



Student Conservation Association  
**Conservation Internship Program**  
**Partner Handbook**

Revised January 2023

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## Welcome to SCA

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

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

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

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

We have a new, informative series of **Intern Supervisor Training Videos** that can be found on the [Partner Resources](#) page of our website. We invite you to watch the videos as a supplement to this handbook.

## SCA - Who We Are

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's conservation corps. Our members protect, restore, and interpret public lands; and serve in national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges, as well as with state, local, and non-governmental agencies in all 50 states and various US territories.

SCA collaborates with our partners to provide high school, college, and adult members with hands-on conservation service opportunities in virtually every field imaginable, from tracking grizzlies in the Grand Tetons to restoring desert ecosystems to teaching environmental education at Washington, D.C.'s Urban Tree House. We are truly building the next generation of conservation leaders. Please visit our website at [www.theSCA.org](http://www.theSCA.org) to learn more about our programs, history, and founder Liz Putnam.

## Mission Statement

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

## Core Values

**Bold Vision:** Co-powering the next generation of conservation leaders requires unwavering vision, innovation, and execution. We think and act creatively and are resolved to write new stories. We challenge prevailing ideas of what's possible to create new opportunities and meet the needs of our members and the communities we serve.

**Respectful of the Land:** We commit to being well-informed environmental stewards and recognize that our work transforms lives and lands. We strategically use our resources and strengths to respond to urgent ecological issues such as climate change, environmental justice, and equitable access while protecting and preserving our natural, cultural, and historical resources.

**Integrity:** We strive to uphold the highest standards of work ethic, honesty, and authenticity. Our passion drives us to work with urgency and to hold each other accountable. We consistently ask how our choices support our mission, our members' social and emotional development, the communities we serve, and our Partners.

**Belonging and Inclusion:** Our differences – when embraced with awareness, self-reflection, care and respect – drive better decisions, stronger performance, and a culture where everyone can comfortably be themselves. We continuously design our culture to invite the best in each individual to reach their fullest potential.

**Collaboration:** We value team over the individual as our success is driven by our ability to break silos and connect across teams, functions, and geographies. We build purposeful relationships grounded in cooperation and a shared vision and have no tolerance for behaviors that are discourteous, aggressive, or tear others down.

## Conservation Begins Here

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

## Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

At SCA, championing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) within our organization and our work with partners is critical to our mission to co-power the next generation of conservation leaders. We will model our commitment to these goals in the way we do business and how we interact with one another and our external partners. Our vision is for our leaders, members, staff, board, and partners to reflect our nation's diversity and the communities we serve. Our commitment to this work is long term, and we will continue to emphasize JEDI throughout our programs and partnerships. Creating a culture of inclusion plays a critical role in supporting growth for individual members and the collective group. Through small, intentional invitations and actions, you can help create an inclusive and welcoming community. By sharing power, you empower members. Empowering members helps to shift power in the community and can help to create an inclusive space.

*Justice:* Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals and communities can live a full and dignified life. These barriers can be described as the “isms” in society, for example, racism, classism, and sexism.

*Equity:* An approach that ensures everyone is given equal opportunity; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person can access an opportunity. Equity takes into account that people have different access to resources because a system of oppression and privilege. Equity seeks to balance that disparity.

*Diversity:* The unique differences among individuals in a group based on which we may be treated differently in society. Ethnicity is not the only way in which we are diverse as a group. There are countless visible and invisible facets of diversity. Furthermore, a person cannot be “diverse” (as in “diverse candidate”).

*Inclusion:* Embracing, leveraging, and celebrating the strengths of our diversity and ensuring everyone feels welcomed and valued for who they are. Inclusion is not merely tolerating differences or overcoming differences to focus on “our common humanity.” Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.

You can find more about SCA’s commitment to JEDI [here](#).

## **SCA National Programs**

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

### **SCA Conservation Internships**

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

### **SCA Team-Based Programs**

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

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

## Your SCA Contacts

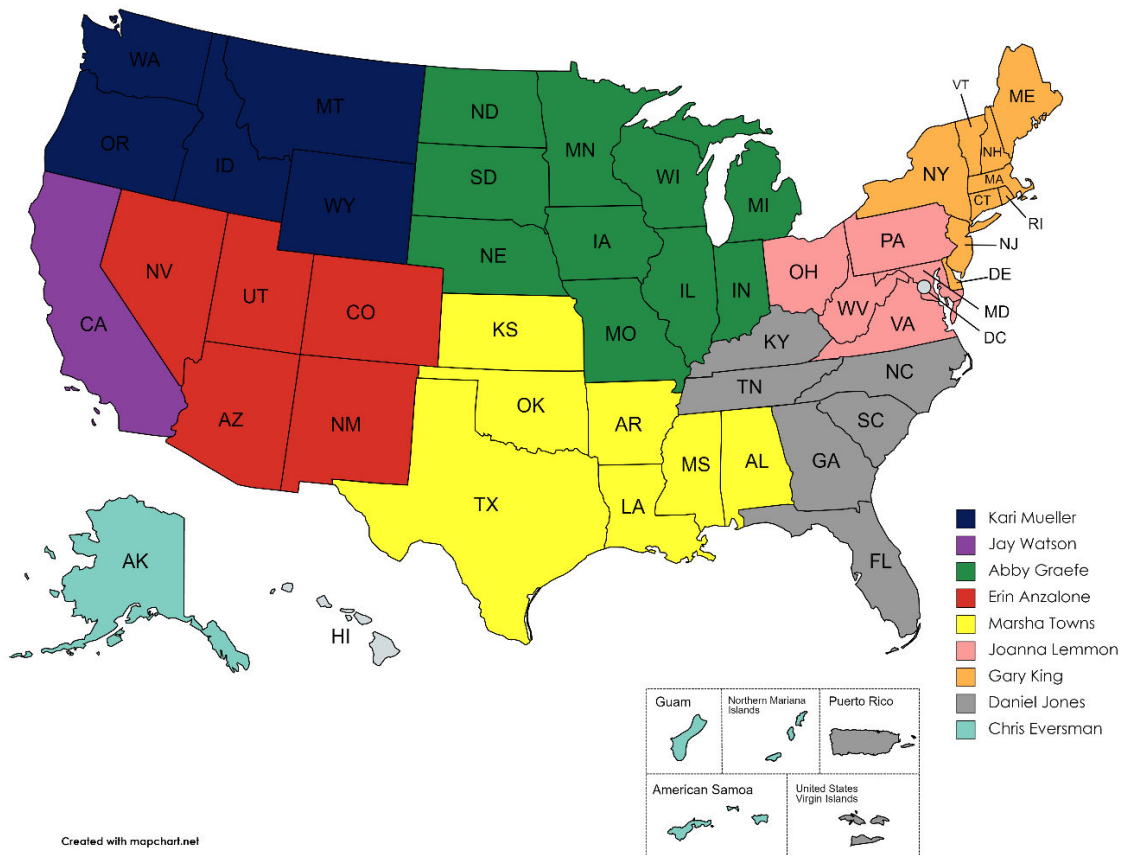
Our team is here to support you during the entire partnership. Staff members are located regionally throughout the U.S and are generally available from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM within their time zone. As a nationwide organization, there are many people throughout the country at SCA that will be supporting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

