

PEACE CORPS PREP STUDENT GUIDE

The Peace Corps Prep program will prepare you for international development fieldwork and potential Peace Corps service. To accomplish this, you'll build four core competencies through interrelated coursework, hands-on experience, and professional development support. These four competencies are the following:

1. Training and experience in a work sector
2. Foreign language skills
3. Intercultural competence
1. Professional and leadership development

This document explains each of these requirements in detail. *Use this guide to map out your Peace Corps Prep course of study.* In particular, refer to this when completing your PC Prep application, where you'll need to document how you plan to fulfill each requirement. **This guide aligns point-by-point with each section of the application!**

1. Training and experience in a specific work sector

3 courses + 50 hours related experience

Leveraging concrete knowledge and skills is central to on-the-ground international development work. Through this PC Prep program, you will begin to build a professional specialty, which should serve your career well whether or not you become a Peace Corps Volunteer.

For PC Prep, you need to complete at least **3 courses** that align with a specific work sector (they can but do not need to come from your academic major or minor). You also must accumulate **a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer or work experience in that same sector**, preferably in a teaching or outreach capacity.

Peace Corps Tip!

If you intend to apply to the Peace Corps, the best way to assure that you will be a strong candidate is to explore Peace Corps' openings and identify the [type of assignments](#) in which you'd like to serve (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/volunteer-openings), then review the positions' required and desired qualifications and build them up accordingly. In the process, you should fulfill these PC Prep experiential requirements.

There are [six sectors](#) (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/what-volunteers-do/) in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve—detailed below. **Choose one sector to focus on** then complete at least 3 courses + 50 hours of related experience in that sector.

Note: Actual Peace Corps assignments are based on local needs, and thus may or may not align seamlessly with your qualifications. Flexibility is central to the Peace Corps experience!

#1 EDUCATION



Teach lessons that last a lifetime. Education is the Peace Corp's largest program area. Volunteers play an important role in creating links among schools, parents, and communities by working in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools as math, science, conversational English, and resource teachers or as early grade reading and literacy teacher trainers. Volunteers also develop libraries and technology resource centers.

If you choose Education, take 3 courses from one of the following areas:

- Elementary, Secondary
- Secondary Education
- Special Education
- Math
- English
- Reading
- Science
- Spanish

Recommended courses:

- EDU 418: Rural and Multicultural Literacy
- EDU 315: Indian Education For All
- EDU 343: Strategies for Managing Diverse Learners
- EDU 432: Literature and Literacy for Young Adults
- EDU 331: Literature and Literacy for Children
- EDSP 310: Supporting Diverse Learners Through Collaboration
- EDSP 205: Adult and Child Interaction Skills
- EDU 406: Philosophical, Legal, and Ethical Issues in Education

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:

- Teaching in one of these or a similar form: in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or in a formal tutoring capacity
- The subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/ Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject
- Tutor at Wild Words Literacy Program Wild Words is a new literacy program from the Housing Authority of Billings, designed to foster a love of reading and improve basic literacy skills for students in low-income housing. We provide one-on-one tutoring session as well as fun family events to help foster a love of lit in the community. <https://wildwordsmt.wordpress.com/>
- Volunteer at Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch helping kids. Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, a nonprofit organization, is trusted locally and nationally as a leader in the field of mental health care for children and their families. <http://www.ybgr.org/>
- Volunteer to lead activities with kids at one of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Yellowstone county. <http://www.begreatyellowstone.org/>

#2 HEALTH



Serve on the front lines of global health. Health Volunteers work within their communities to promote important topics such as nutrition, maternal and child health, basic hygiene, and water sanitation. Volunteers also work in HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs to train youth as peer educators, develop appropriate education strategies, provide support to children orphaned by the pandemic, and create programs that provide emotional and financial support to families and communities affected by the disease.

