

MEMO

TO: Montana AmeriCorps Programs
FROM: AmeriCorps Montana Housing Committee & the Governor's Office of Community Service
DATE: December 6th, 2022
RE: Montana AmeriCorps Housing Guide

Hello Montana AmeriCorps Programs,

In 2022, the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) convened the AmeriCorps Montana Housing Committee. This committee was made up of OCS and AmeriCorps State program staff with the purpose of identifying and addressing housing-related difficulties for AmeriCorps members. The committee met semi-regularly throughout 2022.

There is an identified housing crisis and shortage in Montana and around the country, and the housing committee cannot address these broader trends and issues. Instead, the committee focused on providing context, tips, and expectation-setting for AmeriCorps members living and serving in Montana, so they are prepared for and supported while seeking housing. This focus was chosen based on feedback from AmeriCorps Montana program staff.

The Housing Guide is intentionally brief to make it more approachable to AmeriCorps members, giving them important context, and providing additional resources so they can dig deeper if they choose. The guide is intended to support all AmeriCorps programs and participants in Montana, though it may be most helpful to members serving in AmeriCorps State & National and VISTA.

The Housing Committee has three intentions for use of the Housing Guide:

- **Intention 1:** program staff and site supervisors read the guide before sharing with members, so everyone understands the expectations and reality of finding housing for an AmeriCorps service term.
- **Intention 2:** program staff send a "housing" email to AmeriCorps members as early as possible, once an individual has accepted a service position. This email could include the Housing Guide, contact info to connect members of a cohort, tips specific to the program or host sites, and a template housing letter to landlords (see Intention 3).
- **Intention 3:** A template housing letter from members to landlords accompanies the guide. This letter could include the program's logo, explain to a potential landlord what AmeriCorps is, what the member will be doing, how the living allowance works, the member's personal "why they are serving" statement, and why they would be a good tenant. OCS has adapted the Big Sky Watershed Corps template letter for wider use across the Montana AmeriCorps network.

Please share questions or feedback on the AmeriCorps Housing Guide anytime at serve@mt.gov. We hope this guide is a helpful tool for staff and members embarking on an AmeriCorps service journey.