



RSVP
Northern Virginia
VOLUNTEERS 55+ IMPACTING
THEIR COMMUNITIES

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AMERICORPS SENIORS VOLUNTEER STATION HANDBOOK

2024-2027



AMERICORPS SENIORS VOLUNTEER STATION,
WELCOME TO RSVP-
Northern Virginia (RSVP)



*“AmeriCorps is not a moment.
It’s a movement.”*

AmeriCorps 30 Years

Thank you for partnering with us! We are proud to coordinate and collaborate with local nonprofits and agencies to support older adult volunteers impacting their communities through meaningful volunteer experiences.

Under the sponsorship of Volunteer Fairfax, RSVP has a presence in Fairfax County, Arlington County, and the cities of Fairfax, Alexandria, and Falls Church, Virginia. It is the goal throughout this service area to engage adult volunteers aged 55 and older to serve in a wide variety of areas to meet critical community needs.

This RSVP Volunteer Station Handbook contains important information about how RSVP operates and the benefits and responsibilities of participating in the program. Policies, procedures, and related forms are included. Volunteer Fairfax, through RSVP, employs staff who are available to assist you and who will be your primary contact.

We look forward to building a great partnership with you!

Yours in Service,

Stacey Iden, CVA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

Overview &
Practices

06

What Partner
Stations
Can Expect

07

Program Goals
& Objectives

09

Focus Areas &
Work Plans

12

Volunteer
Station
Responsibilities

18

Special Limitations
& Prohibited
Activities

20

Forms &
Resources

21

Contact
Us

OVERVIEW & PRACTICES



Mission

RSVP inspires and empowers individuals aged 55 and older to strengthen regional community capacity through meaningful volunteer service.

History of RSVP

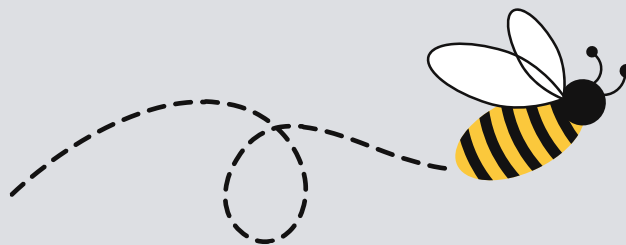
RSVP is a program of AmeriCorps Seniors through AmeriCorps, a federal organization that supports our culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility through national service initiatives. Established in 1971 and now one of the largest volunteer programs in the nation, RSVP engages people aged 55 and older in a diverse range of volunteer activities. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers, through Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and RSVP programs, serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. Today, RSVP engages more than 300,000 members serving across the country.

RSVP Grant Funding

AmeriCorps invests in partnerships with non-profit, faith-based, and Tribal organizations, and state service commissions, to get things done for America. RSVP is supported by a federally funded AmeriCorps grant award. Additional required non-federal funding is garnered through cash and in-kind contributions raised by the sponsor in support of the grant. Though the grant requires the submission of an annual application, work plans and narratives demonstrate the impact the grant will have over a three-year period. RSVP grant awards support programming from April 1 through March 31 during each year of the three-year grant, and program funding is received annually and awarded on a cost reimbursement basis.

Purposes of RSVP

RSVP has the dual purposes of engaging persons 55 and older in volunteer service to meet critical community needs *and* of providing a social network and community for like-minded adults to engage with each other through shared interests and experiences. Flexible in nature, RSVP allows participants to choose how and when they will serve. The program's goals are wide and varied, and volunteer activities currently range from community food support, education success, transportation assistance for seniors, workforce preparation, emergency preparedness, and capacity building tasks to support indirect services that enable volunteer stations to provide more, better and, sustained direct services. RSVP assists volunteer station partners with the recruitment, retention, and recognition of qualified individuals in volunteer services.



RSVP in Our Community

The RSVP program in Northern Virginia was launched in 2013 through a partnership of three local volunteer centers: Volunteer Fairfax, Volunteer Alexandria, and Volunteer Arlington. This regional program, now solely sponsored by Volunteer Fairfax, links individuals to volunteer opportunities to strengthen the capacity of area organizations to make a long-term impact on the community. The program relies on positive and collaborative relationships with both volunteers and community organizations, referred to as volunteer stations. RSVP-Northern Virginia has taken the honeybee as the symbol of an army of seniors dedicated to working on behalf of the collective. Across the ages, many civilizations have revered the honeybee for its virtues, including industry, community, cooperation, perseverance, determination, and wisdom. These virtues are seen in RSVP volunteers and acknowledged with gratitude.