If you choose Health, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Health Administration
- Health and Wellness
- Health Education
- Human Performance
- Biology
- Psychiatric Rehabilitation
- Human Services

Recommended courses:

- NRSB 361 Global Nursing
- HADM 450 Health Policy and Politics
- HTH 270 Global Health Issues
- SOCI 352 Diseases & Society
- HTH 425 Health and Sexuality
- HTH 435 Health and Wellness across the Lifespan
- REHA 201 Introduction to Diversity in Counseling
- SOCI 431 Sociology of Gender Roles

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:

- Volunteer or work experience in such areas as HIV/AIDS outreach, hospice, family planning counseling, emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, maternal health, and hands-on caregiving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting
- Counseling or teaching in health subjects
- Working as a resident advisor in a dormitory, as a peer nutritionist, or as a sexually transmitted infections counselor
- Significant experience in mechanical repairs, construction, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, hydrology, or set design
- Work with the Montana No Kid Hungry project <https://mt.nokidhungry.org/>
- Volunteer or work with AWARE, an organization that helps thousands of people achieve their potential in communities across Montana. AWARE delivers services for children and families as well as people with challenging mental health, emotional, and in some instances, physical disabilities. <http://aware-inc.org/about-aware/>
- Volunteer with Planned Parenthood of Montana <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-montana>

#3 ENVIRONMENT



Help forge a global movement to protect our planet. Volunteers lead grassroots efforts in their communities to protect the environment and strengthen understanding of environmental issues. They teach environmental awareness in elementary and secondary schools and to youth groups and community organizations, empowering communities to make their own decisions about how to protect and conserve the local environment. Volunteers also address environmental degradation by promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

If you choose Environment, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Outdoor Adventure Leadership
- Environmental Studies
- Biology
- Broadfield Science
- Chemistry
- Forestry
- Energy

Recommended courses:

- REC 210: Environment/Leave No Trace
- NRGY 101: Introduction to Sustainable Energy
- REC 309: People and the Environment
- REC 200: Foundations of Outdoor Adventure Leadership
- REC 466: Ethical/Legal Aspects in Outdoor Adventure Leadership
- REC 359: Backcountry Avalanche Forecasting and Rescue

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:

- Educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, or working on environmental campaigns
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping
- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management
- Intern with the **Bureau of Land Management**. BLM mission is supporting energy independence through environmentally responsible development; promoting conservation through shared stewardship; making America safe through effective border management; promoting jobs on working landscapes; and serving the American family - which includes being good neighbors and recognizing traditional uses of public lands (i.e., hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities).
- Volunteer with the **Northern Plains Resource Council**. Their mission is to protect Montana's greatest assets: the quality of our natural resources, the character and viability of family-based agriculture, and the ability of citizens to shape the public policies that affect our land, our water, and our lives so that we may pass them on, unimpaired, to future generations <https://www.northernplains.org/about-us/mission/>
- Volunteer/teach at the **Montana Audubon Society**. Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon is an independent, statewide conservation organization whose mission is to promote appreciation, knowledge and conservation of Montana's native birds, other wildlife, and natural ecosystems and to safeguard biological diversity for current and future generations. <http://mtaudubon.org/>

#4 AGRICULTURE



Lead grassroots efforts to fight hunger in a changing world. Agricultural Volunteers work with small-scale farmers and families to increase food security and production and adapt to climate change while promoting environmental conservation practices. They introduce farmers to techniques that prevent soil erosion, reduce the use of harmful pesticides, and replenish the soil. They work alongside farmers on integrated projects that often combine vegetable gardening, livestock management, agroforestry, and nutrition education.

If you choose Agriculture, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Earth Science
- Geography
- Broadfield Science

Recommended courses:

- EARTH 303: Weather and Climate
- GEO 205: Mineralogy
- BIOO 412: Animal Physiology
- BIOO 435: Plant Systematics
- GPHY 141: Geography of World Regions

*And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:*

- Working with a large-scale or family-run business involving vegetable gardening, farming, nursery work, tree planting or care, urban forestry, landscaping, livestock care and management, or fish cultivation and production
- Teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm
- Housing Authority of Billings Community Gardens Program provides an excellent opportunity for students to work with community members interested in gardening.
<http://www.billingsha.org/CommunityGardens/tabid/4898/Default.aspx>
- Volunteer with the Northern Plains Resource Council. Northern Plains is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montana citizens to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life
<https://www.northernplains.org/about-us/mission>
- Volunteer with Montana Soil Conservation Service's Earth Team Volunteer Program. Montana's *Earth Team* volunteers work side-by-side with conservation professionals. The soil conservationists, technicians, scientists, wildlife biologists, engineers, accounting and administrative staff are all committed to helping people protect and conserve the earth's natural resources. By volunteering, you will help your community, your country, and our Earth. In addition, you will learn new skills, meet new people, and be part of a dedicated conservation effort.
- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/mt/people/volunteers/?cid=NRCS144P2057808>

#5 YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT



Empower the next generation of change-makers. Volunteers work with youth in communities on projects that promote engagement and active citizenship, including gender awareness, employability, health and HIV/AIDS education, environmental awareness, sporting programs, and info technology.

