



**FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS**

GENERAL INFORMATION

How do I know if I qualify for TEAMS/AmeriCorps?

The basic qualifications for eligibility in the TEAMS/AmeriCorps Fellowship program are as follows:

- Commitment to the mission and values of the TEAMS Program.
- Received Bachelor's Degree or in pursuit of Bachelor's Degree through an approved Teacher Education Department, or participating in a Career Ladder educational program,
- Enrollment in a Teaching or School Counseling Credential Program, Master of Arts in Teaching or Education-related program.
- Passing CBEST scores or participation in a Career Ladder educational program,
- Full-time job placement (at least 5 hours daily) as teacher, intern, school counselor, paraprofessional, teacher's aide, or volunteer in a qualifying school.
- Strong academic and leadership potential.
- Dedication to working inclusively with people from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- Commitment to fulfill TEAMS Program Requirements.

We have a three-tiered system for the TEAMS/AmeriCorps Fellowship Program eligibility. All applicants must be within 1 to 5 years of credentialed educating, with the exception of interns and paraprofessionals who are currently completing credentialing coursework.

1st Priority:

Teaching Interns, Paraprofessionals, School Counselors in training who are currently working on their credential.

2nd Priority:

New Teachers, Counselors, Paraprofessionals who have completed their credential and are finishing up their MA coursework.

3rd Priority:

Any New Teachers, Counselors, Paraprofessionals who are taking continuing education coursework, not related to a degree in progress or clearing their credential.

How long is the commitment?

Your commitment lasts throughout the service year, which is approximately ten months (September – June). Once you are accepted as a TEAMS Fellow, you must attend an orientation seminar to be officially enrolled in the program. Then you must attend the **mandatory** pedagogical seminars, usually one Saturday every other month, depending on your TEAMS partner.

Do I have to be a full-time teacher/counselor/paraprofessional?

You must be a full-time or three-fourths time employee/volunteer/intern at an eligible school site. You are responsible for earning 1700 service hours over the course of the year so if you are employed or volunteer for less than (5) five hours per day, you may not earn enough hours to complete the program.

I am a student teacher. Can I still apply for TEAMS/AmeriCorps?

Student teachers are welcome to apply to TEAMS/AmeriCorps, however you must be able to complete the 1700 hour minimum in order to successfully complete the program and earn the \$4,725 Education Award. If you do not have at least a half-time placement (20+ hours per week) in a school, then you should not apply to TEAMS until you do.

What if I do not have a placement when I apply? Does TEAMS/AmeriCorps help me find a placement?

If you do not have a placement when you apply, you can still participate in TEAMS/AmeriCorps. However, in order to earn the education award, you must secure a placement during the year that you are participating with TEAMS. TEAMS/AmeriCorps **does not** formally place members, however we do maintain an informal network with schools and educators to assist in placing Fellows who need extra help securing a placement.

How long can I participate in TEAMS/AmeriCorps?

You may participate in TEAMS/AmeriCorps for up to two years. Returning Fellows must reapply each year to maintain their eligibility for TEAMS. If this is your first time participating in any AmeriCorps program, you have a maximum of two years of eligibility. If you have participated in AmeriCorps under another program and you were successfully exited from that program, you may have limited TEAMS/AmeriCorps eligibility. If you have already completed two years of service through any AmeriCorps program you are **NOT** eligible to receive an Education Award through TEAMS. If you are unsure of your AmeriCorps status, send an email to our office at teams@socrates.usfca.edu and we can help you determine your eligibility.

What is an eligible school site?

An eligible school placement is an urban, public school in which 40% or more of the student body receives free or reduced lunch, commonly known as a Title 1 school. If you have a questions about where a particular school qualifies, please visit:

California:

<http://api.cde.ca.gov/reports/page2.asp?subject=API&level=School&submit1=submit>.

Washington State:

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

You can also visit the resources section of the TEAMS website to find these link.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

What are Pedagogical Seminars and how many Pedagogical Seminars do I have to attend?

Pedagogical Seminars are the meetings where we conduct our professional development. Our seminars are the principal time when Fellows are able to engage with other TEAMS Fellows and interact with pedagogy. TEAMS takes particular time and resources to create an environment to stimulate your intellectual growth, encourage professional networking, and provide practical resources, all within a supportive, yet challenging environment. Each seminar is designed to be inspirational, practical, and culturally relevant. **Attendance at all scheduled Pedagogical Seminars is MANDATORY.**

What is a Mentor?

