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Contact:
Stephanie Lesperance
Campus Compact for NH

New Hampshire Launches One of Four AmeriCorps Pilot Programs in United States to Address Hunger

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteering and service, announced the launch of a new food security initiative to create a comprehensive and collaborative approach to hunger. New Hampshire is one of four states selected to launch a project to combat the growing hunger crisis. The New Hampshire Food Insecurity AmeriCorps program brings together partners from across the state to address hunger.

"New Hampshire continues to manage the many ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our communities, and this unique program through AmeriCorps provides yet another tool to do just that," said Governor Chris Sununu. "The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified food insecurity in New Hampshire, but by bringing together partners and key stakeholders from across the state, I know that this program will make a significant impact."

The project will place 20 AmeriCorps members serving as VISTAs in communities around New Hampshire. Partners for the project include:

- Volunteer New Hampshire: The state's leader in volunteering and service, Volunteer New Hampshire will be providing statewide direction for the project
- Campus Compact for New Hampshire: A current AmeriCorps grantee, Campus Compact of New Hampshire will act as the fiscal agent and coordinator of the project
- The New Hampshire Food Bank: An expert in addressing food insecurity, The New Hampshire Food Bank will deliver training and ongoing support for the project

"The pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity for Americans," said Desiree Tucker-Sorini, director of AmeriCorps VISTA. "The VISTA program is primed to take on this issue, and I am honored to lead our members in this effort. Through these statewide initiatives, we will identify solutions that work, enabling communities to replicate the program across the country so that families no longer have to experience the pangs of hunger."

Since the spread of COVID-19, approximately one in seven men, women, and children in New Hampshire are food insecure, meaning they do not know when or where their next meal will come from. A projected 71,000 additional people are food insecure and, in total, more than 197,000 across the state, a 57% increase. In New Hampshire, an estimated 21-23% of children are living in food insecure environments due to COVID-19. "The New Hampshire Food Bank is excited to work with our partners to

support this program in the Granite State," said Eileen Liponis, Executive Director, New Hampshire Food Bank. "We look forward to working together to support individuals and families who do not have access to the nutritious food they need during COVID-19."

During their service, the AmeriCorps VISTA members will organize community coalitions, sharing information to break down silos between service providers; develop surveys and mapping tools to help local leaders better address food insecurity in an area; write grants and cultivate new relationships with private sector partners to support food banks; recruit and train volunteers to help with food delivery programs; and develop outreach and social media tools to help increase awareness and SNAP enrollment. "Our AmeriCorps members will be working to make long-term impacts and develop sustainable solutions to food insecurity in New Hampshire" said Debby Scire, executive director of Campus Compact for New Hampshire. "We are proud to be able to collaborate with our partners to address this critical challenge facing New Hampshire communities."

The AmeriCorps VISTA program has a strong track record of supporting food security initiatives. Each year, roughly 20% of AmeriCorps VISTA's 8,000 members serve in roles dedicated to address issues of food insecurity. "National Service programs in NH support the state's highest needs and make a huge impact," said Gretchen Stallings, Executive Director of Volunteer NH. "We are thrilled to be able to lead this innovative project that shall place national service members in positions to provide food banks and pantries with much needed help and to support access to nutritious food for NH communities in the face of increased demand." Campus Compact for New Hampshire has begun recruiting for the new positions announced today. Individuals interested in serving in this new initiative can learn more at **AmeriCorps.gov/VISTA**.

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About AmeriCorps
AmeriCorps, a federal agency, brings 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. **Learn more at AmeriCorps.gov.**

About Campus Compact for New Hampshire
Founded in 1997, Campus Compact for New Hampshire (CCNH) is a statewide consortium of college and university presidents and private-sector partners who are united in their commitment to the civic purposes of higher education. As part of a national coalition of college and university leaders, CCNH serves as a catalyst to integrate community service and civic responsibility throughout academic and student life. CCNH is part of the national Campus Compact organization, which encompasses more than 1,100 college and university presidents representing some 6 million students. For more information, see www.compactnh.org.

About the New Hampshire Food Bank
The New Hampshire Food Bank, a program of Catholic Charities New Hampshire, has been working to relieve hunger in the Granite State since 1984. While the New Hampshire Food Bank does not generally receive federal or state funding for food distribution, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the New

Hampshire Food Bank received one-time funding through the recent federal CARES Act. Since the spread of COVID-19, there are approximately one in seven men, women, and children in New Hampshire who are food insecure, a projected 71,000 additional people and more than 57% increase. In 2019, as the state's only food bank, the New Hampshire Food Bank efficiently procured and distributed more than 14.2 million pounds of food to people in need through more than 400 non-profit registered agencies. Agencies include food pantries, neighborhood centers, low-income housing sites, senior nutrition centers, family crisis centers, hospices, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, after school programs, and day care centers. For more information about the New Hampshire Food Bank, please visit www.nhfoodbank.org. Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram.

About Volunteer NH

Volunteer NH's mission is to promote the tradition of service in NH by supporting and sponsoring National Service initiatives and provide training, recognition, and a central site for volunteers and volunteer programs to help them strengthen their communities. Designated as the State Service Commission for New Hampshire, Volunteer NH has almost two decades of experience in service. Volunteer NH holds annual volunteer recognition and training conferences, boasts an AmeriCorps portfolio of more than 2.7 million dollars in federal funds, has a statewide, online volunteer opportunity database (known as "Get Connected"), and also oversees a cohort of organizations seeking to increase their capacity through a Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) grant. For more information visit www.volunteernh.org