Volunteer Fairfax as Sponsoring Organization of RSVP

Volunteer Fairfax serves as the sponsor for RSVP-Northern Virginia and is legally responsible for fulfilling all project management activities necessary to accomplish the purposes of the program.

A few key responsibilities include:

- 1.** Focus AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP resources on activities that will have a positive impact on critical human and social needs within the project service area, and in compliance with AmeriCorps performance measure requirements.
- 2.** Develop and manage one or more volunteer station partnerships to provide a variety of placement opportunities that appeal to persons aged 55 and older.
- 3.** Make special efforts to recruit and place into AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer service individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and/or degrees of English language proficiency, veterans and military family members, persons with disabilities, and hard-to-reach populations and groups in the community.
- 4.** Provide AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers with cost reimbursement for mileage per RSVP policies and procedures.
- 5.** Provide AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers with supplemental insurance and recognition of their volunteer service.
- 6.** Secure community participation in local project operations by establishing an advisory council.
- 7.** Provide levels of staffing and resources appropriate to accomplish the purposes of the program and carry out its project management responsibilities.



WHAT VOLUNTEER PARTNER STATIONS CAN EXPECT



What RSVP-Northern Virginia Offers

RSVP's Program Manager and Volunteer Specialist are experienced volunteer leaders who know their local communities well and can effectively recruit and screen volunteers for referral to volunteer station partners.

Providing support as appropriate to each volunteer and volunteer station, RSVP continually seeks opportunities to creatively engage volunteers in the work of partner volunteer stations to assist them in building sustainable capacity.

Free access for volunteers to accident medical coverage, volunteer liability, and automobile liability insurance is provided to volunteers; optional mileage reimbursement is also available for volunteers.

RSVP provides volunteer engagement and recognition in the form of group service projects, learning opportunities, annual events, and more informal, ongoing recognition of volunteers through incentive programs, awards, newsletters, and local media.

RSVP's Communication Manager works to increase the program's capacity for volunteer recruitment, and coordinates communication through social and print media.

RSVP team members are available to assist with communication and other issues that may arise between an RSVP volunteer and the volunteer station.

RSVP offers social and professional opportunities for volunteer stations to expand their network and explore industry trends with other organizations having similar missions.

PROGRAM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP promotes the engagement of older persons as resources in planning for community improvement and in delivery of volunteer services. RSVP's mission is facilitated by the coordination of the resources of AmeriCorps, the sponsor, and the community to fulfill the following goals:



1) Develop a variety of opportunities for community service for older adults willing to share their experiences, abilities, and skills for the betterment of their community and themselves.

- a.** Mobilize 175+ RSVP volunteers.
- b.** Partner with nonprofits and public agencies that utilize volunteers in identified focus areas as outlined in approved work plans.
- c.** Offer diversity and flexibility in volunteer opportunities, including long-term commitments and monthly episodic service projects.
- d.** Ensure that volunteer assignments are consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteers and the needs of the community served.

2) Foster meaningful volunteer experiences to support individual well-being.

- a.** Ensure that volunteers are provided necessary orientation, in-service instruction, and individual support and supervision for their volunteer service.
- b.** Cultivate individual relationships with and between volunteers (via online and in-person connections).
- c.** Offer opportunities for social connections through groups service projects, special events, and educational and informational sessions.
- d.** Provide recognition to volunteers through existing sponsor organization events, and awards and events specifically for RSVP members.

3) Ensure long-term program sustainability in Northern Virginia.

- a.** Provide reasonable opportunities for community and volunteer involvement and support in the development, operation, strategy, and appraisal of the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP project by engaging a community advisory council.
- b.** Develop local support and identify multiple funding sources and in-kind donations to ensure self-sufficiency beyond federal grant funding.
- c.** Cooperate with agencies and organizations involved in the fields of aging and volunteerism.
- d.** Collect and use data from volunteers and volunteer stations to demonstrate volunteers' lasting impact on the community.
- e.** Support volunteer managers and stations by providing training and networking opportunities.



