

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: August 16, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: A report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, requesting authorization to retroactively execute a contract for \$343,653 with AmeriCorps to manage the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is requesting authorization to retroactively apply for and accept an award of \$343,653 from AmeriCorps to manage the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program.

POLICY

Milwaukee County Ordinance Ch. 53.09(4) provides that the Commission on Aging shall have the power to receive funds from both public and private sources, and to disburse the same for programs related to the aged. These funds are being allocated to Milwaukee County through a grant agreement with AmeriCorps, the operating name for the Corporation for National and Community Service, which was created under sec. 191 of the National and Community Service Act (42 U.S.C. 12651).

The grant agreement received has an initial term of September 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. The match for this federal grant will be waived by Americorps.

Wis. Stat. §46.80 covers services for older adults in the State of Wisconsin. Milwaukee County Ordinance Ch. 53 relates to responsibilities for the Commission on Aging and Ch. 56 covers County Board approval of federal and state funding requiring a match.

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Wis. Stat. §46.80, §59.60(9)(a)
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Ch. 53, Ch. 56.06
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	

BACKGROUND

The AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program will coordinate 40 AmeriCorps Senior volunteers who help with daily tasks and provide transportation and companionship to older adults who live in Milwaukee County. In Milwaukee County, this program was previously coordinated by the Social Development Commission, which closed this year. To continue this program without disruption, AmeriCorps reached out to Milwaukee County's Area Agency on Aging to take on supervision and management of the Senior Companion Program.

The Senior Companion Program is one of three programs supported by AmeriCorps Seniors to support older adults specifically. AmeriCorps volunteers serve between five and 40 hours a week and provide many types of assistance that will support approximately 65 peers who wish to continue aging in place. Services provided by the AmeriCorps Senior Companions include: assistance with shopping, paying bills, giving rides and light chores around the home. By incorporating this program into DHHS, volunteers will also serve as ambassadors and will create connections to the other services and opportunities connected to the Area Agency on Aging. Volunteers receive a stipend for their time, and support for their transportation costs and insurance costs.

This program provides a direct and regular interaction between older adults that addresses not only primary needs, but also social isolation and loneliness. In the most recent Milwaukee County Area Plan, one third of respondents indicated that they do lack companionship.¹ The Commission on Aging developed goals in that plan to address loneliness, and to increase connections between Area Agency on Aging programming and the AmeriCorps Senior programs. The Commission on Aging directly approves of this programming and voiced their support to apply for this grant at the July 17 meeting of the Executive Committee to the Commission on Aging.

Activities that the AmeriCorps senior companions will undertake will be tailored to the needs of the older adult with whom they are matched. Examples to illustrate the breadth of support that could be provided include:

- (1) Maintain adequate nutritional and fluid intake;
- (2) Maintain or improve current level of completing daily activities such as getting in/out of bed, grooming, walking, climbing stairs;
- (3) Maintain socialization and recreation to eliminate the feelings of isolation, including the participation in outings, community events, eating out, reading/writing, playing games/puzzles, crafts, and exercise;
- (4) Express satisfaction with current level of functioning including shopping, getting to medical appointments, access to transportation, assistance with light housekeeping;
- (5) Maintain an ability to remain in the desired living environment that is safe and secure;

¹ Milwaukee County Area Agency Plan 2022-2024 [2022-24 Aging Plan \(milwaukee.gov\)](https://www.milwaukee.gov/2022-24-Aging-Plan)

- (6) Maintain health status without physical decline including medication reminders, access to assistive devices and other medical equipment;
- (7) Adequate access to financial resources to remain in the community;
- (8) Receive appropriate and satisfactory services from community resources including utilities, housing, legal aid, and other social services; and
- (9) Opportunities to provide relief for live-in caregivers.

By taking on management of the AmeriCorps Senior Companion program, the Area Agency on Aging will continue this critical program that directly supports older adults who wish to continue aging in place within Milwaukee County. The interventions provided by this program are flexible to the needs of the older adult receiving service, and positive for the AmeriCorps Volunteers providing them; both of whom are older adults.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This program is aligned to Milwaukee County's strategic plan and supports Strategy 2A Bridge the Gap by delivering services based on the resolution of health disparities. It will apply a racial lens by recruiting participants from impoverished neighborhoods, which are predominately residents of color, and provide a stipend to support low-income senior companions. The Senior Companions Program will make Milwaukee County a more inclusive space by providing direct assistance to older adult residents who would like to continue aging in place.

In addition, this program is aligned with Milwaukee County DHHS's strategy to coordinate care and manage human service needs for individuals by addressing the root causes of those needs, including social determinants of health. By serving older adults in greatest socio-economic need and providing peer companionship to isolated and lonely older adults, this program directly addresses social isolation and loneliness which has been identified as the most prevalent social determinant of health by the U.S. Surgeon General, providing person-centered supports to meet individual needs.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors authorize the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, to retroactively execute a contract for \$343,653 with AmeriCorps to manage the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program.

FISCAL EFFECT

The cost of the program is fully covered by the \$343,653 in AmeriCorps funding available from September 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. No match will be required.

TERMS

The term of this agreement would be September 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita.LaGrant@milwaukeecountywi.gov
daniel.idzikowski@milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

Carrie Koss Vallejo, Program and Planning Coordinator, DHHS Aging and Disabilities Services

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Willie Johnson, Jr., Chair, Committee on Finance
Sup. Shawn Rolland, Chair, Committee on Health Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Tina Anderson, Administrator, Aging and Disabilities Services
Matt Fortman, Fiscal Director, Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services