



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

February 11, 2022

Memorandum

To: DOI Human Capital Officers
DOI Human Resources Directors/Officers

From: Jennifer A. Ackerman
Director, Office of Human Capital
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer

Subject: Extending Peace Corps Noncompetitive Eligibility Period

Background Information:

Legal References: Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 315.605 Appointment of former ACTION volunteers; Executive Order 11103, Providing for the Appointment of Former Peace Corps Volunteers to the Civilian Career Services.

An agency may noncompetitively appoint a former Peace Corps or AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) Volunteer to a career or career-conditional appointment. To be eligible for selection and appointment under this appointing authority, the Peace Corps or VISTA Volunteer must apply to a job opportunity announcement and meet the qualification requirements of the position being filled; provide certification from the Peace Corps that they served satisfactorily as a Volunteer; and have completed the Volunteer service within the past year.

An agency may extend the one-year appointment requirement up to three total years if the person, after the qualifying service is:

1. In the military service;
2. Studying at a recognized institution of higher learning; or
3. In another activity which, in the agency's view, warrants extension.

Issue:

Many Peace Corps Volunteers' service ended early as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and were returned home beginning March 2020. The Peace Corps Director had the authority to waive the provision regarding the 12-month service requirement for those Volunteers whose service ended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the private sector workforce has been significant in that employment opportunities were minimal as many companies were laying off workers or businesses were closing. Schools and educational institutions were also closing or paused for an indefinite period of time.

In March 2021, the Acting Director of the Peace Corps authorized two additional years of non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for returned Peace Corps Volunteers due to the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued challenges in finding employment. All Volunteers and Peace Corps Response Volunteers granted Completion of Service status beginning on January 1, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic are eligible for this extension. Similarly, in March 2021, the Department of Labor and in January 2022, the General Services Administration extended the eligibility of returned Peace Corps Volunteers for a “reasonable period of time,” due to the agency’s critical hiring surge and attempts to fill vacancies with former Peace Corps Volunteers.

Resolution:

The Department of the Interior has been a longstanding supporter of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer program and has appointed numerous candidates using this noncompetitive appointing authority. However, due to the current pandemic and the Department’s critical hiring needs, this decision memorandum clarifies that the Department of the Interior is **extending the non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for returned Peace Corps Volunteers up to the maximum three (3) years allowed under Title 5 CFR 315 for all Volunteers granted Completion of Service status on or after January 1, 2020.** The Peace Corps has encouraged agencies to use this extension authority to the maximum extent possible. As a result, such Volunteers will have a total of three years of NCE for positions within the Department from the date upon which they were granted Completion of Service status. This extension of non-competitive eligibility for returned Peace Corps Volunteers will remain in effect until subsequent guidance is issued to supersede this memorandum. To ensure proper documentation, a copy of this memorandum shall be included in the case file when appointing returned Peace Corps Volunteers.