A mentor is a self-identified staff or faculty member at your school-site who will be responsible for signing off on TEAMS documentation, forms, timesheets, etc. Although we do not establish the mentor/mentee relationship, we do advise Fellows to choose a teacher or administrator who you interact with on a regular basis and one who you feel comfortable evaluating you as an educator, as well as someone who will be able to verify the hours you submit. **You cannot use a current TEAMS Fellow as your mentor!**

What is a Service Learning Project?

A service learning project is a one-time or ongoing activity that a group of your students completes with your guidance. The key component of the service learning project is that it is academically linked to curriculum and the students provide a service to their school or local community. We will teach you the major tenets of how to utilize service learning as an educational tool and we will guide you every step of the way to ensure that you have a successful project.

How do service hours work?

As a TEAMS/AmeriCorps Fellow, you must earn 1700 service hours by working in an urban public school during your term of service, which is generally September through June. While many of our Fellows work summer school or participate in summer programs, if they fall outside of the September-June time frame, those hours cannot be counted toward your 1700 service hour total. All of our Fellows are interns, teachers of record, teacher assistants, counselors and paraprofessionals performing direct service to the students by working at the school, preparing lessons, and being involved in extra curricular activities. You also receive hours for your attendance at professional development workshops, attending educational classes (including MA/Credential classes) and our Pedagogical Seminars.

What is a Partner Site and Cohort?

Your partner site is the organization through which you apply to become a TEAMS Fellow. Most of our fellows have pre-existing relationships with the partner site through which they are applying. We do not assign cohorts unless there are concerns for space, so the partner site/cohort through which you apply is your cohort group. For example, if you are a CSU-Dominguez Hills student, you should apply through the CSUDH cohort.

Why does my partner have more/less meetings than others?

Each TEAMS cohort group is organized differently, but the number of hours and meetings required for each cohort ranges from approximately 30 – 40 hours of training. Some cohorts meet monthly for less time each session, while others meet bi-monthly for longer sessions, it all depends on the makeup of the group.

My computer isn't cooperating. Can I just write in my service hours by hand?

No, we recommend that you find a computer that has a working copy of Microsoft Excel (either at work, school, library or the university) and use the timesheets provided in the timesheet file. Writing your hours in by hand leads to inaccurate hourly totals and may jeopardize the earning of your full awards.

What is the Alternative Time-keeping Method (ATK) and how to I qualify?

The ATK method is designed to support our fellows who are working full-time, attending higher education classes at least half-time, and participating all of the pedagogical seminars. In response to the requests of TEAMS Fellows and many school principals, this system will verify that eligible Fellows are in full-time positions and serving at least 35 hours of direct service per week (not including training hours) at the beginning of the Fellows' term of service, and also certify that 1700 hours have been fulfilled at the end of the term. Fellows working full time as teachers, paraprofessionals and counselors have consistently shown to go above and beyond the required 1700 hour minimum.

Educators working 7 hours or more per day (contracted) and enrolled at least half time in classes will be eligible to use the alternative timekeeping system, which will include a 1) beginning-of-year verification and an 2) end of year verification form completed by the School Principal. Pedagogical seminars hours will be verified by the TEAMS office, using sign-in sheets, and class schedules will be used for training hours.

In order to utilize the ATK method, **you must meet all three (3) eligibility requirements listed below**. If you do not meet all three (3) of these requirements, you will be required to submit monthly timesheets documenting your service hours.

1. Attendance at a TEAMS Partner institute of higher education. (Verification of enrollment in the form of a copy of your current class registration), *and*

2. Placement in a school site for the full academic year (*long-term substitutes, student teachers, or partial year placements **do not** qualify*), **and**
3. Fellow must work at least 7 hours per day, which will be verified by the Principal at your school site.

What is the Service Learning Mini Grant Program?

The Service Learning Mini Grant Program (SLMG) is a way for new and continuing fellows to access funds to support the development of their service learning project. Each year, \$100,000 in grant funding is available for fellows who complete the application and have an approved project. Once awarded, the funds may be used for things such as transportation, supplies and guest speakers to enhance your service learning project. Please see our website and contact teams.grants@gmail.com for more detailed information.