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

## Partnership

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

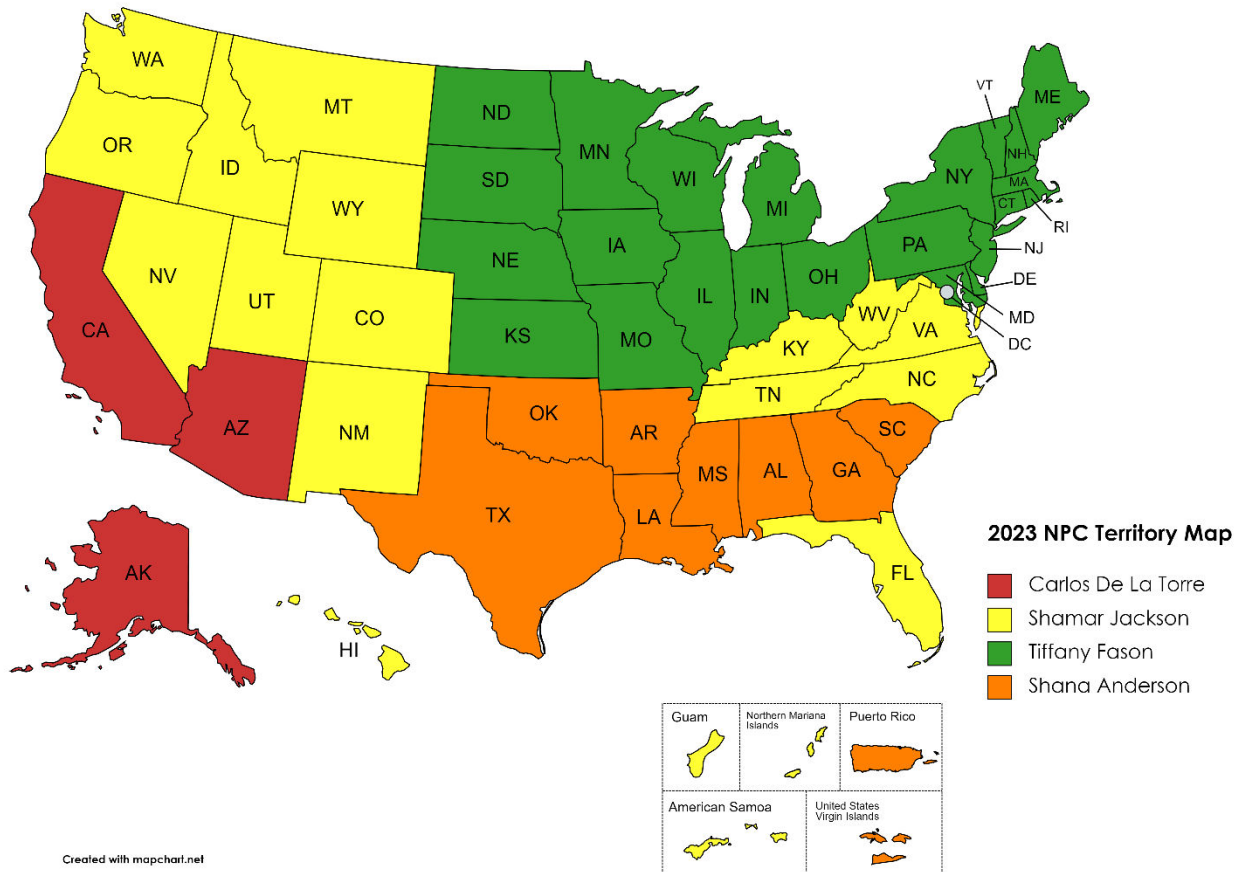




State	Partnership Contact	Phone	Email
CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI, VT	Gary King	603.504.3230	<a href="mailto:gking@thesca.org">gking@thesca.org</a>
FL, GA, NC, SC, TN, KY, VA, PR, USVI	Daniel Jones	470.473.2718	<a href="mailto:djones@thesca.org">djones@thesca.org</a>
MD, OH, PA, VA, WV	Joanna Lemmon	412.356.3300	<a href="mailto:jlemmon@thesca.org">jlemmon@thesca.org</a>
IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, WI	Abby Graefe	708.975.1304	<a href="mailto:agraefe@thesca.org">agraefe@thesca.org</a>
AL, AR, KS, LA, MS, OK, TX	Marsha Towns	713.903.2791	<a href="mailto:mtowns@thesca.org">mtowns@thesca.org</a>
ID, MT, OR, WA, WY	Kari Mueller	208.972.7137	<a href="mailto:kmueller@thesca.org">kmueller@thesca.org</a>
AZ, CO, NM, NV, UT	Erin Roghaar	435.232.5424	<a href="mailto:eroghaar@thesca.org">eroghaar@thesca.org</a>
CA	Jay Watson	510.832.1966	<a href="mailto:jwatson@thesca.org">jwatson@thesca.org</a>
AK, AS, GU, HI, NMI	Chris Eversman	907.771.8491	<a href="mailto:ceversman@thesca.org">ceversman@thesca.org</a>

## Program

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



State	Program Contact	Phone	Email
CT, IA, IL, IN, KS, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, SD, VT, WI	Tiffany Fason	904.525.9619	<a href="mailto:tfason@thesca.org">tfason@thesca.org</a>
AL, AR, GA, LA, MS, OK, PR, SC, TX, USVI	Shana Anderson	404.573.7047	<a href="mailto:sanderson@thesca.org">sanderson@thesca.org</a>
FL, ID, KY, MT, NC, NV, OR, TN, WA, WY	Shamar Jackson	571.895.1756	<a href="mailto:sjackson@thesca.org">sjackson@thesca.org</a>
AK, AZ, CA	Carlos De La Torre	571.895.1793	<a href="mailto:cdelatorre@thesca.org">cdelatorre@thesca.org</a>
AS, CO, DC, DE, GU, NM, NMI, MD, UT, VA, WV	Shamar Jackson	571.895.1933	<a href="mailto:sjackson@thesca.org">sjackson@thesca.org</a>

Your Partnership and Program Contacts will work together to make sure all aspects of the partnership and program work smoothly. We look forward to working with you.

## Overview: Intern Program Request

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

### 1. Completing/Submitting an Intern Request

This is done online through the MySCA Partner Portal. We typically create your personal SCA profile in our database and send you instructions on how to log-in to establish your SCA account and request your position(s). The position request form serves as a comprehensive position description that includes a description of duties, location, service dates, length, required/desired skills, logistics, training, job hazard assessment, points of contact, etc.

Submission of the completed position request allows us to begin recruiting and planning for the deployment of the intern(s) at the targeted start date. Once we have identified pre-screened candidates for your position, we place them in your SCA account for your review, ranking, interviewing, and selecting. After you select a candidate, SCA handles the process of enrollment and onboarding. The option also exists for you to recruit and select your own candidate. You would be required to send us the candidate's contact information so we can guide them through the application and enrollment processes.

