

FOODCORPS SERVICE MEMBER



Application tips and guide

The application for joining the FoodCorps cohort for the 2017-2018 school year is now open! Visit the www.foodcorps.org to find key dates and deadlines and learn more about what we are looking for before you begin.

Wondering what makes a great application? Find more information about the application below.

What Counts as Experience

The application asks you to list your most relevant volunteer positions, internships, club affiliations, or jobs you've held in the arenas of food, gardening/farming, education, health, youth services, community organizing, social justice, and/or the environment. You can list up to 5 experiences. Start with your most recent experience and work your way backwards.

When listing your experiences, remember to be specific. Don't just say you volunteered, but explain what you did as a volunteer.

Below are some examples of what counts as experience in these arenas. **This list is meant to give you an idea of what experiences an applicant might list and is not exhaustive.**

Food:

- Assisting in cooking classes and/or teaching your own class
- Leading low-income middle school youth in an after school cooking class focusing on traditional foods from around the world
- Cafeteria style meal preparation for 500+ people
- Making healthy lunches and snacks for preschoolers and toddlers

Gardening/Farming:

- Researching, planning and executing a toddler-friendly herb garden and outdoor classroom space.
- Participating in bed preparation, harvest, maintenance, and animal chores as a farm hand; transporting wares to the farmer's market, and regularly visiting other urban farms in the area to keep up with the latest practices.
- Growing organic vegetables and raising free-range poultry as a 4H member.

Education:

- Conducting observations and reports in urban elementary school classrooms, engaged with faculty and students during meetings and school functions, and researched emerging issues in school climate and education.
- Serving in a high-need charter school doing classroom lessons, small group tutoring, after-school programming, and weekend service projects.
- Substitute teaching

Health:

- Implementing interactive nutrition education and sustainability workshops in an English Language Learning classroom of 10+ elementary students.
- Assisting in cooking classes for kids and their parents that focus on teaching families fighting childhood cancers about whole-body nutrition with simple, healthy recipes that children can help prepare.



- Counseling and educating patients on improving nutritional status, cooking meals in the hospital cafeteria, and working in the community garden to grow food for the hospital cafeteria.

Youth Service:

- Creating programs for church youth ages 11-18, including construction projects, volunteering at food banks, and camping trips to encourage community engagement; lead group lessons and implement discipline; manage and train high school and adult leaders.
- Leading educational field trips around a farm or garden to expose children to the wonders of hands-on learning experiences.
- Working alongside teachers to facilitate lessons for high school children who suffer from emotional trauma, learning disabilities, or other circumstances that prevent them from learning in a conventional classroom setting.
- Instructing children ages ranging from 6-16 year old in basic Taekwondo.

Community Organization:

- Coalition building, coordinating campaign events, representing an organization at community meetings, and assisting with database development.
- Educating, organizing, entertaining, and advocating for free media platforms in radio operations and equipment training to rural and urban communities across the nation.
- Educating communities and health professionals about the health impacts of hydraulic fracturing and unconventional oil and gas development.

Social Justice:

- Helping families that use food bank services access SNAP benefits
- Engaging a community of low-income families via a 15-week nutrition education curriculum designed to supplement their weekly free food share
- Helping to implement the day-to-day activities for affordable housing community centers. Developing and implementing wellness programs for youths and adults living on the properties.

Environment:

- Designed and taught lesson plans on local plant life for 1st graders
- Completed an 11 week Mosaic Internship with the National Park Service

You are also encouraged to list other **leadership experiences**, such as:

- Proposing, planning, and executing all details of 2 separate weeklong service trips focused on the issues of hunger, homelessness, and food justice, leading groups of 8-10 volunteers and connecting with 20+ organizations.
- Organizing with local community members to start a farmers market.
- Supervising and training staff for after school programs.
- Coordinating 5-day backpacking trips for 30 leadership campers (ages 14-17), teaching outdoor ethics and sustainable practices, strengthening leadership skills for teens, and facilitating community service projects and mentorship for campers.

What Counts as Training?

The application asks you to share up to three relevant and substantive educational experiences. These experiences can be from a traditional degree program or nontraditional sources, such as an apprenticeship, leadership training program, certification, or study abroad program as well as your undergraduate, graduate, or high school studies.