If you choose Youth in Development, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Sociology
- Developmental Psychology
- Family Studies
- Psychiatric Rehabilitation
- Human Services
- Community Development

Recommended courses:

- SOCI 201: Social Problems
- SOCI 332: Sociology of the Family
- SOCI 380: Sociology of Health and Medicine
- CHTH 317: Health Behaviors and Theories
- HTH 270: Global Health Issues
- CHTH 355: Theory and Practice of Community Health Education
- REHA 201: Introduction to Diversity in Counseling
- SOCI 431: Sociology of Gender Roles

And build 50 hours of *related* field experience through an activity such as:

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs
- Activities that involve planning, organizing, assessing community needs, counseling, and leadership, in areas such as education, youth development, health and HIV/AIDS, the environment, and/or business
- Volunteer with Billings Parks and Recreation. The department provides over 270 recreation programs for people of all ages (pre-school through senior citizens). These programs are offered in a wide range of interests including; Aquatics, Youth Sports, Youth Camps, Adult sports, Fitness, Special Interest, and Adults Age 55+. <http://www.billingsparks.org/>
- The Tumbleweed Runaway Program is a non-profit which provides services to runaway, homeless, and otherwise at-risk youth and their families. Tumbleweed's crisis counseling and youth services are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. <http://www.tumbleweedprogram.org/>
- Work with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yellowstone County. Their mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported 1-to-1 relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. <http://www.bbbsyc.org/about/>
- Build relationships with individuals with disabilities by volunteering at Eagle Mount. This non-profit organization provides year round recreational activities for individuals with disabilities. <http://www.eaglemount.us/>

#6 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Harness 21st-century tools to help communities lift themselves. Volunteers work with development banks, nongovernmental organizations, and municipalities to strengthen infrastructure and encourage economic opportunities in communities. They frequently teach in classroom settings and work with entrepreneurs and business owners to develop and market their products. Some Volunteers also teach basic computer skills and help communities take advantage of technologies such as e-commerce, distance learning, and more.

If you choose Community Economic Dev., take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Business Administration
- Accounting
- Marketing
- Mass Communications
- Organizational Communication

Recommended courses:

- BMGT 355: Management and Organization
- ECNS 201: Principles of Microeconomics
- ECNS 403: Introduction to Econometrics
- BGEN 360: International Business
- COMX 351: Principles of Public Relations
- COMX 452: Issues in Public Relations
- COMX 438: Multicultural Mass Communication

*And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:*

- Working with businesses, organizations, or cooperatives in accounting, finance, microfinance, management, project management, budgeting, or marketing
- Starting and running your own business or other entrepreneurial activity
- Training others in computer literacy, maintenance, and repair
- Website design or online marketing
- Founding or leading a community- or school-based organization
- Work with the **Better Billings Foundation**. The Better Billings Foundation exists to promote and provide healthy activities, programs, services, and facilities directly benefitting the people of the greater Yellowstone Valley. <http://www.betterbillings.com>
- Volunteer with the **Downtown Billings Alliance**. The Downtown Billings Alliance is the economic development group dedicated to a strong, vibrant downtown. <http://www.downtownbillings.com>
- **Habitat for Humanity Mid-Yellowstone Valley** volunteer opportunities. In addition to construction work, there are various committees that need volunteers, plus there is always work to be done at the office and at Restore. <http://billingshabitat.org/volunteer/>

**Peace
Corps
Tip!**

Nearly two-thirds of Peace Corps Volunteers serve in Education or Health. Coursework and meaningful experience in one of these areas—especially teaching English as a second/foreign language—produce some of the strongest candidates.

2. Foreign language skills

Requirements vary by placement region

Most students must hone their capacity to interact professionally using a non-English language. Minimum course requirements vary by desired placement region.

