

AmeriCorps Seniors | RSVP of King County

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Meeting Critical Community Needs



RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) of King County
is an AmeriCorps Seniors program administered by Solid Ground.



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**



RSVP

TABLE of CONTENTS

WELCOME!3

ABOUT RSVP

- ▶ What is RSVP?4
- ▶ How did RSVP get its start?4

RSVP STAFF and COMMITTEES

- ▶ Solid Ground’s RSVP and Volunteer Services Staff5
- ▶ RSVP Volunteer Committees5

RSVP BENEFITS and ELIGIBILITY

- ▶ What are the benefits of being an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer through Solid Ground’s King County RSVP?6
- ▶ Who is eligible to volunteer with RSVP?6
- ▶ How do volunteers join RSVP?6

VOLUNTEER SITES, SERVICES, SCHEDULES, and ROLES

- ▶ What are RSVP’s volunteer options?6
- ▶ How does RSVP interact with site partners?7
- ▶ What kind of services do volunteers perform?7
- ▶ How are in-home assignments different?7
- ▶ Who sets volunteer schedules – and can volunteers change their sites or roles?8

VOLUNTEER HOURS and APPRECIATION

- ▶ How do volunteers maintain active status?8
- ▶ Why do volunteers need to report their hours?8
- ▶ How are hours reported?8
- ▶ How do volunteers know their work is appreciated?9

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, and EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ What are AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer rights?9
- ▶ What are the responsibilities and expectations of you as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer?9
- ▶ Are there prohibited volunteer activities?10
- ▶ What is the volunteer separation and appeal process?10

SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE

- ▶ What are the rules and procedures for supplemental insurance?11
- ▶ What happens in case of an accident?11

CONTACT INFOBack Cover

WELCOME!

On behalf of AmeriCorps Seniors and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of King County, it is our pleasure to welcome you as a new volunteer. RSVP, a program of AmeriCorps Seniors, is a national service program dedicated to meeting critical community needs by engaging volunteers age 55 and older.

In King County, RSVP is administered by Solid Ground, a nonprofit agency that works to solve poverty by meeting basic needs, nurturing success, and spreading change. If you're 55 or older and want to make a difference in your community, RSVP is your starting point!

Your wisdom, experience, skills, and time change lives and make a difference!

People throughout King County – particularly those over 55 looking to use their experience and skills to help others – volunteer their time every day to meet critical community needs. These tutors, nutrition champions, home helpers, and capacity builders strengthen our communities by inspiring young people's potential, enhancing families' health, and supporting our elders' well-being.

When you join RSVP, you join a local and national network of volunteers who collectively give thousands of hours of time, wisdom, and support to meet urgent needs in our community. Our staff have a deep understanding of the most critical community needs and the nonprofit organizations working to meet them. We will help you find volunteer opportunities throughout King County that work for your passion, your skills, and your schedule. And as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer through RSVP, you also gain access to key benefits and services designed to help you make the most of your volunteer experience – and all contributed hours count toward a national service impact.

We hope you find your volunteer experience challenging and rewarding, and that you will spread the word about the opportunity to serve. The best inspiration for others to begin volunteering comes from talking to engaged AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. Invite your friends and neighbors to join you in volunteering, and together we can make our communities more resilient, supportive, and caring places to live.

This handbook is designed to answer frequently asked questions about volunteering as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer through RSVP. Read through it at your leisure and keep it for future reference.

We are proud of our role to bring together community agencies in need of help with volunteers who can provide that help. We look forward to being of service to you as you give your time and talents in the community. Thank you!



LEFT-RIGHT: *Megan Wildhood, RSVP Coordinator, Jen Gahagan, Volunteer Services Manager, and Lily King, Solid Ground Volunteer Coordinator*

~The Staff and Volunteer Ambassadors of King County RSVP

ABOUT RSVP

What is RSVP?

RSVP stands for Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. RSVP of King County's mission is simple: To meet community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteering for people 55 and older in King County, WA. RSVP recognizes and values the experience and wisdom of people in the second half of their lives as one of our nation's most important natural resources. We believe that by volunteering, you are supporting our community while staying active and healthy. We hope to make volunteering easy and rewarding.

RSVP is a community of changemakers. We are a part of AmeriCorps Seniors, a federal agency connecting individuals and organizations through service and volunteering. Today, there are more than 200,000 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in over 23,000 locations, who collectively give millions of hours of time, wisdom, and support to the most urgent needs in their communities. Every hour you contribute counts toward a national impact.

