together, it is good practice to make sure all leadership and anyone identified in the RACI chart is brought into the process to make sure everyone agrees to the tasks moving forward.

## COMMON QUESTIONS AND GUIDANCE FOR PROMOTING YOUR PROGRAM

Setting up a full recruitment plan, especially during your program's first couple years, can be a lot of work -- but the end result will set you up for long-term success. Here are resources from Service Year Alliance and CNCS to help organizations build your recruitment plan. You can always talk to someone at Service Year Alliance through our [chat function on ServiceYear.org](#) if you have any questions.



*Additional Resources:*

- [Guidance for Recruiting on ServiceYear.org for Organizations](#)
- [CNCS's Resources for Programs](#)
- [Best Practices for Service Years Awareness, Recruitment, and ServiceYear.org Webinar](#)

**USE ME!**

### SAMPLE RECRUITMENT PLAN:



## RECAP OF RESOURCES



Here are all the resources included throughout this guide.

- [CNCS's Embracing Diversity](#)
- [Best Practice Guide: Engaging Opportunity Youth in Service Years](#)
- [Engaging Opportunity Youth in Service Years Webinar](#)
- [Investing in Service Years: A Strategy to Ensure the Future Success of the Nation's Opportunity Youth](#)
- [Service Year Alliance Campus Recruitment Guide](#)
- [Service Year Alliance Service Year Fair Guide](#)
- [ServiceYear.org Setup and Recruitment for Organizations](#)
- [Service Year Alliance Recruitment Toolkit](#) (including social media tips)
- [ServeLikeMe Campaign](#)
- [Best Practices for Service Years Awareness, Recruitment, and ServiceYear.org Webinar](#)
- [My Office Campaign](#)
- [CNCS's Resources for Programs](#)
- [Best Practices for Engagement & Finding Mutual Fit Candidates Webinar](#)
- [Surviving Your Service Year](#)
- [Thrive During Your Service Year Series](#)
- [Transition After Your Service Year Series](#)
- [Best Practices for Engaging Candidates from Acceptance to Start of Service Webinar](#)
- [Enrolling Your Corps Members Guide](#)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Service Year Alliance wants to recognize that this guide is based on our work to date, as well as resources and learnings from many organizations across the service year field and the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS). Specifically, we would like to thank six programs who gave us feedback on the resources and added valuable insight:

*AmeriCorpsAbility, ArtistYear, Compass AmeriCorps, KEYS Service Corps, PHEEND Fellows Program, and YouthBuild Philadelphia.*

Also, we want to give a heartfelt thank you to all of the organizations with service year programs for all you do in your community and for your service year corps members. Service Year Alliance hopes this guide helps you think through the recruitment strategies you need to be successful. We thank you for being a service year program, making a difference in your community, and building the next generation of civic leaders in the United States.



## ABOUT SERVICE YEAR ALLIANCE

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

Find Us Online: [ServiceYear.org](http://ServiceYear.org)

Find Us on Twitter: [@ServiceYear](https://twitter.com/ServiceYear)

Find Us on Facebook: [Facebook.com/ServiceYear](https://facebook.com/ServiceYear)

## OUR VISION

Every year, one million young Americans engaged in a service year, solving important problems while transforming their own lives.



**A Better You.**  
A Greater Us.

# APPENDICES



## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR SERVICE YEAR PROGRAM MODEL

### YOUR ORGANIZATION SET-UP

- How many corps members are right for your organization?
- How will corps members be supervised and supported? Who will supervise corps members?
- What desired result or quantifiable change will occur due to the service of this position?
- Will corps members generally start and end their service year at the same time, or can corps members start at any time?
- How many hours per week will the corps members serve in direct service or capacity building activities?
- Will your corps members serve as a team at the same service site, or will your corps members serve individually?
- Will the corps member and supervisor be in the same location, or will the supervisor be off-site?
- Who will provide ongoing support to the corps member?
- Average hours of ongoing support per week?
- How do you ensure a diverse group of corps members? To attain your target of a diverse corps do you need to change any practices internally? Do you need to partner with other organizations to help attain your goals for a diverse corps?