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

### 2. Developing/Finalizing a Cost Estimate

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

The primary logistics we need to develop a preliminary cost estimate include:

- **Length of Internship:** How many weeks would you like the intern to serve?
- **Living Allowance:** The minimum rate is \$250/week for all position lengths. Partners can increase the weekly living allowance rate, noting that increasing the living allowance will incrementally increase the estimated position cost.
- **Housing:** It is assumed that intern housing will be provided by the site. If housing is not available, SCA can administer a monthly housing allowance to the intern (amount determined by you that is reflective of the local market rate for housing). In limited cases, SCA can establish a lease directly with a landlord. Once determined, the housing costs will be added to the position cost estimate.
- **Car/Personal Vehicle:** Will the intern be required to have a personal vehicle on site during their internship? If required, the intern will receive a higher Travel Allowance than if a personal vehicle is recommended or not needed.

- **Commuting Allowance:** If housing is off-site, a weekly commuting allowance should be offered to the intern to help off-set daily commuting costs. This is recommended for interns that drive 10+ miles one way and will be paid out along with the Living Allowance.
- **Duty-travel and other Reimbursable Expenses:** Will the intern be traveling during their service for work, training, or professional development opportunities? Will the intern need specialized personal equipment that they will need to purchase? Funds can be budgeted to reimburse the intern for work-related expenses.

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

### 3. Agreement

An Agreement (or contract) between SCA and your organization must be developed and finalized before any position can begin. For federal agencies, all funding documents are tiered off a National Cooperative or Participating Agreement. For state, local, and non-profit agreements, including Friends Groups, SCA can develop the agreement and submit it to you for legal review, or you can utilize a template of your own and submit it to SCA for review.

### Timeline

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

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

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

### Financial and Worksite Agreements

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

## Federal Partners

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

Agency	Master Agreement #	Expiration
US Forest Service (USFS)		
Internship Agreement	20-PA-11132424-031	11/15/2024
Crew/Corps Agreement	20-PA-11132424-030	11/15/2024
National Park Service (NPS)	P20AC00141	3/31/2025
US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)	F18AC00191	9/30/2023
US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	W9126G-16-2-0004	1/31/2025
Navy and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune	N62470-20-2-2003	12/19/2024

For SCA positions to be fielded, it is nearly always necessary for federal host partners to establish and execute position-specific agreements; these are tiered off of the appropriate master agreements listed above. Federal partners should connect early on with their grants and agreements colleagues to ensure they are following the requisite protocols to establish and execute these required agreements. When in doubt, reach out to your SCA Partnership and Agreements staff for general assistance.

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

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

## Timing

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

## Minimum Wage Compliance

To maintain compliance with state minimum wage laws, all partner sites must provide member compensation (the total of all allowances) equal to the current state minimum wage rate. With that said, there are two scenarios by which an SCA position is exempt from meeting this requirement:

1. For federal partners, utilization and citing of the Public Land Corps Authority in the funding instrument (task agreement, supplemental project agreement, task order, etc.) alleviates the requirement to

provide state minimum wage equivalent compensation. Presently, nearly every federal agreement cites the PLC Authority and therefore supersedes the minimum wage requirement.

2. For non-federal partners, as long as their SCA member enrolls in the AmeriCorps Education Award Program (AEAP) the minimum wage requirement is alleviated. In these cases, mandatory enrollment in the AEAP is stated in the position announcement and must occur, noting that if the partner desires to compensate their SCA member at the state minimum wage equivalent, the AEAP mandatory enrollment is not required (and sometimes not offered due to the higher compensation levels – see AmeriCorps section for more details).

### **PLC 25% In-Kind Match Requirement**

Applicable only to most federal partners, when funding instruments are authorized under the 16 U.S.C. § 1723(c)(1) Public Land Corps Act, SCA is required to provide a 25% cost match for each position comprised of in-kind services and/or non-federal cash and/or other resources. SCA's 25% cost match requirement is calculated as 25% of the total cost of the position (not the total partner cost as identified in the cost estimate). In most cases, SCA's 25% cost match can be met by calculating the projected total in-kind service hours of the SCA member, multiplying that amount by the current Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time hourly rate, and then subtracting the total compensation amount the intern will receive via allowances.

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

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

### **Public Land Corps Non-Competitive Hiring Status**

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

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

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

## The “MySCA” Partner Portal

SCA has an online position management system called the MySCA portal. MySCA is a simple interface that allows you to manage your SCA account when and wherever you want. In MySCA, you'll be able to submit and renew position requests, review and select candidates, approve time logs, and manage your overall intern hosting experience with efficiency. Contact information for your Partnership Contact is also posted on your MySCA account home page for easy reference.

Access to the MySCA portal is located here: <https://thesca.force.com/partners/PartnerLogin>. For new users, your Partnership Contact will have activated your account, generating an email that prompts you to create a unique password. If you are unsure if you have an account, please reach out to your Partnership Contact. Existing users can log straight into their personalized account. As a reminder, your username is your agency email address. If you do not remember your password, please reach out to your Partnership Contact who can assist with a password reset.

Once logged in to MySCA, there are three main tabs on the landing page:

1. **Manage Positions** – contains all of your current, previous, and upcoming SCA internship position details. From here you can also request a completely new position or copy a previous position to create a new request.
2. **Placements** – contains all of your current and former interns including their start and end dates.
3. **Manage Tasks** – here you will verify Activity and Time Logs and approve intern reimbursement requests (if budgeted).

## Requesting a New Position

To request a new position, click on the “Request a Position” button on your home page or under the “Manage Positions” tab. There are a variety of SCA program types to choose from. For Interns, select the **Conservation Internship Request** button and complete the various fields in each step of the form. Note that if you’ve had previous positions with SCA, you can simply copy the position by accessing it via the “Manage Positions” tab and then clicking on the “Copy” button in the Action column to the left of the position. The copy function will insert most of the information from the former position into the new position request; however, **you will still need to carefully review and update a variety of fields** including the start and end dates, position description, number of openings, etc.

Each and every new position request is assigned a unique SCA position number (“SCA PO#”) and will remain listed under your “Manage Positions” tab. Once submitted, your Partnership Contact will review and approve the position and, when time, post it on our website to begin the candidate recruitment process. If you want to recruit your own candidate and/or you are looking to select a local candidate, please be sure to inform your Partnership Contact.

## Position Description

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



## Length of Service

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

## Weekly Living Allowance

Internships of any length have a minimum living allowance of \$250 per week. **At the partner's request, the weekly living allowance rate can be increased above the minimum**, noting that it will also incrementally increase the overall cost. **Offering a higher living allowance will encourage a more diverse range of applicants and ensure a more equitable experience for your intern.** In high cost of living areas, such as in large metropolitan areas, we recommend providing a living allowance that is acceptable for the cost of living in your area.