A program of Solid Ground, King County RSVP has about 1,000 active volunteers serving in nearly 50 organizations including schools, food banks, senior centers, homeless shelters, and other agencies with volunteer opportunities. Each year, RSVP's AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers provide over 100,000 service hours to nonprofits and public agencies in King County.



Original group of Community Service Society (CSS) Project SERVE volunteers, Staten Island (included with permission from CSS RSVP)

How did RVSP get its start?

RSVP resulted from efforts by groups of volunteers and government agencies to create opportunities for engagement, activity, acquaintanceship, and growth for Americans in the second half of their lives. One of the earliest RSVP programs was the Community Service Society (CSS) of New York, launched as a pilot project in 1965 on Staten Island. The project involved a small group of volunteers dedicated to serving their communities in a variety of ways. The success of their efforts led to an amendment to the Older Americans Act, creating RSVP as a nationwide program in 1969.

In 1994, AmeriCorps (formerly the Corporation for National and Community Service) was created

to consolidate federal volunteer programs under one agency. They bring people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities.

AmeriCorps helps make service to others a cornerstone of our national culture. They administer AmeriCorps Seniors and RSVP nationwide, providing a significant portion of funding, and also fund VISTA, Senior Companion Foster Grandparent, and other national service programs. Additional RSVP funds come from local government and corporate and foundation grants as well as donations from individuals.

Locally, Seattle RSVP was established and administered by United Way in 1972. In 1973, East King County RSVP began, sponsored by the City of Bellevue. These two programs merged in 1978 to form King County RSVP, and American Red Cross assumed sponsorship. Finally, in 1994, Solid Ground became King County RSVP's local sponsor. As a program of Solid Ground, RSVP is a part of a regional effort to address racism and solve poverty.

RSVP STAFF and COMMITTEES

Solid Ground's RSVP and Volunteer Services Staff

King County RSVP has a full-time RSVP Coordinator dedicated to the program, and several other Solid Ground staff members provide support as well. Staff have a deep understanding of the most critical community needs and the nonprofit organizations working to meet them. This means that as a volunteer, you have real people ready to assist you in having a rewarding volunteer experience. RSVP is a clearinghouse that connects you with the greatest opportunities to make an impact. Volunteers are the heart of RSVP – and RSVP, Solid Ground, and YOU strengthen King County. Together, we help solve poverty and support healthy, resilient communities.



A 2021 RSVP Ambassadors Zoom meeting (LEFT-RIGHT, TOP-BOTTOM): Volunteer Services Program Assistant Sam Stones; RSVP Coordinator Megan Wildhood; Volunteer Services Manager Jen Gahagan; Volunteer Coordinator Lily King; RSVP Ambassadors Lillian Hayashi, Joe and Helen Hesketh, and Suvendoo Ray; Solid Ground Giving Manager Gary Rubin; and RSVP Ambassador Marty Thompson

RSVP Volunteer Committees

Made up of RSVP members and other interested community members, RSVP Volunteer Committees work closely with program staff to increase our capacity and provide feedback to further our mission and expand the program.

- ▶ **Newsletter Team:** Write articles and procure photographs for our *Experience in Action (EIA)* newsletter.
- ▶ **Ambassadors:** Provide feedback to program staff and evaluate program activities, represent RSVP at community events and meetings, and recruit volunteers and spread the word about the great work they do.
- ▶ **Service Projects:** Provide additional program support, including visiting volunteer site partners, doing service projects, and helping site partners with volunteer recognition.

By working closely with these committees, RSVP staff expand their capacity to serve volunteers and the community. Committee members also help us gain a deeper understanding of volunteer and community needs and interests. You don't have to join a committee to be an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer through RSVP, but we are always looking for fresh ideas and energy.

RSVP BENEFITS and ELIGIBILITY

What are the benefits of being an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer through Solid Ground's King County RSVP?

Benefits include:

- ▶ RSVP connects you directly to opportunities at nearly 50 King County organizations. We match your talents, interests, and schedules to meaningful opportunities that keep you active and engaged while supporting your community.
- ▶ You are part of a national organization that demonstrates senior volunteers' impact on our communities.
- ▶ You receive personal service and ongoing support from dedicated staff as you volunteer.
- ▶ While performing volunteer duties, you are covered by supplemental accident, personal liability, and auto liability insurance beyond your own coverage at no cost to you.
- ▶ You receive RSVP's newsletter, *Experience in Action (EIA)*, which keeps everyone up to date on current opportunities, other RSVP volunteers' impacts, and issues that matter to our community.
- ▶ Volunteer recognition is vital to RSVP's mission. Each year we celebrate volunteers and recognize your service.



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

Who is eligible to volunteer with RSVP?

