State of Maine

Volunteer Maine,
The State Service Commission



RFA # 202303048

Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grants
Application Instructions and Guidelines

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| **RFA Coordinator** | *All communication regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified below:***Name:** Maryalice Crofton **Title:** Proposal Coordinator**Contact Information:** service.commission@maine.gov19 Elkins Lane, 105 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0105207-624-7792 |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *All questions must be received by the RFA Coordinator identified above by:***Date:** April 3, 2023, no later than 4:00 p.m., local time. |
| **Information Session** | *There will be a virtual information session to answer questions about AmeriCorps and the planning grant application. Registration using the link below is required. The session will be recorded and posted with this grant announcement on the Division of Procurement Services grant page.***Date:** March 29, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., local time.**Registration link:** <https://tinyurl.com/5y8bnd95>  |
| **Proposal Submission** | *Proposals must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:***Submission Deadline:** April 13, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.*Proposals must be submitted electronically in the federal eGrants system and additional documents emailed to the following address:***Electronic (email) Submission Address:** Proposals@maine.gov |

From the time this RFA is issued until proposal selection is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFA. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the selection process, at the State’s discretion.

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# Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

**AmeriCorps:** An umbrella term that refers the federal agency and its three programs that strengthen communities by mobilizing community resources. The three AmeriCorps programs are AmeriCorps State/National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

**AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps):** a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24, that strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. Members are assigned to one of the campuses located in Denver, Colorado; Sacramento, California; Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Vinton, Iowa.

**AmeriCorps State and National:** Used only when referring to grants or funding. AmeriCorps *State* grants are awarded by the state service commissions to organizations operating programs solely within the particular state. AmeriCorps *National* grants are awarded directly by the federal agency to multi-state or national organizations operating a program in multiple states.

**AmeriCorps State:** A voluntary, team-based national service program supported by the U.S. federal government that engages individuals ages 17 and older in public direct-service projects with a goal of helping communities meet critical local educational, public safety, environmental, and human needs. The program is often seen as a domestic Peace Corps and is one of six different programs under the AmeriCorps umbrella.

This program operates through grants of positions and funds to support those who serve. Grants are awarded to nonprofits, units of government, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations. Those grantees provide the local share of resources needed to operate the program, such as but not limited to material costs, human resources, and training. If the AmeriCorps grantee operates solely within a single state, the grants are administered by the state’s service commission. If the grantee operates in multiple states, the award is made directly by the federal AmeriCorps agency.

**AmeriCorps member:** Participants in AmeriCorps programs age 17 or older who are recruited, selected, trained, and supervised by the AmeriCorps grant recipient. A member commits to a term of service that is no more than 1700 hours over 11 months. As a team, members carry out a project from the nonprofit community organization or public agency that is tackling a community problem related to education, public safety, health care, or the environment. AmeriCorps members who serve 35-40 hours weekly receive living allowances, health insurance, childcare, and work-related accident/injury/death coverage.

In most programs, they also have access to assistance in resolving personal problems that may adversely impact their ability to serve. Upon successful completion of service, members qualify for an education award that can be used in any post-secondary program eligible to accept federal financial aid. Under federal law, members are not employees, apprentices, or interns.

**AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America):** AmeriCorps VISTA provides full-time members to community organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs that build capacity and ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA is administered out of the federal agency's Regional Field Offices.

**Capacity Building:** A set of activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations served by AmeriCorps-supported organizations (i.e. AmeriCorps programs.) As a general rule, AmeriCorps considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable AmeriCorps-supported organizations to provide more, better, and sustained *direct services*. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Capacity building activities must:

1. Be intended to support or enhance the program delivery model,
2. Respond to the program’s goal of increasing, expanding, or enhancing services in order to address the most pressing needs identified in the community, and
3. Enable the program to provide a sustained level of more or better direct services after the capacity building services end.

**Climate Corps:** A set of community service corps programs (including AmeriCorps) focused on addressing climate-related challenges while developing the workforce, strengthening community, and increasing citizen engagement. Programs must contribute to state climate action goals; be based in current, good science; and address equity, justice, and accessibility. Climate Corps projects may pertain to mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, or any combination of the three within the following focus areas: coastal zone, transportation, energy, housing, land and fresh water preservation, community resilience, education (K-12 and community), and public health.

**Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps) dba AmeriCorps**: A federal government agency that engages individuals in national service initiatives like AmeriCorps and the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF). The Corporation was created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. In October of 2020, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) changed the operating name of the agency to “AmeriCorps”.