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

## To/From Travel Allowance and Vehicle Required Status

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

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

## Commuting Allowance

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



## Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses

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

## Housing

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

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

## Uniforms

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

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

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

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

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

### **Education and Skills**

The current list of Education and Skills that partners can select from is based on over 60 years of experience and represents the most effective categories for maximizing targeted recruitment. Please be aware that the skill levels you select have a direct impact on the position "fit rating" given to each candidate. It's best to avoid selecting education or skills levels above and beyond what is necessary and realistic. This will reduce the possibility of losing out on strong candidates whose "fit rating" may appear low when, for example, advanced degrees or multiple degrees are marked as required. Always feel free to discuss your expectations and how to fill out the Intern Request form with your SCA Partnership Contact.

### **AmeriCorps Eligibility**

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

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

To be AmeriCorps eligible, the position may NOT:

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

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

Additional information on AmeriCorps can be found in the "SCA AmeriCorps and the Education Award" section of this document.

## Permissible and Prohibited Activities

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

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

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

Interns who will interact with the public should be given information about your site and the surrounding area. If it is not possible to include them in your regular, seasonal training, please provide other means of acquiring this information.



## Time to Write Your Position Description?

Here's a great example and some helpful hints for creating your own.

**Position Title:** Interpretive Intern *[IMPLY RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROVIDE CONTEXT WITH YOUR TITLE]*

### **Position Description:**

Come join our seasonal staff at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center on the Tongass National Forest in Juneau, Alaska! *[HOOK THEM WITH YOUR LEAD SENTENCE; IN THIS CASE, WITH THE ALLURING LOCATION]* The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center includes the center plus approximately 40 surrounding acres. Our mission is to further visitors' knowledge and enjoyment of glacial phenomena and the surrounding environment. *[RELATE THE OBJECTIVE OF THE SITE OR INTERNSHIP]* You will enhance the experience for many of our 400,000 cruise ship passengers and thousands of independent travelers annually. *[EXPLAIN THE INTERN'S ROLE]* The Mendenhall Glacier is one of Alaska's top attractions, largely due to an easily accessible glacier and excellent wildlife viewing, including black bears and spawning salmon. *[PROVIDE A UNIQUE TIDBIT ABOUT THE SITE]*

### Duties Include:

- Staff and continue to develop the Discovery Zone, a youth-focused outdoor activity station (30%).
- Develop and present short formal interpretive programs (30%).
- Provide roving interpretation on topics ranging from glaciers to wildlife, such as black bears and salmon (10%).
- Staff information stations to answer visitor questions (30%). *[PRESENT THE DAY-TO-DAY DUTIES IN PERCENTAGES]*

Anywhere from 6 to 20 people staff the Visitor Center at one time. *[DESCRIBE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK, AS APPLICABLE]* The work week will be 5 days, 8 hours per day, and will include evening and weekend work. Conditions often require working outside in wet, cool, rainy weather and long periods of standing each day. *[INCLUDE WORK SCHEDULE AND CONDITIONS]* This position is ideal for outgoing individuals or those looking to obtain the skills needed for a career in the visitor services sector. *[SUGGEST THE SKILLS, INTERESTS OR BACKGROUNDS APPLICABLE TO THE POSITION]*

### **Service Location Description:**

The Tongass National Forest was established in 1902 and covers nearly 17 million acres in Southeast Alaska. The Tongass makes up ninety percent of Southeast Alaska and is a land of glaciers, mountains, waterways and thousands of islands separated by straits and channels. The islands and mainland create 11,000 miles of shoreline where regal mountains rise from the tidewater to overlook a mostly undeveloped and isolated landscape. *[DESCRIBE THE IMMEDIATE AND SURROUNDING AREAS]* The geography of the Alexander Archipelago presents a transportation challenge and most of the Tongass is isolated from the continental road system. Visitors arrive by cruise ship, ferry or commercial airplane. The town of Juneau, with full amenities, is an 11 mile drive from the Visitor Center. *[STRESS THE MOST APPEALING OR EXCITING ASPECTS OF YOUR SITE TO MAXIMIZE APPLICANT INTEREST]*

**Training Opportunities:**

Two weeks of preparatory training including: safety topics, CPR/First Aid, interpretive program development, natural resource training, and visitor center operations. ***[HIGHLIGHT THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL SETS INTERNS WILL GAIN THROUGH THIS POSITION]***

**Education/Recreation Opportunities:**

Education and recreation opportunities are plentiful in the surrounding area. Hiking, kayaking, biking, backpacking, fishing, and whale watching are just the tip of the iceberg. There are also many classes offered through the local community center at a nominal fee including pottery, painting, dancing, etc. ***[ENTICE THEM FURTHER BY REFERENCING POTENTIAL OFF-TIME ACTIVITIES]***

**Housing:**

Bunkhouse is adjacent to the Forest Service office and approximately 2 miles from the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center. The bunkhouse consists of apartments with 2 bedrooms, each with two beds. Each bedroom has a full bath. Apartments also have fully furnished kitchens, living room with cable TV, phone for local calls only. There is cell phone reception and Wi-Fi. The bunkhouse is near a bus stop for shopping, etc. You will be sharing the apartment with up to three others of the same gender. ***[ALLEVIATE POTENTIAL CONCERNS ABOUT A NEW AND UNKNOWN ENVIRONMENT BY DETAILING LIVING QUARTERS AND AMENITIES]***

**Position Description Check List:**

- ✓ Strong first sentence, a good hook!
- ✓ Break duties down into percentages.
- ✓ Mention what level of background will ideally be brought to the position (e.g., a solid foundation in GPS/GIS versus someone with little experience who can be trained to a certain level)
- ✓ State with whom the intern will be working (e.g., on a team versus independently).
- ✓ Say something unique (good or challenging) about the internship position and duty station.
- ✓ Mention work conditions/schedules.
- ✓ Specify what the intern will get out of the internship.
- ✓ Identify the unmet need the intern will fulfill.

**More helpful hints:**

- When selecting the education, training and skills expected, separate the qualities a candidate **MUST** have (those you won't seriously consider an intern without) and those that would merely be nice to have (a bonus!).
- Try to avoid using acronyms in the description as applicants may not be familiar with them.
- In the housing section – is there access to cell service and Wi-Fi? This is always a big plus.
- Ask your staff about things they think would've been helpful to know before they arrived.
- Consider including how your colleagues create a safe and inclusive space for all staff and interns.

## Selecting an Intern

### Pre-Selected Candidate

Sometimes partners want to recruit local candidates themselves or have a pre-determined candidate to whom they would like to offer the position (aka a “pre-select”). SCA can enroll a pre-selected candidate into your internship as long as the applicant is 18+ years old, completes the SCA Conservation Internship application, and subsequently passes the required background check. Partners should email the name, email, and phone number of the candidate to your SCA Contacts who will then contact the candidate directly and guide them through the application process.