The only requirement for joining RSVP is age: Anyone 55 or older can become an RSVP volunteer. Eligibility is not restricted based on race, color, national origin (including individuals with limited English proficiency), gender expression, age, political affiliation, religion, or disability. RSVP strives to support each volunteer's needs and make reasonable physical accommodations for all volunteers.

How do volunteers join RSVP?

To become a volunteer, all you need to do is complete the registration form either online or by mail. After you return the completed registration form, RSVP staff will work with you to find suitable and exciting volunteer placements based on your needs and interests. In order to remain an active volunteer, RSVP must receive your volunteer hours from your site, or in some cases, directly from you every month.

VOLUNTEER SITES, SERVICES, SCHEDULES, and ROLES

What are RSVP's volunteer options?

RSVP of King County has partnerships with nearly 50 community agencies and social service organizations – which RSVP calls site partners – throughout the county. RSVP's AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve in various capacities with site partners such as:

- ▶ Catholic Community Services ▶ Food Lifeline ▶ Habitat for Humanity ▶ Northshore Senior Center ▶ Jewish Family Services ▶ Port of Seattle ▶ Power of One ▶ Reading Partners ▶ Solid Ground ▶ ... and many more.

RSVP may refer volunteers to serve with a specific site partner, or a site partner may refer eligible volunteers to RSVP for enrollment.

How does RSVP interact with site partners?

Site partners must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with RSVP. This agreement outlines program requirements and working relationships between RSVP and site partners and helps ensure that RSVP volunteers have positive and productive volunteer experiences. These agreements are valid for three years with the opportunity to renew. Site partners provide orientation, in-service instruction, and special training for RSVP volunteers as needed. RSVP welcomes conversations with local organizations interested in becoming RSVP site partners. Site partners are approved based on program goals, federal funding guidelines, and community needs. We ask that site partner staff submit their volunteers' monthly time reports to us by the 5th of each month.

RSVP support and benefits for site partners include:

- ▶ Listings under volunteer opportunities in our Experience in Action (EIA) newsletter, with a circulation of 3,500 in King County, and on Solid Ground's website at www.solid-ground.org/rsvp/#region.
- ▶ Publicity for the program through articles and announcements in the EIA newsletter.
- ▶ Referral of potential volunteers to help fulfill partner volunteer needs.
- ▶ Opportunities to network with other RSVP site partners.

What kind of services do volunteers perform?

RSVP's AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers help meet critical community needs in the following strategic areas: ▶ healthy futures (food security and independence for older adults), ▶ K-12 success, ▶ capacity building, and ▶ other community needs. Volunteer opportunities can change as community needs change. For example, virtual and socially distanced opportunities have been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. We strive to have a range of available opportunities at any given time, so we encourage interested volunteers to check in periodically to learn about new opportunities. RSVP volunteers may choose from a list of King County agencies that have a signed agreement with the RSVP office.

Opportunities include:

- ▶ deliver food and groceries
- ▶ provide transportation
- ▶ support food banks
- ▶ teach low-income families about nutrition
- ▶ prepare taxes
- ▶ tutor and mentor youth
- ▶ provide companionship and home help to elders
- ▶ fundraise and build capacity at nonprofit organizations
- ▶ assist families transitioning into homeownership
- ▶ manage and train volunteers
- ▶ support blood drives
- ▶ ... and more!

Volunteer assignments are made according to volunteers' skills and interests and the needs of site partners. It is important to note that volunteers do not take away the jobs of paid employees – rather they supplement existing staff capacity and enrich and enhance the organization's services in the community. RSVP receives numerous requests from organizations that need volunteers. We work closely with you to find the best assignment(s) possible and will help you find another placement if you are dissatisfied with your current one.

How are in-home assignments different?

When RSVP volunteers enter a person's home for volunteer service, a Letter of Agreement needs to be signed by the volunteer, the person being visited, and the volunteer's supervisor. This document is provided by the site partner where you serve. It includes information such as your training plan, supervision, and dates and times you will enter the person's home. This document is kept on file in the RSVP office.



Who sets volunteer schedules – and can volunteers change their sites or roles?

Each volunteer position has different time requirements. RSVP strives to help you find opportunities that match your scheduling needs, including short-term and one-time opportunities as well as opportunities with flexible scheduling. You work out scheduling, including orientations and training, directly with your site partner supervisor. RSVP offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities with a wide range of site partners. If at any time you would like to change your assignment or take on a new challenge, let us know. We are happy to work with you to find new placements. Our website lists available opportunities, and for as long as you remain an active RSVP volunteer, you will receive our EIA newsletter with listings of available opportunities and other information of interest to you and your fellow volunteers.