ONLINE APPLICATION

What is the application procedure?

To apply to TEAMS, visit our website at www.teamsusf.org to begin your online application. Complete all sections of the application and remember to attach your Statement of Purpose and a current resume. If you did not submit your proof of citizenship online, then you must send it to our office via email, US Mail or fax within 14 days for your application to be complete. Once our office receives your *completed* application, it will be reviewed and you will be contacted via email as to your acceptance within 4 to 6 weeks.

After your acceptance, you will receive an enrollment email with dates and times for orientation as well as a link for the MENTOR VERIFICATION form. You must have this form signed by orientation.

I am submitting sensitive information. Is my application secure?

Yes, your application is securely transmitted to our host server using SSL (Secure Socket Layer) technology. This is the same security given to banks, credit card companies, and online shopping web sites that consistently handle sensitive data. In addition, all sensitive information is further encrypted and can only be decoded through our San Francisco office.

I did a year with TEAMS/AmeriCorps last year. Do I need to reapply this year?

Yes, each fellow must apply each year. Continuing Fellows must provide an updated resume as well as a new statement of purpose. You will NOT need to resubmit your proof citizenship. Your

new application is reviewed by the Application Committee and you are selected according to our eligibility criteria as well as your previous years commitment to the program.

I do not have my proof of citizenship documents in an electronic format. What can I do?

You can transform your paper documents to electronic documents at any computer with a scanner, either at your school site, your college/university, or a copy center such as FedEx/Kinko's. Your paper document will be transformed into a digital file and it can then be submitted along with your online application. We strongly recommend sending an electronic file, as it will ensure that your application is complete once you click the SUBMIT button.

You can utilize the option of mailing in the copy of citizenship documents. We do suggest that you submit it via US Postal Service Certified Mail or another delivery service with confirmation to ensure its receipt in our office. We also suggest that you include the name with which you applied to TEAMS if it is different from the name on your birth certificate, in the case of a name change, marriage, or if you use a name other than the one printed on your proof of citizenship documents).

How do I know that my application was successfully submitted?

You should receive an email shortly after hitting the submit button, confirming that your application is complete. If you did not receive this email, please log in to your application, check that your email is correctly entered and hit the submit button again. If you still do not get a confirmation email, please contact us at teams@socrates.usfcas.edu or call 415-422-5179.

I need to update the information from my initial application. How do I do this?

If you need to update the information included in your application, you may do so **after** you have submitted the necessary portions of your application. You will need to remember your **email address** and your **application password**, which you will create during the application process. You will also receive a confirmation email that will provide the link to update your application.

How and when will I be notified of my acceptance into TEAMS/AmeriCorps?

TEAMS/AmeriCorps utilizes email for the majority of correspondence, program updates, and notifications. It is important that you are able to receive emails at a reliable email address, as important information is often transmitted via email, such acceptance notification, seminar locations and dates, as well as general information regarding the program and your active status.

You will be notified of your acceptance within 4 to 6 weeks of the receipt of your application.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS

When do I receive my \$4,725 Education Award?

Because the \$4,725 Education Award is an **EARNED** award, you must complete the requirements of the program before you receive the award. Requirements include, attendance at pedagogical seminars, completion of the required number of hours (900 for partial award/1700 for full award), and completion of other documentation **within the program timeline (September 1 – June 30)**. Once you are successfully exited from the TEAMS program, you will be notified of your award by our office and the Corporation for National Service in 6 – 8 weeks. You can also view your account information online within 10 days of receiving the confirmation email.

AmeriCorps also has an online account management system that allows successfully exited Fellows the opportunity to make payments to their loans or schools through the web. Once you are exited, you will receive an email confirmation your status and giving you instructions to utilizing the online account management system.

It is available at: <https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>

How can I use my \$4,725 Education Award voucher?

The AmeriCorps Education Award can be used in its entirety or broken-up and used numerous times to repay qualified student loans. The most common include:

- Stafford Loans
Perkins Loans
Federal Direct Loans
Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS)
Federal Consolidated Loans
Health Education Assistance Loans (HEAL)
Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL)
- Pay current educational expenses, such as tuition, at a qualified, Title IV, school. Most schools are Title IV; contact National Service Trust for guidance. Educational expenses will vary from school to school.
- Pay current educational expenses while participating in an approved school-to-work program. You can use your voucher to repay any existing or past student loans, originated by the federal government.