- ❑ Latin America: Students indicating an intention to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must build strong intermediate proficiency, having completed two 200-level courses or learned Spanish through another medium.
- ❑ West Africa: Students indicating an intention to serve in French-speaking African countries must build proficiency in French or another Romance language, having completed one 200-level course or learned the language through another medium.
- ❑ Everywhere else: Students indicating an intention to serve anywhere else do not have explicit language requirements to complete the Program, but they should still be encouraged to study a foreign language.

Note: If you are a strong native speaker and hope to serve in a country that speaks your same language, you can skip this requirement!

3. Intercultural competence

3 approved courses or 1-2 courses + substantive intercultural experience

Engaging thoughtfully and fluidly across cultures begins with one's own self-awareness. With this learning objective, you will deepen your cultural agility through **a mix of three introspective courses** in which you learn about others while reflecting upon your own self in relation to others. The goal is for you to build your capacity to shift perspective and behavior around relevant cultural differences. Some example courses:

WGSS 274 Women, Culture, and Society: Examines the diversity of women's experience in society as citizens, creators, and thinkers. The course includes cross-cultural and historical study, but concentrates on the status and roles of women (and men) in contemporary American society.

LANG 292 Language, Culture, and Identity: Explores how language shapes and is shaped by identity, and how an individual's is constituted through a variety of different factors, including the social, cultural, and ethnic contexts, and issues such as bi- or multilingualism. There will be discussion on how individuals and social groups distinguish themselves on the basis of language in the different regions of the world and the USA, with specific reference to Montana. Course materials draws from the fields of sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics.

SOCI 431 Sociology of Gender Roles: Covers the fundamental importance of gender roles as a structural component of social interaction, social structure, and social organization in the face of shifting role responsibilities.

For this competency, we require **that all students take three courses: one core course in Diversity and Inclusion and two relevant electives.** You have the option of engaging in substantive intercultural experiences in place of one or both electives.

You'll take at least 1 of these core courses:

- WGSS 274: Women, Culture and Society
- COMX 212: Introduction to Intercultural Communication
- SOCI 344: Sociology of Race and Ethnicity
- ANTY 220: Cultural and Society

And choose 2 additional electives from the above list or these below:

- SPNS 150: The Hispanic Tradition
- ANTY 217: Physical Anthropology and Archeology
- PSCI 230: Introduction to International Relations
- LANG 292: Language, Culture, and Identity
- BGEN 360: International Business
- PSCI 425: International Conflict

Is there another course in the catalog that you feel meets this requirement? Please discuss it with your PC Prep Coordinator.

***Peace
Corps
Tip!***

Prolonged intercultural experiences—such as studying or volunteering abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees acculturate to the United States, or volunteering in diverse schools—would also strengthen your Peace Corps candidacy significantly.

Optional: Intercultural experience in place of elective(s). You the option of substituting intercultural experiences for one or both electives, here are the guidelines:

- **Studying or volunteering abroad** may count *if* you are in a country that has at some point hosted Peace Corps Volunteers (see the list of current and past countries [here](http://www.peacecorps.gov/countries/) [www.peacecorps.gov/countries]).
 - Studying/volunteering abroad in these countries from one week to a summer may substitute for one course.
 - Experiences that last a full semester may substitute for both electives.
 - Visit the Office of International Studies for recommendations on intercultural experiences
<http://www.msubillings.edu/internationalstudies/>
- **Other intercultural experiences**, such as helping new immigrants/refugees acculturate to the U.S. or volunteering in diverse schools, may also count. For example, working with the Native American Achievement Center on the yearly Pow Wow.
 - Each distinct intercultural experience lasting at least forty hours may substitute for one elective.

4. Professional and leadership development

Resume and interview support + Leadership experience

Peace Corps service and similar international development work opportunities are highly professional and selective. PC Prep requires **three specific activities** that will strengthen your candidacy for the Peace Corps (or any other professional endeavor):

1. Have your **resume** critiqued by someone in Advising & Career Services.
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** at Advising & Career Services].
3. Develop at least one significant **leadership experience** and be prepared to discuss it thoughtfully. For example, organizing a campus event, leading a work or volunteer project, or serving on the executive board of a student organization. See <https://www.msubillings.edu/studentlife/orgvideos.htm> for a list of organizations available on campus.

Student Name: _____

University: _____

PC Prep Coordinator: _____