**Cost Reimbursement Grants**: These grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances with flexibility to use all of the funds for allowable costs regardless of whether or not the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement unless a waiver is active and require the submission of a budget and financial reports. Planning grants are cost reimbursement grants.

**Direct service:** Action or service that directly affects the community or in the case of environmental protection, impact area, that an organization identifies as its customers or clients. The service purpose is to benefit entities external to the organization that provides it. The quality or resulting change is quantifiable through data or evaluation. Direct service is *not* planning, grant writing, administration, or research.

**Education Award (proper name:** Segal AmeriCorps Education Award) - After successfully completing a term of service, AmeriCorps members who are enrolled in the National Service Trust are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. It can be used to pay education costs at any place qualified to accept federal financial aid (higher education institutions, technical training programs) or to repay qualified student loans. The annual value is tied to the maximum amount of the U.S. Department of Education’s Pell Grant. The value is updated each winter for the following year.

**Encore Programs:** Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. AmeriCorps seeks to meet that 10 percent target in this competition and encourages encore programs to apply.

**Enrollment Rate:** Enrollment rate is calculated as slots filled divided by slots awarded.

**Evidence Based Program**: a program that has been rigorously evaluated and has demonstrated positive results.

**Evidence Informed Program**: uses the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but does not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the program itself and is not replicating an evidence-based program.

Applicants that have not yet collected data from their own programs may be evidence-informed if they have incorporated research from other evidence-based programs into their program designs.

**Fixed amount Grants:** These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY). The amount does not cover the full cost of program operation so a grantee must obtain funds and in-kind resources to support the full range of expenses. The award amount is subject to adjustment based on the level of member enrollment and the number who complete the full term of service. Invoices for reimbursement are submitted on a schedule during the budget year and show the members serving along with the hours they completed during the invoiced period.

Under fixed‐amount grants, grantees have minimal financial reporting.  Fixed‐amount grants are exempt from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Cost Principles, which means that the amount of the AmeriCorps award is not based on a line-item budget and programs are not required to maintain documentation to support the allowability of expenditures charged to Federal or matching grant funds.

Focus Areas for National Service. Congress has directed the federal AmeriCorps agency to focus on some specific areas of need. These categories encompass a broad range of service activities. The focus areas below describe *all permitted* service activities, and each competition identifies a set as funding priorities.

1. **Disaster Services.** Grants will support increased and improved disaster services for individuals and communities to prepare and adapt to disasters, including but not limited to climate change events. Activities will provide support to increase preparedness for disasters, improve readiness to respond to disasters, support recovery efforts from disasters, and/or assist in the implementation of pre-disaster mitigation and adaptation measures. Grants will support communities and individuals in planning for disasters, in particular engaging disadvantaged communities in the planning process.
2. **Economic Opportunity**. Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.
3. **Education.** Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students’ preparation for success in post-secondary educational institutions.
4. **Environmental Stewardship.** Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging climate and environmental circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive events: programs that conserve natural  habitats; protect clean air and water; maintain public lands; support wildland fire mitigation and sustainable forest management; cultivate individual and community resilience; and provide reforestation services after floods or fires, such as nature based solutions.
5. **Healthy Futures.** Grants will provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis; increase seniors’ ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition with the purpose of reducing obesity.
6. **Veterans and Military Families.** Grants will improve the quality of life of veterans and improve military family well-being; increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their caregivers, families, and survivors served by AmeriCorps programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps programs.
7. **Capacity Building.** As direct service, interventions are the set of activities intended to increase service capacity in the community rather than solely within the grantee. Beneficiaries are organizations that increase their effectiveness, efficiency, and/or program scale/reach as a result.

**Grantee Share:** the resources a grantee contributes to operating an AmeriCorps program. Although the grantee share is sometimes informally called “match”, it is the portion of funds, supplies, and human resources not covered by the amount of funding provided through AmeriCorps awards.

**Leveraged Resources:** “Leveraged resources” are all the non-AmeriCorps resources that a grantee uses to support the program.

**Members**: Participants in AmeriCorps are referred to as members - not volunteers.

**Member Service Location:** A member service location is the site at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

**Member Service Year (MSY):** One Member Service Year (MSY) is equivalent to a full-time AmeriCorps position (at least 1700 service hours.)

**National Direct Applicants**

* *Multi-state*: Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to AmeriCorps.
* *Federally-recognized Indian Tribes*: Applicants that are Indian Tribes apply directly to AmeriCorps (see the Eligible *Applicants* section in the *Notice*.)