VOLUNTEER HOURS and APPRECIATION

How do volunteers maintain active status?

RSVP must receive a monthly report of all volunteer hours, either from volunteer site partners or from volunteers directly. It is acceptable to take a break from volunteering. To remain active with RSVP, you must complete and submit at least one volunteer hour every 24 months. It is our policy that volunteers be placed on the inactive list after 24 months of inactivity. If you or your site partner have not submitted hours to the RSVP office for 24 months, you'll automatically be placed on the inactive list.

Why do volunteers need to report their hours?

Monthly hours reporting helps document RSVP's impact and provides important information for volunteers, the community, and RSVP. They maintain your active volunteer status, guarantee coverage under our insurance policy while you volunteer, and ensure that you receive the *EIA* newsletter and annual recognition for your service. The RSVP office keeps a cumulative record of time contributed to all approved RSVP site partners and projects beginning the month you sign up with RSVP. RSVP uses information from the monthly report to educate the community about volunteer contributions. It is important for the people of King County to understand and appreciate the time, skills, and experience senior volunteers contribute to the betterment of our area. Also, federal and state funders require RSVP to track all time spent volunteering to help assess program performance. Volunteer hours help demonstrate RSVP's value to the community.

How are hours reported?

Arrangements for recording volunteer hours vary among site partners. When you begin a new assignment, you should learn the sign-in requirements. In most cases, volunteers submit hours to their site's volunteer coordinator monthly, and site coordinators send hours to the RSVP office by the 5th of each month. If you submit your own hours, you should also send them to the RSVP office by the 5th of each month. A volunteer timesheet is included in the welcome packet each volunteer receives within a month of registering with RSVP. Days and activities performed while volunteering should be recorded. Both volunteers and site partner supervisors should sign timesheets. *(Note: Travel time is not counted as volunteer hours.)*

Ways you can submit completed timesheets to the RSVP office:

- ▶ **EMAIL:** RSVP@solid-ground.org
- ▶ **FAX:** 206.694.6777
- ▶ **MAIL:** RSVP c/o Solid Ground, 1501 North 45th Street, Seattle, WA, 98103
- ▶ **PHONE:** *In special cases*, volunteers may report hours to RSVP staff over the phone. Contact us at **206.694.6785** or **206.694.6786** for more information.

How do volunteers know their work is appreciated?

We all need a pat on the back, a smile, and genuine words of appreciation once in a while. Individually and collectively, volunteers have a great deal to celebrate. A very important part of RSVP's work is the visible acknowledgment and appreciation of volunteers' gifts of service to the community. RSVP encourages site partners to provide recognition for their volunteers. We often assist by helping plan appreciation events and by sending an RSVP Ambassador to award RSVP service certificates. In addition to participating in site partner-sponsored recognition activities, RSVP has celebrated and honored volunteer service in a variety of different ways over the years, including recognition events, certificates, pins, and other tokens of appreciation.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, and EXPECTATIONS

What are AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer rights?

- ▶ Assignments that utilize and develop your skills.
- ▶ Information and training needed to carry out your assignment.
- ▶ Communication about the organization, its policies, and its programs as they relate to your volunteer role.
- ▶ Guidance and supervision from a willing, experienced staff person.
- ▶ A written job description, a designated place to work, and materials or equipment needed to perform your volunteer assignment.
- ▶ Freedom to discuss problems, ask questions, and make suggestions.
- ▶ Recognition for a job well done.



RSVP Volunteer Arlene Hing-Loh assists with a Solid Ground Cooking Matters class in 2019.

What are the responsibilities and expectations of you as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer?

- ▶ You will be clear about your volunteer assignment and not accept assignments you are not comfortable with. If an assignment turns out to be unsuitable, you are invited and expected to let RSVP know so we can find a better fit.
- ▶ You will notify RSVP of all volunteer assignments so we can ensure you are credited for your volunteer work with RSVP partner organizations.
- ▶ You will inform the agencies where you volunteer that you are affiliated with RSVP.
- ▶ You will be on time and keep the schedule you have agreed upon. You will inform your site partner as far ahead as possible if you will be absent.
- ▶ You will be willing to learn and ask questions. Training and supervision are essential to any job well done.
- ▶ You will be flexible. You will try to meet the needs of your site partner and the people it serves.
- ▶ You will adhere to their site partner's policies and procedures.
- ▶ You will respect confidentiality and keep in strictest confidence any information about your site partner and the people who receive its services.
- ▶ You will keep an open mind. You will not let preconceptions interfere with your volunteer assignment.
- ▶ You will be reachable and be sure to let RSVP know if your address or phone number changes.
- ▶ You will report your volunteer hours. As described above, most site partners report volunteer hours, but some do not. You will check with each new site supervisor to find out how this is handled.

