



GREEN IOWA AMERICORPS: SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS

TRACK DESCRIPTION:

The Sustainable Schools (SS) track of the Green Iowa AmeriCorps program has been operational since 2017 to provide coordination and collaboration for sustainability efforts with K-12 school districts, solid waste agencies, community colleges, and city governments. The SS track provides support for students, teachers and community members with environmental education, service learning, and outreach opportunities through the lens of sustainability. The program also focuses on support for improving operations through energy efficiency improvements, waste audits, school gardens and other capacity-building efforts to help our partners make practical and sustainable efforts from the inside out. Finally, the program seeks to engage young people, typically high school students from partnered districts, with service opportunities over the summer to learn more about the environment, engage in their communities, and gain hands-on skills and experiences.

TRACK DESIGN:

The Sustainable Schools track is designed to place two AmeriCorps members with each host organization, each serving a 1,200-hour service commitment over the course of an 11-month period. This breaks down to roughly a 25–30-hour weekly commitment. Members assume one of two coordinator roles. The first is the Sustainability Education Coordinator, focused on engaging students, staff, and the community in environmental education programs, service projects, and helping to create educational resources for partner agencies. The second position is the Sustainability Operations Coordinator, focused on evaluating procedural or facilities improvements, organizing energy and waste audits, and assisting with making operational improvements to help partners run more efficiently. Team coordinator roles may fluctuate based on site specific initiatives or host site placement.

Sustainable Schools also employs a minimum of two high school age students (17 years of age or older), preferably from the school district, to serve in 3-month summer AmeriCorps positions as Environmental Summer Stewards. This is an introduction for students to the environmental field, community service projects, job training, and hands-on skill development. By engaging young people in activities impacting their schools and communities, we hope to continue to engage and ignite passion in the next generation of “green collar” workers.

PROJECT & COORDINATOR EXAMPLES

- Collaborate with utility companies and facilities to determine where and how districts are losing energy dollars
- Work to help districts and/or communities gather data needed to begin a Climate Action and/or Strategic Sustainability Plan to help guide future decision making about sustainability efforts
- Work to make the individual school buildings more energy-efficient through maintenance upgrades, data tracking and/or behavioral tactics
- Organize and execute waste audits to develop recycling or composting initiatives



- Collaborate with school's Maintenance and Operations staff to help implement energy-efficient practices
- Develop district-wide/community "Green Teams" to engage students and staff in planning and executing of sustainability projects.
- Help develop an outdoor learning classroom for sustainability and student health efforts
- Collaborate with faculty and staff to implement energy and environmental education lessons for students before, during, and after school
- Work to identify the mental, physical and emotional health and well-being of students could be improved by implementing sustainability in whole-school culture (i.e. outdoor learning classrooms, working with custodial staff to implement a 'green cleaning' initiative, pesticide management with facilities, gardening/greenhouse maintenance, etc.)
- Work with Instructional Coaches/key staff to develop environmental-based lessons meeting the curriculum requirements of the Next Generation Science Standards
- Engage community members and/or partners to assist with student-led, project-based learning initiatives (i.e. installing rain barrels, creating school gardens, planting trees, running energy and/or food waste audits etc.)
- Help identify professional development opportunities for faculty and staff regarding energy efficiency, waste management, and environmental education

FAQs

- 1. Who qualifies to host a Sustainable Schools track?** The program typically partners with K-12 school districts and solid waste agencies, but nonprofit organizations and municipalities are also great hosts for Sustainable Schools members.
- 2. We are interested in hosting a team. What are my next steps?** The program has an application process for anyone interested in hosting members from any of our service tracks. Host site selections are based off of availability, application, and timing of requests. You can contact Program Director Ashley Craft at Greenlowadirector@gmail.com or Sustainable Schools Program Manager Carmen Finken at finkenc@uni.edu with your inquiries.
- 3. What requirements are involved with hosting a program?** The program requires the necessary capacity to host a team, including functional office space, a designated site supervisor, and a cash match payment to the program annually to help cover costs associated with the member's uniforms, living allowance, and general program operations. Each host executes a host site agreement with Green Iowa AmeriCorps and the University of Northern Iowa that outlines all the host and program responsibilities that goes into greater detail of the expectations of each partner.
- 4. Are members employees or our organization?** All Green Iowa AmeriCorps members, including members serving in Sustainable Schools, are contractual employees through the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). UNI is responsible for all hiring processes, paperwork, distribution of living allowance, health benefits, FICA, workers compensation, etc. A host site is where a member is placed for their service, but they are not considered the host's employee, intern, etc.
- 5. I am interested in serving as a Sustainable Schools member. How do I apply?** Interested applicants can take the first step in the process by applying to our available positions on our website at www.greeniowamericorps.org. Applicants can also send any questions to the GIACrecruitment@gmail.com email address.