### Candidates Recruited by SCA

SCA will only share the most qualified applicants that meet the skills and education requirements you listed in your position request. You, and any colleagues designated as “Applicant Reviewer,” will receive an email notification each time applicants are added to the position for review. Please note that applicants are notified when they are sent to you for consideration. Your contact information is shared with the candidates, and they are encouraged to follow up with you directly. If you wish to opt out of this, please inform your Partnership Contact before any applicants are sent.

To view the list of applicants placed in your MySCA account, you will need to login to your account, click on the “Manage Positions” tab, click on the PO# hyperlink and scroll down to the “Candidates” section. By clicking on the Application hyperlink, you can view each candidate’s application. Please note that **candidate contact information is only made available to you when “Interview” status is selected**. Also, at this time resumes are not an application requirement, so you may or may not see a resume attached to the rest of the application. If you wish to see resumes for your candidates, please indicate so when requesting your position.

**We strongly recommend that you review applications as soon as you receive them or shortly thereafter.**

Applications are often sent to multiple sites so reviewing your list and then contacting and interviewing your top-tier applicants as soon as possible greatly increases your chances of securing one of your top candidates. Also note that intern enrollment and onboarding can take up to three weeks (refer to the “Intern Preparation and Arrival Section” for more information).

Once you have reviewed each application, there are three options available to choose from in managing the status of each individual applicant: **“Remove from Consideration,” “Interview,”** and **“Offer.”**

### Remove from Consideration

If your preliminary assessment of a candidate’s skills and abilities does not meet your expectations as far as being able to meet the position requirements, please remove the candidate from your applicant list by changing their status to “Remove from Consideration.” Removing an applicant from your position does not delete them from our system, it simply removes them from your candidate queue and indicates to us that you do not consider them as a viable candidate for your position. Candidates “removed from consideration” do not receive an email notifying them of your decision; however, they are able to see that they are not being considered for your position in their MySCA account.

## Interviewing an Applicant

Once you have determined which applicant(s) you are interested in interviewing for the position, click “Interview” next to the candidate’s name. This action will reveal the candidate’s contact information, including telephone number and email, which will allow you to contact them directly to schedule an interview. Note that applicants do not receive notification of your decision to interview them in their SCA account.

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

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

## Requesting More Applicants

If you find that you don’t have enough candidates to review and you want to receive more, please reach out to your SCA Contacts. Your request will be sent directly to an SCA recruiter who will provide additional applicants for your review. Your SCA Contacts can also work with you to refine the skills and/or education requirements established for the position if you find you are not receiving the applicants that best match your needs.

## Making an Offer

Once you have decided on your top candidate(s), please call the candidate and make a verbal offer. Upon receiving confirmation that the candidate intends to accept the position, **click “Offer” next to the candidate’s application in your MySCA account.** This will initiate the official offer process from SCA to the candidate. **Do not click “Offer” until you have received verbal or email confirmation that the candidate intends to accept the position.** This is important as there is a trickledown effect that occurs in our system that will restrict your ability to offer the position to someone else should your first choice decline the position. And please do not offer a position to an applicant who has already agreed to serve at a different site.

After you click “Offer,” you will be directed to an offer page where you have the opportunity to modify the start and end dates of the position and leave notes regarding any other important logistical details that may vary from the initial position request. **Click “Submit”** once the details have been added; your Program Contact will be notified that you have made an official offer to a candidate. Please note that your Program Contact does NOT receive specific notification when you make changes to the position before offering it. If you alter any position details before clicking “offer,” **please follow up with your SCA Program Contact to let them know you wish to make those changes.**

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

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

Once the applicant officially accepts the position offer, please follow up with any candidates whom you have interviewed but not selected, to let them know the position has been filled. SCA in turn will email the selected intern directions for completing additional enrollment paperwork, such as a written confirmation of acceptance (COA), medical information with emergency numbers, and a liability release form. The intern will be directed to the SCA Intern Handbook, which contains all the information the intern will need to get the most out of their internship.

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

### **Selection Made Less Than Three Weeks before the Intern Start Date**

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

### **SCA AmeriCorps and the Education Award**

Overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), AmeriCorps is a network of organizations that offer opportunities for people to dedicate themselves to a long-term service project such as tutoring and mentoring youth; building affordable housing; cleaning parks and streams; and recruiting,



training, and managing community volunteers. In return, AmeriCorps members receive funds they can use for education.

SCA receives a grant from CNCS to administer an AmeriCorps Education Award program for our members. Under this grant, interns that complete service satisfactorily can receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of roughly \$1,370-\$6,500, which can be applied to education-related expenses.

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

**Overview**

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

<b>2022-23 AmeriCorps Education Awards</b>			
Minimum Hours	Weeks	Award	Max Comp
1700	44-52	\$6,495.00	\$33,004
1200	31-43	\$4,546.50	\$23,103
900	23-30	\$3,247.50	\$16,502
675	17-22	\$2,474.27	\$12,542
450	12-16	\$1,718.25	\$8,581
300	8-11	\$1,374.60	\$6,931
For internship positions starting between 7/1/22 - 6/30/23			

**Education Awards**

The AmeriCorps Education Award is a sum of money members can receive after successfully completing their service. Members are able to use this award to pay for expenses at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. Upon selection, members are offered an award relative to their length of service. Members who choose to enroll in AmeriCorps sign an agreement confirming that **they will complete both the minimum number of hours AmeriCorps required and**

**the full term of service.** SCA AmeriCorps terms of service and corresponding awards are listed below. Again, the hours listed truly are a minimum. The intern must honor the commitment to the site *and* serve the full term of the internship as agreed to at the time of acceptance, in order to qualify for the award. The majority of interns serve well over the minimum hours required.

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

### Partner Responsibilities with AmeriCorps

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

- **Set up your position's duties and activities to be AmeriCorps-eligible.** As a federal program AmeriCorps has specific requirements and prohibited activities. If your position meets these requirements, it will be "AmeriCorps-eligible."
- **Complete the SCA AmeriCorps Site Agreement once per year.** This requirement under our federal AmeriCorps grant outlines the expectations for partners.
- **Participate in the SCA AmeriCorps webinar training once per year.** This training is available year-round as a pre-recorded. The link to the on-demand video will be sent to partners with AmeriCorps Eligible positions. Contact [AmeriCorps@thesca.org](mailto:AmeriCorps@thesca.org) for assistance.
- **Verify your member's submitted time logs.** Approve your member's time logs—both Activity Logs and Output Logs—in your MySCA Partner Portal on a regular basis. Both of these time logs are requirements for SCA and AmeriCorps service, so you should be reviewing them for completeness and accuracy on a weekly basis, regardless of your intern's AmeriCorps status. For more information, visit the *Activity Logs and Output Logs* section of this handbook.
- **Verify that member service hours do not include prohibited activities.** Members are not allowed to be involved with AmeriCorps prohibited activities. See below for a complete list of prohibited activities. Members may participate in these activities as private citizens on non-SCA/AmeriCorps time and should not identify themselves with the SCA AmeriCorps program or wear any of their logoed gear during participation.
- **Complete Mid-term and End-of-term Evaluations.** All SCA members need completed mid-term and end-of-term evaluations on file. This requirement is especially important for AmeriCorps members as it determines their eligibility for future AmeriCorps service opportunities. Evaluations will be available in your MySCA Partner portal at the mid-point of the position and within one week of the end date. These evaluations are only available for 30 days in your account, so if you need access to the link, please contact your SCA Program Contact.
- **Support members to complete their service commitment and minimum hours.** Except in compelling personal circumstances (outlined below), members who leave the program early forfeit their

education award. Leaving positions early for school, disinterest in the program, or paid work is not considered an acceptable reason for a member to leave early. Please encourage members to complete their service commitment.