Examples of relevant training can include:

- Going to culinary school
- Learning basic skills relating to urban gardening, sustainability, permaculture, and off-grid homesteading, as well as helping to design lesson plans for workshops on community gardening as a WWOOF volunteer.
- Completing a training in organic farming
- Earning a teaching certification

This list is meant as inspiration and is not exhaustive.

What Makes a Good Short Essay/Story

The application asks for short answers to questions about your motivation, knowledge, leadership, and experience with marginalized communities. These short answer questions provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences and accomplishments that make you a unique and well-qualified candidate.

To make the most of your short answers:

- Learn more about FoodCorps' mission, vision, and approach to building healthy school environments
- Learn more about what we are looking for
- Read the question carefully, and make sure your answer addresses the questions being asked
- Show your personality! We are looking for people with compelling personal stories, not cookie-cutter candidates. With four short essays, there are four chances to show us something unique and compelling about yourself
- Show, don't tell- use specific examples about your experiences and achievements over vague statements and generalities
- We only know what you tell us. Remember to include any relevant information about your background that makes you an outstanding candidate, but don't just repeat the information found in the "Experiences" section of the resume. Use this space to expand on what we know about you.
- Proofread! Grammar isn't our main concern, but it's still a good idea to check over your writing for errors before submitting.
- If writing isn't your strong suit, remember you can also include a multimedia response to any of the questions below, and we strongly encourage you to include at least one creative file instead of writing.

Examples of good short answers are below:

Motivation: What values and experiences have inspired you to join FoodCorps? What motivates you to take on this challenge? In other words, why do you want to serve with us? What do you hope to gain personally or professionally from this experience?

Since age ten the kitchen has been integral to me. Working at my family's taqueria inculcated a deep respect for food. Waste never. Share always. I also witnessed the power of food, from long lines of people waiting to eat or its ability to bring polar opposites to a common ground for a good meal. Furthermore, while living in Paris I was able to experience a society that highly values food. From fresh and easily accessible produce to delicious school lunches served and cooked by a school chef, as opposed to a food conglomerate. Also, working at a school where the vast majority of students are low income showed me how narrow their diets and lack of food literacy can be. I want to serve in order to show these communities the possibilities of food. --Cesar Cortes, CA



In a short space, Cesar answered the question by connecting his childhood respect for food to his current work at a low-income school and his goals for the future.

Knowledge: What have your personal, education, and/or work experiences taught you about the relationship between food, health, education, and inequality?

While in middle school our family lived in midtown Manhattan where we had access to a great variety of good-looking produce. My mom loved experimenting in the kitchen, so she added more vegetables and salads to our meals. When we moved back to the South Bronx the supermarkets in our area were dismal by comparison. Having been exposed to more options, we noticed the difference in the quality and in the variety of foods available to us. I've learned that our health is reflected in our supermarket shopping carts; our shopping carts are a reflection of our culture and what is available to us. Lastly, increasing the knowledge around food and its impact on our health can encourage higher consumptions of fruits and vegetables in our communities. --Rosanne Placencia-Knapper, NYC

Serving with City Year opened my eyes to issues of equity. I served in a "food desert," and I saw that the lack of access to anything other than fast food was detrimental to the community's health. I learned that year that many problems facing my community were the result of years of losing funding from the city to support the neighborhood's infrastructure and development. These families were denied access to nutritious food and a safe environment, despite living very close to families whose children go to better schools, have fruits and vegetables at home, and can feel safe on their streets. I realized that access to nutritious food is integral to the idea of equity, and so is community education about the topics of food and health. --Andrew Blair, IA

Roseanne answered the question by sharing her personal history with food and how it has informed her understanding of health and inequality. Andrew emphasized his previous service in a food desert through City Year to demonstrate his knowledge of food justice issues. Both answers show candidates who are informed and passionate about food, health, and education.

Leadership: How have your personal, education, and/or work experiences prepared you for a successful year of public service with FoodCorps?

My academic work with Chicano Studies and Biology has allowed me to understand my passions and community through another frame. It has helped confirm the value of community-based knowledge about food and farming that I have been learning through community organizing. I am already very familiar with FoodCorps work in New Mexico and Albuquerque and have often mentored incoming service members in our city. I believe that with my community based knowledge, paired with what I know about FoodCorps, I can successfully continue to shape FoodCorps' role within the host site, and within Farm/Garden to cafeteria initiatives. Professionally I can gain more skills and views on how our communities are fighting for a just food system in NM. --Stephanie Olivas

Stephanie used her short essay to highlight how her combination of academic and community organizing work has helped her become a stronger leader in her own community. She used detailed, succinct examples to show what made her a stand-out candidate.