FOCUS AREAS & WORK PLANS

Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs throughout the nation align their projects with focus areas determined by AmeriCorps Seniors, the primary funding source for RSVP. RSVP-Northern Virginia is focused primarily on the following broad areas, each having specific sub-areas:

1) Healthy Futures: Aging in Place: Activities to enable older adults to maintain their independence.

a. Companionship – Volunteers connect with homebound elderly and/or disabled individuals to provide meaningful engagement, conversation, and relationship-building activities.

b. Transportation Services – Volunteers transport elderly and/or disabled individuals to doctor’s appointments, grocery stores, and other errands.

2) Healthy Futures: Obesity & Food

a. Nutrition/Food Support – Volunteers provide food collection, food distribution, and food pantry support by assisting with gleaning projects and soliciting food donations, distributing bagged meals and serving hot meals, unloading food deliveries and stocking shelves, and providing administrative support.



3) Capacity Building: Capacity Building & Leverage

a. Volunteer Management – Volunteers manage community volunteers during days of service and service projects.

b. Resource Development – Volunteers assist with office management, data management, financial development, grant writing, and other capacity building activities to support and enhance program delivery.

c. Donations Management – Volunteers create, coordinate, and/or manage donation drives, i.e., coats, books, food, toys, gifts cards, emergency supplies, etc., and provide ongoing donation support at local clothing and food banks.

4) Education: School Readiness & K-12 Success

a. Classroom Support – Volunteers assist classroom teachers by preparing, leading, and supporting learn-through-play activities, reading to students, supervising the playground, and serving meals to pre-kindergarten age children.

b. Tutoring – Volunteers provide tutoring services for educational programs supporting the advancement of students K-12.



5) Economic Opportunity: Employment

a. Job Training – Volunteers provide job training services that include interview skills, resume writing, English writing and language skills, and computer skills to immigrants, beginning level English and literacy adult learners, neighbors in need, and under or unemployed men and women.

6) Disaster Services: Assistance Provided

- a. Disaster Preparation** – Volunteers assist the community with disaster preparedness activities.
- b. Disaster Response** – Volunteers assist the community with disaster response needs.

7) Other Community Priorities

Volunteers serve in additional ways to meet community needs that are outside the scope of the focus/mission areas listed above.



VOLUNTEER STATION RESPONSIBILITIES



What is a Volunteer Station and What are Partnership Eligibility Requirements

A volunteer station is a nonprofit organization, public agency, or proprietary health care agency that partners with RSVP and has the responsibility for appropriately placing, supervising, and training volunteers to meet its unique needs. Each partner organization or agency shall be licensed or otherwise certified when required by the federal, state, or local governments. Neither informal groups nor private homes qualify as volunteer stations.

RSVP must have on file the following documents from a volunteer station for it to be current and active: Memorandum of Understanding, Proof of Eligibility, Data Sharing Agreement, Accessibility Checklist, and Safety Checklist.

- **Memorandum of Understanding**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the working relationship, mutual responsibilities, and guidelines between partner agencies using volunteers and RSVP. An MOU may be amended at any time by mutual agreement, but at least every three years.

- **Proof of Eligibility**

Volunteer station partners provide their Employer Identification Number (EIN) and select whether they are public nonprofit, private nonprofit, proprietary healthcare agency, or governmental agency when completing and signing the formal memo of understanding with RSVP.

Data Collection

RSVP's continued federal funding through AmeriCorps Seniors is dependent on the number of active volunteers and the number of hours served, but most importantly, **on the measurable outcomes of the volunteers' efforts.** It is therefore extremely important to RSVP that each volunteer station partner has on file a signed Data Sharing Agreement with RSVP and keeps records and prepares reports as required by RSVP, including station rosters and surveys.

At least once annually, RSVP will request that volunteer stations complete a data collection form. RSVP will try to utilize the data already collected by the organization or agency as part of ongoing operations; however, there may be times when RSVP will request help and cooperation in collecting new or different data. Assistance in this process is vital to maintaining program funding.

Insurance & Beneficiaries

It does not happen often, but it is possible that a volunteer may be injured, or injures someone else, while performing their volunteer duties. RSVP volunteers are provided with insurance protection in case such a thing happens. RSVP volunteers have access to accident, personal liability, and excess automobile insurance coverage. This insurance is excess, not primary insurance, and noncontributing to any other insurance. This coverage is automatic and free to the volunteers as long as they remain active and fully enrolled in RSVP. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers must provide proof of auto insurance showing active coverage, designation of a beneficiary, driver's license number and expiration date, and signature and date on their volunteer enrollment form to be covered under this insurance. This information is gathered during the new volunteer onboarding process with RSVP. When filing a claim, the volunteer must also submit a monthly timesheet showing the volunteer activity they were performing when the injury occurred.