### CORPS MEMBER BENEFITS

- What is the living allowance amount per month for this position?
- What are the benefits corps members will receive while serving in this position?

**CORPS MEMBER ROLE**

- What are the roles and responsibilities a service year corps member will perform to address the needs identified in the community? What are their daily activities? Will the activities be direct or capacity building services?
- What will the average day look like for this corps member?
- Who will they report to, what resources will they be given, and what will they be responsible for?
- What are the specific service activities the corps members will perform?
- What is the position description?
- What is the term of service for this position?

**CORPS MEMBER SKILL BUILDING**

- What type of orientation will corps members receive at the beginning of their service year? What will it entail?
- How long is the orientation corps members receive for this position?
- How will you establish and track the corps member's development goals, and ensure that those are being met?
- What skills will they develop through their participation in the program?
- What experience, knowledge, or certifications will they achieve during their term of service?
- On average, how many training hours will the corps members participate in each week/month?

**CORPS MEMBER MENTORING**

- Who will mentor the corps members?
- How will you identify the mentoring needs of the corps members?
- What is the intended nature and/or focus of the mentoring relationship?
- Average hours of mentoring per month?

## SAMPLE RECRUITMENT PLAN

### **EXAMPLE: Fund Development Service Year Program**

**Program Goal:** XYZ organization builds capacity at local nonprofits through trainings and leadership development. To maintain the right fund development goals to bring programming to local organizations, XYZ organization engages with a fund development service year program that is geared toward building fundraising capacity to maintain the program support for the community and build new fund development leaders. Our service year program is 10 months (Aug - May).

### **MUTUAL FIT CANDIDATES:**

#### **CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Has Grit – someone who can make it through a year of ups and downs.
- Empathetic & Compassionate – the person will be working with small capacity organizations within the community and the person will need to understand how to help without judging the organizations' current practices.
- Attention to Detail – fund development requires attention to detail.
- Proficient Writing & Communications Skills -- this person will be interacting with donors so needs to have good writing and communication skills.
- Experience in Sales – whether through a previous job or school the person must have some experience is sales and selling [or a deep desire to go into the field of fund development].
- Willingness to Learn – through the program we will train them on the skills needed to be a successful fund development professional and we will need someone who is willing to learn and work hard.

**DIVERSITY OF CORPS:**

- We are looking for equal representation of Americans regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, and personal assets and barriers. To accomplish this we will rely on using our network of organizations we assist and community partners.
- We will primarily recruit locally to give opportunity for folks in our community to serve – we will do some national recruitment through ServiceYear.org as we value the fresh perspective of someone outside the community as well.
- Our target demographic is young adults 18-28 as this position is good for someone starting out in fund development; at the same time we will gladly accept adults older than 28.
- We will engage opportunity youth through our community partners and have set up partnerships with agencies for corps member services that will help anyone who may need additional services that we do not offer ourselves.
- We will offer a monthly living allowance of \$1600 (paid biweekly) and benefits, including health coverage, transportation costs to and from site, and a modest relocation budget (if applicable).

**Recruitment Goal:** By March 20XX, XYZ organization will garner at least 40 interested candidates who fill out applications in anticipation of selecting 20 candidates to interview.

**Recruitment Goal:** By April 20XX, XYZ organization will interview at most 20 potential candidates in anticipation of selecting 10 final candidates for our service year program.

**Recruitment Goal:** By April 20XX, XYZ organization will select 10 incoming corps members.

**Recruitment Goal:** XYZ organization values diverse corps and will make sure that at least one candidate is opportunity youth and at least half of the corps represents different races, genders, socio-economic statuses, and/or personal assets and barriers.