*State and Territories without Commissions*: Applicants in South Dakota, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands apply directly to AmeriCorps because this State and Territories have not established a State Commission

**NOFO:** Federal Notice of Funding Opportunity.

**Opportunity Youth:** Opportunity youth are economically disadvantaged individuals ages 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months. AmeriCorps defines “economically disadvantaged” consistent with the definition used in the member development performance measures, “Receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Section 8 housing assistance.” AmeriCorps defines “disconnected from school or work” as unemployed, underemployed, and not in school for at least six months prior.

**Other Revenue:** Funds necessary to operate an AmeriCorps program that are not AmeriCorps funds or grantee share (match) identified in the budget. Programs should not enter the total operating budget for their organization unless the entire operating budget supports the AmeriCorps program. Programs that have additional revenue sources not included in the matching funds section of the budget should provide the amount of this additional revenue that supports the program. This amount should not include the AmeriCorps or grantee share amounts in the budget. Fixed amount grantees should enter all non- AmeriCorps funds that support the program in this field. All fixed grants will have other revenue.

**Partner:** An organization or agency that contributes to the Corps program by providing specific training, supplies, or financial resources.

**Prohibited Activities:** While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or AmeriCorps, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

1. Attempting to influence legislation
2. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes
3. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing
4. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements
5. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office
6. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials
7. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization
8. Providing a direct benefit to a. a business organized for profit, b. a labor union, c. a partisan political organization, d. a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative, and e. an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph C. 7. above, unless AmeriCorps assistance is not used to support those religious activities
9. Conducting a voter registration drive or using AmeriCorps funds to conduct a voter registration drive
10. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services
11. Such other activities as AmeriCorps may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-AmeriCorps funds.

**Project:** A set of actions completed over a defined period that result in a measurable change in a situation or quantifiable progress toward a goal. When carried out by Corps members, the project required additional human resources which were not available locally. Corps members may not displace employees or community volunteers.

**Qualifying Standards for Climate Corps Programs:** To be considered one of the Maine Climate Corps programs, a community service corps must:

* exhibit the traits of high-quality service programs.
* contribute directly to the goals of the State of Maine’s *Climate Action Plan*.
* individually focus on responses to climate change that are aligned with the sponsoring organization’s demonstrated area of expertise.
* implement service activities based on current, good science.
* be deliberate in its actions addressing equity, justice, and accessibility.
* collaborate with organizations and agencies who share the goals of the program but who do not have the capacity to independently operate a Climate Corps program.
* coordinates goals, service actions, Corps member training, recruitment, and community outreach in a formal State Climate Corps Directors Team convened by Volunteer Maine.
* meet any state or federal standards or requirements set for being identified as a Climate Corps program.

**Retention Rate:** Retention rate is calculated as the number of members exited with award (full or partial award) divided by the number of members enrolled.

**Reducing and/or Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse:** AmeriCorps is interested in any program models that seek to address the prescription drug and opioid abuse crisis in America.

**Rural Communities:** Applicants may designate themselves as serving rural communities if some or all service locations are in rural areas as defined by RUCA codes or if the program can provide other compelling evidence that the program is rural in the narrative portion of the application.  This self-designation will be considered in grant-making decisions. AmeriCorps uses rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes to classify program addresses as either rural or urban for analytic purposes. RUCA codes classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting. Census tracts with an urban cluster population less than 50,000 are considered rural (RUCA codes 4 – 10). For more information about RUCA codes, please visit the USDA website found here:

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/>

**Rural Intermediaries:** AmeriCorps recognizes that severely under-resourced communities may have limited capacity to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, due to the size and organizational capacity of eligible applicant/host site organizations or the lack of available matching funds in these communities. Thus, it may be effective for a single eligible applicant (intermediary) to develop an application and oversee the implementation of an AmeriCorps program that engages multiple grassroots non-profits/eligible applicants (referred to as a consortium) that, individually, do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program. Given the desire to address community needs holistically, the nonprofits/eligible applicants that make up the consortium may have, but are not required to have, different focus areas (including the non-focus area capacity building) and thus the nonprofit/eligible applicant intermediary will be multi-focused.

**Same intervention described in the application:** The intervention evaluated in submitted evaluation reports must match the intervention proposed in the application in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:

* Characteristics of the beneficiary population, including evidence of current or historic inequities facing the population
* Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
* Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention, including all key components and activities
* The context in which the intervention is delivered
* Outcomes of the intervention

Evaluation reports that do not sufficiently match the intervention proposed by the applicant will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

**Same Project:** Two projects will be considered the same if they: Address the same issue areas, address the same priorities, address the same objectives, serve the same target communities and population, or utilize the same sites. Programs must get approval from their AmeriCorps program officers to be considered a new project.

