

Learn & Serve America

Learn and Serve America is one of three programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency, created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. The Corporation also includes the SeniorCorp and AmeriCorp programs.

Learn & Serve supports service-learning as a unique opportunity for youth to get involved in a tangible way by integrating community service projects with classroom learning. Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems; students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform. Service-learning can be applied across all subjects and grade levels; it can involve a single student or group of students, a classroom or an entire school.

A national study of Learn and Serve programs suggests that effective service-learning programs improve grades, increase attendance in school, and develop students' personal and social responsibility. A growing body of research recognizes service-learning as an effective strategy to help students by:

- Promoting learning through active participation in service experiences;
- Providing structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and writing about their service experience;
- Providing an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations;
- Extending learning beyond the classroom and into the community; and
- Fostering a sense of caring for others.

Learn and Serve America provides direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community based organizations and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects.

North Dakota's Learn & Serve Program

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction oversees the Learn & Serve America program. The sub-grantee is the North Dakota Supreme Court, who uses the allocated funds to work specifically with youth teen and drug court programs.

The SeniorCorp and AmeriCorp programs are under the oversight of the ND Department of Commerce.

More than 3,500 seniors in North Dakota contribute their time and talents in one of three SeniorCorp programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

AmeriCorp provides individuals the opportunity to provide intensive, results-driven service to meet education, environmental, public safety and other pressing needs in communities across North Dakota. Nearly all AmeriCorp funding goes to the Governor-appointed ND Dept. of Commerce, which in turn awards grants to nonprofit groups to respond to local needs. The

remaining funds are distributed directly to multi-state and national organizations through a competitive grants process by the Corporation.

Other individuals will serve through AmeriCorp VISTA, whose members help bring individuals and communities out of poverty by serving full-time to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses and increase housing opportunities, and AmeriCorp NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps), a 10-month, full time residential program for men and women between the ages of 18 and 24. In exchange for their service, AmeriCorp members earn an education award of up to \$4,725 that can be used to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans.

For more information, contact the Department of Public Instruction at (701) 328-2260.