## EXAMPLE RECRUITMENT LISTING(S)

### Main Listing: Serve Your Community and Gain Fundraising Skills

Nonprofit fund developers are some of the most sought after hires for nonprofits. Through doing a service year, you will gain a whole new set of skills, including fund development basics, written and verbal communication skills, interpersonal skills, social media and database technology skills, and sales skills while serving your community. You will help continue the fund development and resource building capacity of XYZ organization [link to organization website] and be coached by a skilled and experienced supervisor. Sample main projects include co-creating (with supervisor) fund development plan and social media campaigns to drive revenue and acquire donors (major donors, low to mid-level donors as well as corporate and foundation donors). A service year is a way to gain skills and give back at the same time. A Better You. A Greater Us.

**Service Term: June 20XX - March 20XX**

#### NEEDED SKILLS:

- Some sales background – either work or school experience
- Interest in being a fundraiser or in the development field
- Excellent initiative and ability to work both independently and as part of a team
- Ability to work well under pressure
- Willingness to talk to donors and cultivate relationships
- Willingness to learn sales and comfortable with the idea of asking for money
- Detail-oriented and able to keep accurate and up-to-date records
- Good verbal and written communication skills

#### SKILLS GAINED

- Fund development basics
- Social media and database technology management skills
- Sales skills
- Written and verbal communications skills
- Interpersonal skills

**SOCIAL MEDIA LISTING: WANT A CAREER IN FUNDRAISING?**

- Gain skills in fundraising, social media management, and sales.
- Benefits include monthly stipend, transportation costs to and from XYZ organization, a modest relocation fee (if needed), and other benefits.
- Serve your community by working with a local nonprofit organization and gain these skills. More information here [link job posting on website or ServiceYear.org] A Better You. A Greater Us.

**LOCAL ADVERTISEMENT LISTING: OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY & GAIN FUNDRAISING SKILLS**

- Do a paid service year for 10 months with XYZ organization to increase organizational capacity through fundraising and gain skills in fundraising, social media management, and sales. A Better You. A Greater Us.
- Benefits include monthly stipend, transportation costs to and from XYZ organization, and other benefits.
- For more information go to this link: [link job posting on website or ServiceYear.org]

**RECRUITMENT PLAN**

Our timeline is to align closely to folks finishing up school and to give enough time for the corps members to be onboarded and enough experience to help with the end of year solicitations.

Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
January		Review recruitment strategies and integrate lessons learned from the previous year.	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	Review recruitment strategies and integrate lessons learned from the previous year.
		Revise forms and systems including work plan, timeline, forms, templates, application process, sponsor recruitment packet, and any technical systems.					Make sure everything is in compliance.
		Review recruitment listing descriptions and make any adjustments.					

Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
February		Post recruitment listing description(s) to website and other recruitment sites, including ServiceYear.org.	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	
		Set up time at each partner organization to let them know you are starting recruitment and to look out for potential corps members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X org on Y day</li> </ul>					
		Start receiving and processing applications.					

Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
<b>March</b>		Start attending recruitment events and building awareness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X event on Y day</li> </ul>	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	
		Set up time at each partner organization to coordinate an event to their beneficiaries to promote openings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X org on Y day</li> <li>• [carry over into other months depending on schedules]</li> </ul>					
		Bring currently serving corps members and alums with you to events					
		Continue to receive and process applications.					



Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
<b>April</b>		Start interviewing and place applicants; set aside time for background checks.	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	
		Coordinate acceptance packet material and send to accepted service year corps members.					
		Start engaging accepted corps members from now to June. [see engagement plan]					
		Continue interviewing and recruitment events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X event on Y day</li> </ul>					
<b>May</b>		Continue interviewing and recruitment events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X event on Y day</li> </ul>					

Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
June		Continue interviewing and recruitment events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X event on Y day</li> </ul>	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	
		Complete interviews and service year corps member placements.					
		Create applicant waiting list.					
		Continue engaging accepted corps members from now to June. [see engagement plan]					

Month	Deadline	Activity	R	A	C	I	Notes
July		Continue engaging accepted corps members from now to June. [see engagement plan]	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	N a m e	
		Get ready for orientation and corps members arriving.					
August		Day 1: Service year corps members' orientation.					