Current and previous grantees need to get approval from their Program Officer to be considered a new project. AmeriCorps will consider a project to be new if there is a meaningful difference between it and previous projects in a comparison of the following characteristics, among others: the objectives and priorities of the projects; the nature of the services provided; the program staff, participants, and volunteers involved; the geographic locations in which the services are provided; the populations served; and the proposed community partnerships. (§2522.340).

**Single-State Applicants**: Single state applicants are organizations that propose to operate in only one state; they must apply through the Governor-appointed State or Territory Commissions. Each state and territory commission administers its own selection process and submits to AmeriCorps the applicants it selects to compete for funding.

**Unallowable Activities**: In addition to the *Prohibited Activities*, the following restrictions also apply to the service of AmeriCorps members:

*Nonduplication*. AmeriCorps assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. AmeriCorps assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides unless the entity complies with the following “nondisplacement” requirements. Note: In section below Corporation = AmeriCorps

*Nondisplacement*.

* 1. An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
	2. An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
	3. A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.
	4. A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.
	5. A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—
		1. Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or
		2. Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.
	6. A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—
		1. Presently employed worker;
		2. Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;
		3. Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;
		4. Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or
		5. Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

*Supplantation.* Corporation assistance may not be used to replace State and local public funds that had been used to support programs of the type eligible to receive Corporation support. For any given program, this condition will be satisfied if the aggregate non-Federal public expenditure for that program in the fiscal year that support is to be provided is not less than the previous fiscal year.

*Religious use.* Corporation assistance may not be used to provide religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytization.

*Political activity.* Corporation assistance may not be used to assist, promote, or deter union organizing; or finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of a Federal, State or local election to public office.

# A. Federal & State Partners in AmeriCorps State Grant-making

## I. Volunteer Maine, the Commission for Community Service

 Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, builds capacity and sustainability in Maine’s volunteer and service communities by funding programs, developing volunteer managers, fostering adoption of high-quality volunteer management practices, raising awareness of sector issues, and promoting service as a strategy.

Established in 1995, the mission of Volunteer Maine is to foster community service and volunteerism to meet human and environmental needs in the State of Maine.

As the State of Maine partner for the federal Corporation for National and Community Service, the Commission has several specific legal responsibilities related to AmeriCorps and National Service. These include:

* providing training and technical assistance to local nonprofit organizations and other entities that want to plan and apply for funding to implement national service programs.
* selecting programs to be funded under the National and Community Service Act.
* pre-selecting programs to compete for funding under AmeriCorps State Competitive.
* providing training and technical assistance to National Service programs in Maine.
* evaluating, monitoring, and administering grant programs.

All the Commission activities -- those related to the wider volunteer sector as well as National Service -- and its funding priorities flow from its Strategic Plan. To learn more about the business side of Commission work, visit [VolunteerMaine.gov](http://volunteermaine.gov/).

## II. AmeriCorps, the federal agency

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established in 1993. It changed its public name to AmeriCorps in the fall of 2020. At its inception, the Corporation was directed to manage:

* Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and the Senior Companion Program; and
* **AmeriCorps** which is comprised of VISTA, the National Civilian Community Corps programs, and AmeriCorps State/National (the crew program).

The federal agency mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. It seeks to

* Act as a catalyst by providing strategic critical support to volunteer organizations that, in turn, deliver much-needed services to communities throughout the country.
* Promote a healthy, vibrant non-profit volunteer sector that can deliver effective community services efficiently.
* Build character and creates career and educational opportunities through the volunteer experience.
* Develop and cultivates knowledge that enhances the overall success of volunteer and service programs.
* Cultivate the growth of a culture of citizenship and service to communities.

To accomplish these goals, the federal agency provides grants as well as training and technical assistance to state service commissions and national volunteer organizations. It explores, develops, and models effective approaches for using volunteers to meet the nation's human needs and conducts and disseminates research that helps develop and cultivate knowledge that will enhance the overall effectiveness of national and community service programs.

FMI, visit [AmeriCorps.gov](https://americorps.gov/) .

# B. Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grant Details

## I. Purpose, Number of Awards, Grant Amounts, Eligible Applicants

A. Grant Purpose: The purpose of a planning grant is to give community organizations and their partners the resources, technical assistance, and support to develop a “shovel-ready” AmeriCorps State program that would be proposed for funding in a future Maine AmeriCorps operating grant competition. Applicants should submit a budget for a ten-month planning period.