- **Support members who want to attend national service events locally.** There may be AmeriCorps-sponsored events periodically in your state or region. Members are encouraged to attend if their schedule allows. These hours can be recorded on their time logs under "Training/Education."

### **AmeriCorps Health Insurance**

AmeriCorps members serving 42 weeks and longer are offered health insurance by SCA in accordance with AmeriCorps policy. The rate for health insurance is currently \$417/month and will be added to the cost estimate for AmeriCorps eligible positions with position lengths 42 weeks and longer. Health insurance costs are pro-rated for the first month (based upon the intern's actual start date) and charged in full for the last month (regardless of end date). An additional month of health insurance expense is therefore included in all cost estimates, but billed as actual once known. If your position is less than 42 weeks and you would like to provide a health insurance option, please speak with your Partnership Contact.

### **AmeriCorps Grievance Procedure**

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

### **AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities**

SCA is committed to ensuring that all partners and members are knowledgeable of the activities prohibited by AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps prohibited activities include partisan political activities, political advocacy, protests, petitions, strikes, union activities, religious proselytization, for-profit business, abortion services, and general fundraising. The complete list of AmeriCorps prohibited activities can be downloaded from our website [here](#). Please contact your SCA Program Contact for questions about the SCA AmeriCorps program.

### **Intern Preparation and Arrival**

Congratulations on your candidate selection! Once you have spoken with the candidate and confirmed selection to the position, please send the candidate a written confirmation of what you've discussed. Keep in mind, the offer has to be sent through your MySCA Portal for SCA to make an official offer and enroll the intern.

### **Things to Consider**

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

- How is the intern getting to your site: driving, flying, bus? Suggest a recommended means of transportation or the closest airport or bus station.
- How is housing being handled? See the SCA housing policy below if housing is not being provided onsite.

- Does SCA have the correct start and end dates for the internship? Always notify your SCA Contacts when there is a change to the start or end dates.
- Is your agreement (Task Agreement, Supplemental Project Agreement, Purchase Order, Assistance Award) being processed? **An intern cannot start until SCA has a signed agreement in place 10 business days prior to the internship start date.**
- Does SCA have the correct mailing address for sending the uniform?

## General Information

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

- A specific and complete description of job duties—be sure to note any changes from the original position description.
- A description of the housing facilities, including location (proximity to your site), internet and cell service availability, and whether cooking utensils and household items are included (see the Intern Housing Policy section).
- Personal equipment and clothing needed both on- and off-duty.
- Information on the proximity of stores and laundry facilities is helpful. What is the distance to stores and how often will the intern be able to shop? Should the intern bring a small supply of food to get started until he or she can get to a store? What items are best brought from home due to high prices in the area?
- Suggest recommended means of transportation to the area. What is the most convenient airport? Is a personal vehicle required? Is there public transportation in the area?
- Include the name of the person who will meet the intern upon arrival. If no one will be meeting them, where and to whom should the intern report? Exchange contact information in case the intern needs to contact you with any changes in plans.
- Include general information about your area, especially the location where the intern will be working and living. Be sure to include information pertaining to climate and terrain if this will affect clothing or equipment needs. Indicate details of any dress or appearance standards.
- Discuss any potential safety concerns and cultural norms that could affect the social and emotional wellbeing of the intern.
- Is an ATM available at or near the site? Let the intern know if cash is necessary.
- Date changes must be communicated to your SCA Contacts (both Partnership and Program Contacts) to ensure that the intern receives allowance(s) at the appropriate time, that AmeriCorps award dates are correct, and that the internship is compliant with dates specified on the agreement.
- While it's rare, an intern can withdraw from a position prior to the start date, so we encourage you to remain in contact with your intern and be available to answer any questions prior to arrival.

## Uniforms

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

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

## Background Checks

### SCA's Background Check

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

### Non-AmeriCorps Participants

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

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

### AmeriCorps Participants

Any AmeriCorps intern is required to undergo an additional, federal background investigation through our AmeriCorps background check vendor, Truescreen. All SCA's AmeriCorps background check vendors meet CNCS requirements. Regardless of their access to vulnerable populations or not, all AmeriCorps interns will be required to complete a three-part AmeriCorps check:

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

The background investigation process for AmeriCorps interns is a federally initiated process and SCA cannot perform a background check in lieu of the federal investigation. If your intern requires a federal background investigation, please be sure to allow time for the process to be completed, otherwise, the intern will not be

able to start the position as scheduled. The intern will receive an email from [hrdocs@thesca.org](mailto:hrdocs@thesca.org) with information on how to complete the FBI background check.

## Supervising an Intern

### Compensation & Pay Schedule

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

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

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

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

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

### Activity Logs and Output Logs

Members must submit both **Activity Logs** (also known as **Time Logs**), which record their completed service hours, as well as **Output Logs**, which record the *kinds* and *volume* of work they are accomplishing.

**Members are expected to complete their Activity Logs on a weekly basis. If access to technology is going to be severely limited, you should discuss the situation with your Program Contact as soon as possible. Your Program contact can share critical information about the rules surrounding log submission and interim approved processes if interns absolutely cannot submit weekly.**

Output Logs are completed as projects are completed. When working in groups, only one intern is required to submit an Output Log on behalf of the whole group. If the Output Log data is inaccurate (i.e., if the activity, date, and/or units are incorrect), please reject the Output Log. Only approve Output Logs with

accurate information and a complete description. This will ensure that we are collecting accurate and complete data for reporting purposes.

We expect interns to perform their duties to the same standard as regular or seasonal personnel. Interns are expected to work the equivalent of a 40-hours week. You may require interns to work on weekends and holidays, but you should arrange compensatory time off. The hours recorded on a member's Activity Log should be hours spent in active training or education or actual direct service hours. Partners may approve time off for members, when appropriate, but hours on time sheets should reflect actual hours served.

**Interns should log ZERO hours on days not served including time off.**

Interns should select the "Service" option to record their hours in the Activity Log, unless time has been dedicated to training. AmeriCorps members cannot exceed 10% of their hours with "Training" hours, and the "Fundraising" option is never used.

Activity Logs are verified or denied electronically through your MySCA Portal. When an intern's logs are pending your verification, you will receive an email that the log is ready for your review. If you are not able to view the logs, have questions, or need to change the name of a supervisor, reach out to your Program Contact to help troubleshoot.