Experience with Marginalized Communities: Describe your experience being part of, working with, or learning about the history or culture of people marginalized by race, class, geography, or immigration status? What has been your biggest lesson? The biggest challenge? How would you bring this experience to bear on your FoodCorps service?



I grew up in rural Missouri, of which there are many benefits, but diversity is unfortunately not one. Most of my exposure to the culture and needs of the different communities listed comes from volunteer work with organizations at Mizzou and around Columbia, such as Mizzou Alternative Breaks, the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture, WIC, and The Central Pantry. All of these experiences shared one common theme: the best way to understand a community is to participate actively, to share your life with them, and allow them to share theirs with you. Being open and vulnerable is challenging at times, but it forms the basis for an extraordinary sense of community, and it is this attitude I hope to bring to locations in which Food Corps serves. --Zach Wehmeyer, MS

Zach made a connection between his volunteer work experience and his changing perspective on learning from different communities. Specific examples of your achievements combined with thoughtful reflection makes a compelling short essay.

What Makes a Good Supplemental File

Any of the short answer questions can be responded to with a multimedia file, and you are strongly encouraged to include at least one creative file instead of writing. Examples of creative files can include a video, audio file, PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi presentation, etc. If you are filling out a paper application instead of an online application, you might include a photograph, an excerpt from a paper you wrote, a lesson plan, or other printed material.

Tips for a great creative file:

- It should show your passion for the FoodCorps mission and what it means to you- be creative!
- If you include a photo, make sure to include an explanation of what is being shown- is it a garden you grew, a place where you learned something important, an artistic interpretation of what food justice means to you, or something else?
- If you are filling out the application online, you can upload a link (such as to a Youtube video or Prezi presentation) by including the link in a Word doc
- A supplemental file should fully answer the question it is addressing. See below for examples of creative files that address motivation, knowledge, leadership, and community knowledge

Examples of creative files:

- A lesson plan that demonstrates your knowledge of food, health, education, social justice, or knowledge of local food and culture:
 - An applicant from Hawai'i included a lesson plan she created for 1st through 3rd graders to explain the significance of the local plant kalo & the story of Haloa, the first Hawai'i person. The lesson plan included a student objective, essential question, notes on materials needed, as well as a detailed outline.
 - An applicant applying to serve in New York included a lesson plan for a cooking lesson that incorporated the history of New York, and encouraged students to compare and contrast modern times with colonial times.
- A recommendation letter from a supervisor, mentor or teacher that demonstrates your leadership and ability to contribute as a service member
- Original kid-friendly recipes
- An excerpt from a research paper or thesis that is relevant to one of the short answer questions
- A poem that describes your evolving relationship to food and shows your motivation to serve:



There once was a girl
Who would much rather hurl
Than eat carrots, or broccoli, or peas...

But when asked to supersize
While ordering fries
She'd respond quickly 'Yes, please!'

Then one summer she went
(a summer well-spent)
To her aunt's small, but bountiful farm

She helped to plant seeds
And to pull all the weeds
And to water, and then one day...

She found to her delight
Right there, in plain sight
A tomato! (Which she grew, by the way!)

It was so full of flavor

She ate slowly and savored,
While she soaked up the rays from the sun
Then she started to think
Hey, fast food stinks!
And healthy food can be tasty and fun

You've probably surmised
(It's no great surprise)
That this little girl was me

And I think everyday
Of the myriad ways
In which **good food** now fills me with glee

I would enjoy nothing more
Than to learn and explore
Alongside students who deserve to eat

Good food from the ground
And a solution's been found!
FoodCorps is achieving this feat

Other tips for Applying to FoodCorps:

- Do your research!
- You can only apply to FoodCorps directly through our website, not through the AmeriCorps site. If you do not have access to a computer to fill out the online application, you can fill out a paper application and return it by mail or email.
- Check your email often for updates about your application
- Visit our Youtube page to watch a panel of Alumni discuss what makes a good application

Still have questions about the application or serving with FoodCorps? Contact us at serve@foodcorps.org, or at (646)-583-1759.