Are there prohibited volunteer activities?

Due to federal grant guidelines, RSVP volunteers cannot perform the following activities as part of their RSVP service:

- ▶ Give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in proselytizing.
- ▶ Assist with electoral activities, voter registration, transportation to polls, or efforts to influence legislation.
- ▶ Engage in activities that displace paid workers.
- ▶ Accept money or donations from the people they serve or relatives and friends of service recipients.
- ▶ Endorse particular political candidates or participate in/support campaigns for public office.

What is the volunteer separation and appeal process?

RSVP or a site partner may separate a volunteer from the program for reasons including but not limited to extensive or unauthorized absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, or inability to accept supervision. Separation may also be based on termination of volunteer assignment or when the volunteer assignment is no longer meaningful or satisfying to the volunteer. Any appeal of an adverse action affecting a volunteer must be made in writing to the King County RSVP office. RSVP staff will conduct an investigation with the necessary individuals making the appeal. RSVP will respond in writing to the appealing volunteer within one month and will state that either the office agrees or disagrees with the findings for termination. Should the office disagree with the findings, it will also state what action is to be taken to correct the situation. This procedure applies to volunteer assignment situations only. Other concerns can be directed to RSVP staff.



Knit-It-Alls (KIA) Distribution Day 2019 (LEFT-RIGHT): RSVP Coordinator Megan Wildhood with KIA volunteers Patty Stolzof, Sarah Parhurst, Lillian Hayashi, and Pat Loftin

SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE for VOLUNTEERS

What are the rules and procedures for supplemental insurance?

At no cost to you, RSVP provides supplemental accident, personal liability, and automobile liability insurance (with some restrictions) beyond other insurance you may have. This coverage is in effect while you volunteer or travel to and from assignments. Benefits are payable only if the RSVP office has a monthly report showing your volunteer activity on the day of injury or property damage.

Volunteers are covered by:

- ▶ **Accident insurance for personal injury** while traveling between their homes and RSVP volunteer sites, during meal periods while volunteering, and while attending RSVP-sponsored activities such as recognition, orientation, and Ambassador meetings. It does not duplicate expenses covered by Medicare or any other valid and collectable insurance.
- ▶ **Personal liability insurance** provides economic protection for volunteers if they accidentally injure someone or damage another person's property. This coverage is in excess of any other valid and collectable insurance coverage.
- ▶ **Automobile liability insurance** covers bodily injury or property damage claims for RSVP volunteers while driving their own cars as a part of volunteer assignments, such as delivering meals. This coverage is in excess of any insurance they carry, or the limits of the state financial responsibility law, whichever is higher. To be eligible for this coverage, volunteers must have valid driver's license numbers on file in the RSVP office. This insurance does not apply to damage to volunteers' automobiles.

What happens in the case of an accident?

In case of accidents at sites, site partner supervisors should respond to any injuries and medical needs as appropriate. Injured volunteers or their site partner supervisors should contact the RSVP office as soon as possible within 48 hours to report injuries and details surrounding them, including date, time, place, and cause. RSVP staff will submit initial claim forms to CIMA Companies, Inc.

After volunteers receive treatment, they should copy any medical bills and file the originals through their medical carriers. Then, they must submit copies of bills and an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) to CIMA (*see address at right*).

Claims are accepted within 52 weeks from the date of the accident. If a volunteer does not receive a reply from our insurance company within 45 to 60 days of submitting a claim, they should notify the RSVP office. The insurance company does not automatically notify RSVP regarding claims, so we depend on our volunteers to let us know if there are any problems.

For insurance coverage details, please visit the CIMA Volunteers Insurance program webpage: www.cimaworld.com/nonprofits/volunteer-insurance-access-for-insurance-agents.



CIMA Companies, Inc.
2750 Kilarney Drive, Suite 202
Woodbridge, VA 22192
Attn: Claims Department

Welcome to RSVP!

On behalf of King County RSVP staff, our site partners, and the people who benefit from the time and talents volunteers offer, we want to thank you for your interest and generosity. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

CONTACT RSVP:

EMAIL: rsvp@solid-ground.org

WEB: www.solid-ground.org/rsvp

PH: 206.694.6785 or 206.694.6786

FAX: 206.694.6777

MAILING ADDRESS:

1501 North 45th Street
Seattle, WA, 98103-6708

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) of King County
is an AmeriCorps Seniors program administered by Solid Ground.



AmeriCorps
Seniors



RSVP