For reporting purposes, you may need to review and capture the total hours served by your interns. To find this information, login to your MySCA Portal, select the "Manage Tasks" Tab, and click the associated Position ID hyperlink. The Total Hours will be listed at the top left, with the individual intern hours just below. You may sort the time logs by the following statuses: "All", "Submitted," "Approved," and "Rejected." You can review the status of time logs at any point during or after the intern's service.

### **Intern Travel**

Certain positions require travel to complete field work or to attend conferences or trainings. It is expected that SCA interns follow travel protocols as dictated by the partner organization. Funding for travel must be included in "Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses" in the cost estimate in order to fund intern travel. Please see the following section on reimbursement procedures.

### **Reimbursements**

Reimbursements will only be approved by the SCA if Duty-Related Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses were included in the initial position request and included as a line item on the estimate.

Please note that **interns must provide a receipt as proof of expense when requesting reimbursement**.

Interns unable to produce receipts at the time of request can receive reimbursement, but the reimbursement amount will be taxed. Interns should reach out to their Intern Advisor to confirm the best way to submit these receipts and then make a reimbursement request through their SCA account.

When your intern submits their request for reimbursement, it will be sent to your SCA Program Contact who will include the reimbursement amount in the next pay cycle. **Reimbursement requests must be submitted**

**and approved no later than the preceding Friday of the pay week, in order to be disbursed on the following Friday.**

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

- A. The intern should discuss the reimbursement with their supervisor to ensure funds are available and that the supervisor approves of the expense prior to submitting.
- B. The intern will upload receipts and put the reimbursement request into the SCA portal. The intern will then notify their supervisor about reimbursement submission.
- C. The supervisor will email their Program Contact (National Program Coordinator) with the intern's name and the total dollar amount that is approved.
- D. The Program Contact will process the reimbursement for the next pay period after approval by the supervisor.

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

### **Holiday, Sick, and Vacation Time**

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

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

### **Intern Performance**

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



#### Step #1: Verbal Warning

As the first step in progressive discipline, the purpose of a verbal warning is to clarify policies and expectations. Member will be informed that they are being issued a verbal warning.

#### Step #2: Written Warning

If the conduct addressed by a verbal warning is repeated or additional problems occur after the issuance of a verbal warning, follow up with a written warning.

#### Step #3: Creation of a Performance Plan

This is a formal written plan between the SCA supervisor and the member to modify recurring behaviors and/or performance issues that have continued after the issuance of both a verbal and written warning. This plan will be written in collaboration with the member and will be signed by both the supervisor and the member.

#### Step #4: Breaching of the Performance Plan

SCA supervisor will discuss the breach of the performance plan with SCA's HR Department. They will determine if a new Performance Plan needs to be created to address new/different behavior. Once a decision is made the member will be notified.

#### Step #5: Member Dismissal

If the Performance Plan has been breached by the member, dismissal from the program may be warranted, as decided by SCA in its sole discretion.

### Intern Evaluations

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

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

### Mentoring an Intern

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

As an intern supervisor, you are more than a manager. You are a mentor. A manager supports a person in their job and provides feedback on job performance. A manager receives a short-term return on their investment in a person. A mentor, on the other hand, shapes a person's career trajectory, and

thinks outside the scope of the job. A mentor considers the personal and professional growth of the mentee in a mutually beneficial exchange of new ideas and skills.

### Benefits of a Mentoring Relationship

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

### Your First Meeting

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

Here are some discussion topics to get you started.

- How do you identify? (e.g., review gender pronouns – “Which pronouns do you use?”)
- What is something outside of work that you really enjoy doing?
- What time of day do you work best (morning, afternoon, evening)?
- Do you mostly like to work individually or in groups?
- How do you like to receive information (by email, text, phone, or in person)?
- How do you like to contribute your ideas?
- What helps you stay organized?
- What helps you feel motivated at work?
- How can colleagues cheer you up after a bad day?
- Why did you choose to participate in this internship?
- What are you looking forward to in this internship?
- Is there anything that you feel nervous about in this internship?

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

- What will the workday schedule look like? What are the expectations for days off due to illness or personal needs?
- What are some important site rules and regulations?
- What should the intern do in the event of an emergency? You can complete or review the Emergency Response Plan, identify fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and other emergency equipment.
- What is your favorite thing to do for fun at the site? Share some information to help the intern get excited about the site.
- What is the history of the site? This is a great time to introduce the intern to some resources to create a land acknowledgment. Land acknowledgements are a powerful tool to express gratitude

and appreciation for the Indigenous Peoples of the land where we work. Share some of the history of the site.

- What should the intern do if there is any concern, large or small? Reiterate that in addition to the support of staff on site, the intern should also communicate with their SCA Program Contact.

## Weekly Check-ins

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

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

## Setting Goals

Early in the internship, you can help the intern set some goals for their time at the site. These goals can also stretch beyond their time with you. In one of your first check-ins, ask for the intern to come prepared with some things they would like to achieve during their internship – both professional and personal goals. You can then help the intern craft these goals into SMART goals. SMART is an acronym to remember when goal setting.

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

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

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

### Providing Continuous Feedback

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

Tips for successful feedback:

- **Schedule the meeting.** Prior to the check-in, ensure the meeting time and location is convenient, comfortable, and private.
- **Set an intention.** Determine the purpose of the feedback session and the outcomes you would like to reach. Share this intention with the intern and set a positive and welcoming tone. Prepare some notes with specific observations.
- **Identify strength areas.** Descriptive positive feedback gives the intern clarity about your expectations and reinforces behaviors that strengthen performance. When you take the time to celebrate the intern's successes, you build their confidence, and help them to feel valued and motivated.
- **Identify growth areas.** Constructive feedback can be a powerful tool to support growth. Remain objective and own your feedback. It can be useful to focus on performance instead of personal traits. Prepare some suggestions of tools, training, and resources to work on the area of improvement. Great mentors encourage mentees to identify challenges and work with them to overcome them. At the end of each feedback session, interns should have an action plan that you will be able to discuss at the next check-in.
- **Build feedback into weekly check-ins.** Weekly check-ins ensure that feedback is timely and relevant. While feedback can be provided as a part of a formal evaluation, this continuous process during weekly check-ins allows for an open dialogue and encourages two-way communication.
- **Ask for feedback.** Set aside time in your check-ins for the intern to provide feedback to you. It can help helpful to ask specific questions in areas you would like feedback. While the intern shares, concentrate on active listening to understand and be receptive to new ideas. Ask for specific and detailed examples. Write down the ideas and discuss ways to implement suggestions given. Each week, you can discuss your action items. Expressing gratitude for feedback will encourage this open communication.

## Resolving Conflict

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

- **Vent:**
  - Each individual takes turn listening to the other, while the other expresses their feelings.
  - Only one person should be talking, and the others should be listening
  - Make “I” statements they clarify your position, feelings or opinions.
  - Sentence starter “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you.”
- **Ownership:**
  - Each individual takes ownership for what the other has expressed they have done
  - Sentence starter: “I contributed to this by...”
- **Motives:**
  - Each individual verbalizes the other person’s motivation.
  - Sentence starter: “This is what I think you were intending...”
- **Plan:**
  - The individuals work together to come up with a plan to prevent a similar conflict from arising in the future.

