OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps sends the best and brightest Americans abroad on behalf of the United States to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world. Volunteers work at the grassroots level to develop sustainable solutions that address challenges in agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development. Through their service, Volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a life-long commitment to service that positions them to succeed in today’s global economy.

The agency traces its roots to 1960, when then-Sen. John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country by living and working in some of the most remote corners of the world. He ignited a movement among young Americans that inspired the nation and led to the founding of the Peace Corps. In an ever-changing world, the agency has become a dynamic, forward-leaning champion for international service defined by its innovation and compassion—yet, its original mission remains the same:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

HISTORY

Officially established: March 1, 1961
Americans who have served: Nearly 220,000
Host countries served to date: 140

PEACE CORPS TODAY

Peace Corps Director: Carolyn Hessler-Radelet
(Western Samoa, 1981–83)

Host countries: 64
Volunteers and trainees: 6,818
Gender: 63% female, 37% male
Marital status: 94% single, 6% married
Minorities: 25% of Volunteers*
Average age: 28
Volunteers over 50: 7% of Volunteers

* Volunteer percentage excludes non-responders.
**PEACE CORPS SERVICE**

Peace Corps Volunteers live and work alongside the people they serve. They collaborate with local governments, schools, communities, small businesses, and entrepreneurs to create sustainable, community-based projects that address changing and complex needs across six sectors.

**Peace Corps Program Sectors**

- Agriculture: 3%
- Community Economic Development: 9%
- Environment: 12%
- Health: 24%
- Education: 38%
- Youth in Development: 9%
- Peace Corps Response: 5%

**BUDGET**

- Fiscal Year 2013: $356.25 million
- Fiscal Year 2014: $379 million

**TO BE A VOLUNTEER**

- Volunteers typically serve for two years following in-country training.
- The Peace Corps provides Volunteers with housing and a living stipend to cover food and incidentals—allowing them to live similarly to the people in their community.
- The minimum age for Peace Corps service is 18; there is no upper age limit. Volunteers must be U.S. citizens.
- Volunteers’ health, safety, and security are the Peace Corps’ highest priorities. The agency is committed to providing Volunteers with the training, guidance, and support they need to stay healthy, safe, and productive throughout their service.

**WHERE VOLUNTEERS SERVE**

The Peace Corps provides technical assistance to countries that request it, while strategically targeting resources and country presence to achieve the greatest impact.

**Percentage of total Volunteers serving, by geographic region, in 2014**

- Africa: 45%
- Latin America: 23%
- Eastern Europe/Central Asia: 10%
- Asia: 12%
- The Caribbean: 4%
- North Africa/Middle East: 3%
- Pacific Islands: 3%

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- In July 2014, Peace Corps Director Carolyn Hessler-Radelet announced sweeping changes to the agency’s recruitment, application, and selection process that makes applying to the Peace Corps simpler, faster, and more personalized than ever before. Applicants can now choose their country of service and apply to specific programs through a new, shorter application.
- Following historic changes to the application process, incoming applications reached a 22-year high for the agency and increased more than 70 percent over 2013.
- As part of the Peace Corps’ recruitment reforms, the agency increased the amount of staff dedicated to diversity recruitment and is forming partnerships with Hispanic-serving institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and organizations such as Alpha Phi Alpha and Alpha Kappa Alpha. In 2014, the number of Volunteers who self-identified as racial and ethnic minorities increased to 25 percent.
- There are a number of benefit options to reduce student loans for Peace Corps Volunteers. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Peace Corps launched a web portal and public education campaign to help current, future, and returned Volunteers understand the benefits available to them.

Figures are based on data as of September 30, 2014.