

FEDERAL NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBILITY (NCE)

A guide for VISTA members about to complete their year of service

What is non-competitive eligibility (NCE)?

It allows a VISTA who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job to be hired by a federal agency without having to compete with the general public. It also allows you to compete for certain federal employment jobs that only federal employees are also eligible to compete for.

With non-competitive eligibility status, you don't gain any entitlement to federal employment (or even an interview) but your special status does give federal agencies the option of directly selecting you for a vacant position if you are rated as "qualified" for a particular position by agency personnel specialists.

However, although non-competitive eligibility does not require, it does permit an agency to hire a former VISTA who meets the minimum qualifications for the position without going through all of the formalities of the competitive process.

It is only available to VISTA alumni, not members of any other AmeriCorps program. It is only valid when applying for positions with the federal government (it is not valid for state and local government positions).

If you are hired to a federal position after VISTA, you'd also be able to use your year(s) of national service toward calculating retirement benefits like retirement and vacation time.

When does it take effect and how many times can I use it?

It takes effect the day after you successfully complete a year of service (any service less than one year will not give you NCE status).

NCE status cannot be "used up;" you can use it to apply for multiple positions. NCE status is valid for one year after your year of service has ended.

A hiring agency may extend the period on an individual's NCE status beyond one year for two additional years, to a total of three years if the individual, after the qualifying service (e.g., after VISTA service), is:

- In the military service, or Peace Corps service
- Studying at a recognized institution of higher learning
- In another activity which, in the agency's view, warrants extension

How do I prove my NCE status when applying for federal positions?

To establish your non-competitive status, you need proof of eligibility (you can print a certification letter through your My AmeriCorps portal, under "Service Letters").

Search for open federal positions at: <https://www.usajobs.gov/>

On the "Advanced Search" page, there is an option to check whether you have NCE when searching for a position.

When applying for a position, you should note your NCE status either in your cover letter, on your resume, or with a supplemental document (your service letter).

Many federal applications require that you enter your grade and series when proving NCE status. Typically, VISTAs do not have a grade and series since they were volunteers and were never previously federal employees. If a VISTA who is currently accorded NCE status has no grade and series to enter, s/he must contact the employing agency to determine how they should fill out an application that requires a grade and series in order to prove NCE.