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

## Holding a Debrief

The process of debriefing is a reflection method to use after any physical, emotional, or social incidents or near-misses, or any you and your intern need to come together to step back and think about something that has occurred. The debrief is a powerful tool that leverages experiences as opportunities for learning. Debrief should take place regularly during the internship.

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

- **What?** Observations
  - Getting the Facts
  - Based on what people see, hear, touch, smell, taste.
  - Discuss the facts of what happened, in detail (who, what, when, where, why, how, etc.)
- **Gut?** Reactions: Emotions, Feelings, Memories
  - Our emotional responses.
  - Feelings about the topic--angers, excites, frustrates, enjoys.
  - Give space for members to surface, share, and explore the emotional impact of the event.
- **So what?** Ideas: Meaning, Significance, Purpose, Importance
  - What people think about the topic.

- What the topic means to them.
- Identifies available options & possibilities for what might be done differently in the future.
- **Now what?** Decisions: Future Resolves, Next Steps
  - People decide what they will do with the information.
  - How they want to act after the debrief.
  - Identify specific actions steps for the future.

Source: Adapted from Institute for Cultural Affairs, Focused Conservation Overview

## Changes to Dates of Service

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

## Withdrawals and Early Exits

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

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

## Service Interruption

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

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

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

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

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

## Terminations

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

## Safety

The safety of our interns is of utmost importance to us. While SCA maintains a remarkable safety record, we do not assume it can remain so without exceptional diligence and a high level of commitment from you as the intern's supervisor.

SCA is proud of our safety record and risk management program. Based on over 60 years of experience, SCA has developed standards and guidelines that promote a strong safety culture. SCA continually evaluates safety through hazard assessments and incident analysis and integrates the lessons learned into our protocols, procedures, and training. In addition to being time and event tested, SCA's risk management protocols and procedures are thoroughly reviewed (and revised, as necessary) annually by SCA's Risk Management Team.

## Emergency Communication with SCA

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

**SCA's Conservation Internship 24-hour Contact: (571) 895-1799**

## Non-Emergency Communication with SCA

For general notification of minor incidents, please call your SCA Program Contact within 24 hours of the occurrence, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A few examples of minor incidents include, an

embedded tick, potential early departure of an intern, unprofessional conduct, or a non-injury vehicle incident. Any information provided on the health and well-being of our interns is appreciated.

### Workers' Compensation Coverage and Claims

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

### Job Hazards

There is inherent risk in whatever we do, but if we anticipate and prepare to manage this risk, we can prevent many incidents. We rely on your experience and expertise to evaluate and communicate risk at the worksite and in the local environment. **The Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) section must be completed as part of the position request**. Completion of the JHA ensures that we are educating each other regarding potential risks as well as providing the necessary preparation and training.

### Training and Supervision

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

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

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

### Emergency Response Plan

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



## Vehicles

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

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

## Off-Duty Safety

We have found that many incidents occur while interns are exploring the area during their free time. While we understand they are responsible for themselves during their off time, we encourage you to educate your intern(s) about the hazards of your area and recommend mitigation strategies. Encourage the "safety culture" to exist not only at work but during their entire SCA internship.

## SCA Policies

### Intern Housing Policy

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

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

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

If your site cannot provide housing for the intern, you should include a housing allowance in the budget for your position. Interns will receive that housing allowance monthly and use it to make rental payments directly to the landlord. Directing payments to the member does not diminish the responsibility of the

partner to locate and secure housing. If payments are made directly to the member, they must include utilities and other costs associated with the housing. In this case, the member will be responsible for shutting off utilities at the end of their term of service.

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

### **Wildland Fire Duty**

Wildland firefighting provides interns a unique opportunity to gain valuable experience in the field of conservation and preservation. Occasionally, partners have an urgent need for firefighters and request that interns be allowed to assist.

It is the policy of SCA to allow members to suspend their internship for a maximum of 14 days, inclusive of travel, for the purpose of fighting wildland fires. Per SCA Field Operations Standards, interns may not be involved in wildland firefighting activities as a member of SCA. However, they may engage in wildland firefighting activities as a member or employee of another agency. To fight wildland fires the intern must be approved to take leave from their term of service. This approval must come from the partner and your SCA Program Contact must be notified prior to suspension of the internship. Once on leave from their term of service, the member will no longer be covered by SCA's liability or workers' compensation insurance policies. In addition, the partner must continue to cover the cost of some of the intern's benefits, including housing, health insurance, and related administrative fees.

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

### **Pet Policy**

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

### **Alcohol Policy**

SCA understands that adults of legal drinking age may choose to consume alcohol after work hours and off program time during their term of service with SCA. Instead of prohibiting this activity, SCA strives to foster a culture of personal and professional responsibility where the consumption of alcohol by legal adults may

be done in a responsible manner. With this in mind, alcohol consumption while an SCA member is a privilege and not a right. If the consumption of alcohol becomes a management or safety issue, SCA may revoke this privilege. In addition, members are expected to adhere to the rules and regulations regarding alcohol use where they are housed.

### Drug-Free Workplace

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

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

All staff and volunteers of SCA are required to understand and comply with the organization's drug-free workplace policy. Any failure to comply with the guidelines of this policy can result in immediate termination of employment. Staff members and volunteers either in our offices or conducting business on behalf of our organization, regardless of location, are prohibited from all of the following:

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

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

## **Racism, Discrimination, and Sexual Harassment**

It is expected of all of our partner agencies to maintain a workplace environment free from any type of discriminatory conduct, including making statements or jokes, or committing acts regarding a person's race, color, national origin, religion, gender, physical condition, age, marital status or sexual orientation that are offensive, derogatory, or harassing.

## **Press Releases and Photographs**

SCA encourages interns to tell us about the work they are doing by sending photos or writing a press release. A template is provided in the [Intern Handbook](#) to help interns write about their experience and provide it to newspapers in their hometown and the town closest to where they are working.

Photographs of interns at work help raise awareness of SCA programs and recruit top-quality interns. We appreciate any assistance you can provide in this regard. Color photographs are ideal for displays, brochures, reports, and newsletters. Photos should capture interns on the job; ideally in their SCA gear or with an SCA patch visible. Please include a brief description of the activity depicted and a note permitting SCA to use your photos in its publications or displays. Be sure to mark your name or other appropriate credit on each photograph or slide and specify whether it should be returned after copying. Emailing photos to your Partnership Contact is the simplest approach, if you have the capability.

## **COVID-19 Policy**

SCA no longer requires proof of vaccination for members or staff in any type of position, effective January 1, 2023. The most up-to-date COVID-19 Management Plan can be found on the [Partner Resources](#) page of the SCA Website. If your site requires proof of vaccination, please speak with your SCA Partnership Contact about including conditions of employment on the position description.

If you are unclear about any of the information presented in this handbook, or if you did not find the information you were looking for, please reach out to your SCA Contacts.

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