Volunteer stations are required to cooperate throughout any investigative or claim process.

Orientation & Training

RSVP distinguishes between “orientation” and “training” and strongly advises partners to provide both to new volunteers.

Orientation can be provided in both written and oral form and should include a description of the function of the agency and the service(s) it provides, a tour of the facility including where accessible restrooms are located, and a review of the volunteer’s assignment description.

Training will depend on the assignment. The more a volunteer interacts with other people and makes decisions independently, the more training should be provided. Many volunteer stations find on-the-job training to be most effective, while others prefer a formal, classroom-type training session. Time should be allotted after each session for questions and evaluation.

Recognition of Volunteers

Volunteer stations benefit from the time, energy, and expertise that volunteers offer, and it is important to provide them with ongoing recognition. This can be done in a formal manner, such as an awards reception, annual volunteer recognition event, etc. Volunteers can also be recognized in simple, inexpensive ways throughout the year. A question about the volunteer’s family, recent vacation or health shows care and concern for the volunteer as an individual. Birthday cards are well-received, and thank-you notes for special service are appreciated. The words, “You’re doing a great job” and “We really missed you while you were away,” can mean the world to a volunteer.

RSVP holds an annual recognition event. Representatives from each volunteer station will be invited to attend along with RSVP volunteers who serve the organization or agency. Many partner organizations or agencies have recruited new volunteers at this event simply by visiting with them and sharing their stories and successes.

Special Request

When publicly recognizing RSVP volunteer contributions, volunteer stations are encouraged to specify and display that RSVP volunteers are linked to RSVP-Northern Virginia and AmeriCorps Seniors. By doing this, the visibility of RSVP is raised in the community, and that helps everyone.

Safety & Accessibility

Volunteer stations are required to complete accessibility and safety checklists initially when partnering with RSVP, and subsequently upon request. If the volunteer station has multiple sites, checklists may be required for each location. Checklists are designed to allow evaluation of the overall accessibility and safety of locations where RSVP volunteers serve. They are not meant to eliminate volunteer stations for possible placement of volunteers but to provide information needed to match volunteers appropriately.

Screening & Interviewing

When RSVP recruits a potential volunteer for a volunteer station, RSVP will communicate with the point of contact at the volunteer station to share the potential volunteer's contact information, the assignment they are interested in supporting, and any skills or experience that are relevant to the assignment.

RSVP expects the volunteer station to contact the volunteer within five (5) business days. It is important that contact with the potential volunteer be timely so that they maintain their interest in volunteering, and know their time and energy are valued. It is requested that the volunteer station provide a status update to RSVP within three (3) weeks once the organization or agency has completed the typical volunteer screening process, such as a formal or informal interview, and determined if the volunteer is a good fit. RSVP will coordinate an alternative placement for the volunteer if the volunteer does not meet the criteria for placement within the organization or agency.

RSVP does not conduct background screening of its volunteers. If the referring volunteer station requires a background or fingerprint check of volunteers it is the responsibility of the organization or agency to conduct these checks.

Supervision

The volunteer station agrees to provide necessary supervision of volunteers. The amount of supervision depends on the volunteer's assignment. RSVP prefers that a supervisor is always available during a volunteer's work time in case of any problems or questions. Supervisors shall allocate resources for volunteer needs, both in terms of time and money. Requests for more volunteers and/or different assignments may be made by submitting a volunteer assignment description to RSVP staff.



The following are some suggestions for working with volunteers:

- 1.** Designate one staff supervisor responsible for day-to-day communication and oversight of volunteers and additional supervisors, as needed.
- 2.** Ensure volunteers know what is expected of them.
- 3.** Set goals and objectives with each volunteer. Volunteer assignment descriptions are required.
- 4.** Set a trial period. Evaluate performance with volunteers and allow them time to discuss their experiences.
- 5.** Give volunteers a chance to prove themselves.
- 6.** Ensure volunteers feel needed and appreciated.
- 7.** Respect volunteers as part of the organization or agency's team and encourage staff to do the same. As appropriate, invite volunteers to participate in team meetings and ask them for feedback.
- 8.** Notify the RSVP Volunteer Specialist if a volunteer is found to be unsuitable for the organization or agency.
- 9.** Follow timekeeping and reporting requirements of volunteer hours.

