

Career development: Cover letter support



BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN REPRESENTING CITY YEAR ON YOUR COVER LETTER

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how to structure a team-based activity that centers the needs of individual AmeriCorps members while gaining perspective from the entire team on confidence in writing a cover letter. This activity is designed to provide multiple learning options (in small groups or as individuals) to help AmeriCorps members build knowledge and skills in cover letter structure utilizing the different resources available in the [career toolkit](#).

Team activity overview

Activity length: 60 minutes

Agenda

- Opening whip-around question: What issue(s) related to confidence in writing a strong cover letter are you seeking to address right now? (10 min)
 - I would like to translate and highlight my service skills and experiences in a cover letter.
 - I would like to better understand how to tailor my cover letter to a job description.
 - I would like to understand what good cover letter structure or template looks like.
 - Other
- Group reading discussion: Read [“Hey, students: 5 things that are wrong with your cover letter.”](#) (10 min)
 - What insights resonate the most with you?
 - What questions are surfacing for you?
 - Is there anything you are reading here that connects to the area of confidence you want to build?
- Learning options based on what you want to gain more confidence in: You have the option to work in pairs or small groups based on seeking confidence in same area or you can choose to work independently. (30 min)
 - Option one: Read the [“Hey, students” article](#) again especially the tip about “telling a story” for your first paragraph. Work on telling a story about a meaningful moment in service so far (examples: planning an event, lesson planning, working with a group of students, etc). Don’t worry about paragraph structure – just start writing words, phrases and sentences about the learning moment or experience. A good way to start a story is with a phrase like “I remember when . . .” or “The first time I . . .”
 - Option two: Read the recommended the [cover letter guidance resource](#) with tips using City Year experiences on the [cover letter page](#). As you read through the resource, reflect on (if individually working on) or discuss (if in a small group) what lessons you are learning that you can immediately incorporate when starting to work on your own cover letter. For an additional resource that may be helpful, [explore real examples of cover letters from alums that led to being hired](#).
 - Option three: includes two integrated learning components around understanding what it means to tailor your cover letter to a job description:
 - Part one: Watch this 11-minute video clip (27:28 mark to 38:36) [Think like a hiring manager activity with City Year Alumni in HR](#) to better understand how to identify the three most important competencies in any job description. **Note:** This video clip is in the context of writing a résumé, but the same knowledge around identifying and highlighting the three most important competencies applies for cover letters too.

- Part two: Put your knowledge into practice. Spend five minutes finding a job posting that you find interesting on [ZipRecruiter](#), [Indeed](#) or another job board. Don't spend too much time looking. You just need an example to read through to practice finding the three most important competencies highlighted for a role. Read your sample description and name what you believe are the three most important competencies that you would highlight in a cover letter when applying for that job.
- Group closing: What did you learn based on the option you chose? What are one-two takeaways or insights that helped you the most? (10 min)

Additional resources

Visit the [career resources page](#) and familiarize yourself with the [career toolkit](#) available to City Year AmeriCorps members and alums.

TROUBLE ACCESSING ANY LINKS ABOVE? All of the above resources linked in the team activity overview are available on the [cover letter page](#).