Do I need to fill out the FAFSA?

We recommend that all Fellows complete the [FAFSA](#) form, as it is required in order to qualify for a [Stafford Loan](#) or any financial assistance from TEAMS.

What is Loan Forbearance and how does it apply to me?

TEAMS/AmeriCorps Fellows who are earning an education award are uniquely eligible for one type of postponement of the repayment of their qualified student loan called forbearance. During

this forbearance based on national service, interest continues to accrue. If you successfully complete your term of service and earn an education award, the Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that has accrued on your qualified student loans during this period. ***This accrued interest paid by the Trust, like the education award itself, is subject to income taxes.***

Submit your **Forbearance Request for National Service form** and any other information required by your loan holder to the TEAMS office in San Francisco by September 30, 2007, which we will process. **We can certify your AmeriCorps status, but only the loan holder can determine your eligibility for forbearance.** Contact your loan holder if you have not heard from them within four weeks of submitting your information to the Trust.

What about the interest that accrues on my loan that is in forbearance?

AmeriCorps members who have earned an education award are eligible to have the Trust pay up to 100% of the interest that accrued on their qualified student loan during their service. To have the Trust pay all or a portion of the interest accrued on your qualified student loans, the Trust must receive verification from our program that you have completed your service and are eligible for an award. You and your lender also must complete the **Interest Accrued During National Service form**, which indicates the amount of interest accrued during your service period. Your loan holder sends this completed form to the Trust for payment.

The Trust **WILL NOT** pay interest on qualified student loans if you fail to complete your term of service. Exceptions will be made only if you fail to complete your term of service for compelling personal circumstances and you have earned a pro-rated award. It is up to your individual program to determine compelling personal circumstances. Examples that might be considered are a serious illness or injury, death of your immediate family member, or early closing of your school.

The Trust will only pay interest on qualified student loans, as described earlier. Ask your loan holder if your student loan qualifies for other kinds of forbearance.

Defaulted Loans

Most student loans that are in default are not eligible for forbearance. If you have loans that have gone into default before you begin your AmeriCorps service, you can attempt to negotiate an arrangement with the loan holder (or collection agency) to bring the loan out of default so forbearance can be granted and interest paid.

You must correctly complete and submit to the Trust the (1) ***Forbearance Request for National Service form*** at the start of your service term; and submit to your lender the (2) ***Interest Accrued During National Service form*** at the end of your service term. **I am currently participating in AmeriCorps and have a question about my Education Award. Who should I contact?**

For general questions about the Education Award and student loan deferment, contact National Service Trust at 1-888-507-5962. Live operators are available from 8:00 am to -6:00 pm EST, Monday through Friday.

If you have successfully completed your AmeriCorps service, you can view your [AmeriCorps Education Award account balance](#) and activity online.

The web address is: <https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>

To request a copy of your AmeriCorps Education Award voucher or report a change of address, you can e-mail edawardvoucher@cns.gov.

For general information on student financial assistance, you may contact your high school guidance counselor, the financial aid officer at the post-secondary institution you plan to attend, the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243), or consult the [Student Guide](#) issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

Is my Education Award considered taxable income?

Yes. The education award is taxed in the year it is used. The Corporation for National Service does not deduct taxes from the award, but in late January it sends 1099 Forms to all AmeriCorps members who have made payments from their education awards and who have accrued interest during the previous year. The 1099 Form does not need to be included in your tax return, but it reflects the amount that the National Service Trust reports to the IRS as taxable miscellaneous income. If you have questions about how to file taxes for your award, contact your local IRS office.

Remember, you can split up the use of your award to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. And, you can split up the allocation of your award over multiple calendar years, as well, to divide up the tax costs.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

How do I know when I have completed the program?

In order to be successfully exited from the TEAMS program and earn an education award, each Fellow must:

1. Complete **ALL** required documents and obtain **ALL** necessary signatures (see “Required Form Checklist” in your Resource Book),
2. Earn the minimum number of required hours (1700),
3. Attend all mandatory Pedagogical Seminars,
4. Develop and implement a service learning project.

Once you are successfully exited from the TEAMS program, you will be notified of your award by our office and the Corporation for National Service in 6 – 8 weeks. You can also view your account information online within 10 days of receiving the confirmation email.