Timekeeping & Reporting Volunteer Hours

Volunteer supervisors assigned to RSVP volunteers at partner organizations and agencies are required to support the program's timesheet and reporting requirements for volunteer hours. RSVP staff will communicate the process and coordinate the collection and reporting of these hours. Hours of service for each volunteer are recorded in RSVP's database and used for data tracking, reporting, and celebrating volunteer service. Mileage reimbursement is a benefit offered to RSVP volunteers, and volunteers requesting mileage reimbursement must have their hours verified by the volunteer station supervisor(s).

Volunteer Assignment Description(s)

Volunteer stations must develop volunteer assignments with descriptions for each position the organization or agency seeks to fill with RSVP volunteers. This is a detailed and important document that allows RSVP to fully understand the volunteer needs and enables RSVP staff to be more successful in recruiting volunteers to fill open positions. A copy of the assignment description should be given to each volunteer when an assignment has been made.



AMERICORPS SENIORS SPECIAL LIMITATIONS & PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

As a volunteer station partner of RSVP, it is the responsibility of the organization or agency to adhere to the following regulations:

- RSVP volunteers may not perform any service or duty or engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by an employed worker, or which would supplant the hiring or result in the **displacement of employed workers** or impair existing contracts for service.
- No person, organization, or agency may request or receive any **compensation for the services** of an RSVP volunteer and under no circumstances may an RSVP volunteer receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, members of their family, or friends.
- A volunteer station may contribute to the **financial support of the RSVP project**. However, this support shall not be a required precondition for a potential station to obtain RSVP volunteers. If a volunteer station agrees to provide funds to support additional volunteers or pay for other volunteer support costs, the agreement must be stated in the written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the station.
- Grant funds are not used to directly or indirectly finance **labor or anti-labor organizations** or related activity.
- RSVP does not require **criminal history checks** as part of the enrollment and onboarding process to become an RSVP volunteer. If an RSVP volunteer will have contact on a recurring basis with children, frail adults, persons with disabilities, or other potentially **vulnerable populations**, the volunteer station may require them to participate in a criminal history check and/or background screening. This will be coordinated through the volunteer station.

SPECIAL LIMITATIONS AND PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- RSVP volunteers and staff must not participate in any **religious or sectarian activity** while they are volunteering with RSVP. This includes giving religious instruction, conducting worship services, or engaging in any form of proselytization as part of their duties.
- No part of any RSVP grant may be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity to **influence the outcome of any election to public office, or any voter registration activity**. No RSVP volunteer or staff of a sponsor or volunteer station may take any action, when serving in such capacity, with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of RSVP with such activity.
- A volunteer station may request the **removal of an RSVP volunteer** at any time and the RSVP volunteer may withdraw from service at any time.
- **In-home assignments** may be made through volunteer stations. When these are made, a letter of agreement will be signed by the parties involved and the document will authorize volunteer service in the home and identify specific volunteer activities, periods, and conditions of service.
- Volunteer stations will comply with all **civil rights laws and regulations** and maintain the programs and activities to which RSVP volunteers are assigned accessible to persons with disabilities and/or limited English language proficiency and provide reasonable accommodation to allow persons with disabilities to participate.
- Volunteer stations will **not discriminate** against RSVP volunteers or in the operation of its program based on race; color; national origin, including limited English proficiency; sex; age; political affiliation; sexual orientation; religion; or based on disability if the volunteer is a qualified individual with a disability.
- RSVP volunteers, volunteer stations, and staff are expected to **observe high standards of business and personal ethics** in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities and must comply with all applicable policies and regulations, practicing honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities. RSVP has an established grievance procedure to raise concerns or complaints and if, a violation is reported in good faith, there will be no harassment, retaliation, or adverse consequences.

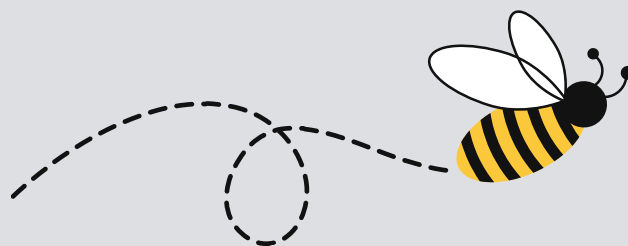


FORMS & RESOURCES


AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Handbook





RSVP Group Service Project Request Form



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