During the planning period, the grantee will devote personnel to training and completing tasks that:

* clarify the scope and impact of the critical issue affecting their target community.
* research and identify an evidence-based service response to the issue, one that can be implemented by AmeriCorps members and the community volunteers they recruit.
* develop an operation model to deliver the services effectively.
* establish effective partnerships to connect with community beneficiaries and acquire needed human, financial, and other resources.
* develop the human resource policies, systems, and management procedures required to recruit, select, onboard, supervise, evaluate, train, and record accomplishments of both AmeriCorps members and community volunteers.
* develop data collection systems that will be used for reporting, learning, and continuous improvement.
* prepare to integrate AmeriCorps financial management requirements into agency policies and procedures; and
* educate financial, human resource, senior leadership, and relevant organizational staff about AmeriCorps grant provisions, regulations, and resources available for new grantees.

Throughout the planning grant, the organization’s lead planner and team members must participate in Commission training about specific aspects of program planning. The organization must also commit to completing critical tasks between training events.

An advisory committee must be created with a variety of community stakeholders including people who will benefit from the service activities. The Advisory Committee’s mission is to assist in crafting the overall program design by clarifying program goals, identifying AmeriCorps members' service activities and sites, developing partner roles, and outlining budget needs and sources of match funding. The Advisory Committee fulfills the legal requirement that the community be involved in developing and implementing an AmeriCorps program.

The planning grant product is an AmeriCorps program proposal that addresses the following elements in a strong, competitive manner:

* Community Need and Intervention
* Theory of Change and Logic Model (service activities, locations, duration, resources needed)
* Evidence-base
* Member Experience (training, reflection, connection to AmeriCorps movement)
* Program alignment with sponsor mission and goals as well as readiness to operate program
* Program Staffing, Compliance, and Accountability
* Member Supervision
* Performance Measurement
* Data collection and evaluation

B. Number Of Awards And Size: The Commission intends to fund one to three proposals through this competition but retains the right to fund none if the quality of proposals do not merit support. It also retains the right to issue either full or partial awards at its discretion.

Total funds available for this competition are $180,000 and award sizes will be no greater than $60,000 for 10-months. Planning grant funds must be used within the award period and cannot be carried forward into an operating grant.

C. Eligible Applicants: Organizations submitting proposals are eligible if they have never received grant funding to operate an AmeriCorps State/National program. The sole exception is a subunit of a statewide entity that will serve a new community or a completely new need. Under the AmeriCorps rules, organizations that have hosted AmeriCorps members but not been grantees may apply for their own grant and qualify as “new.”

D. What Types Of Organizations May Apply?Maine non-profits, State and local units of government, higher education institutions, faith-based organizations, and national or regional organizations intending to operate an AmeriCorps program only in Maine may apply.

E. Not Eligible: Pursuant to the Lobbying disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Sections 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 USC 501(c)(4), which engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply, serve as a host site for Member placements, or act in any type of supervisory role for an AmeriCorps program.

F. **Special Note About “Same Project” Proposals Submitted to both AmeriCorps National and AmeriCorps State Grant Competitions.** Volunteer Maine will **not** entertain proposals for the same project if an applicant submits to both the AmeriCorps National and AmeriCorps State competition since all competitions occur simultaneously and a project may not be funded from both sources. See page 9 for “same project” defining criteria.

G. Preferences: Although all eligible proposals will be considered, Volunteer Maine will award preference points in three areas during Phase II of selection.

* For applications from partnerships or coalitions whose members represent local organizations working together on a common goal. Partnerships are expected to either build on existing cooperative efforts or draw new partners together in ways that do not duplicate existing community efforts. One member of the coalition must serve as the legal applicant and lead sponsor for the planning grant. It must be evident in the proposal that partners are genuinely committed to participating in the training and development tasks.
* For applicants with a physical presence in and proposing to serve counties classified as 6, 7, or 8 on the USDA rural—urban continuum (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/>). Those counties are Aroostook, Franklin, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington.
* For proposals from any county if they are submitted by an organization led by or primarily supporting historically marginalized communities and/or people.

## II. Funding Priorities for Planning Grants and Federal Focus Areas

A. Commission Priorities: Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, has identified the following priorities for AmeriCorps action and will award preference points to applications seeking to develop programs in these areas:

* Public Health – including domestic violence, abuse or neglect, substance use, emergency preparedness/response, adverse childhood experiences, and mental health;
* Workforce development – combining service with skill development or certifications that lead to post-service employment
* Housing – affordable and safe housing; home energy conservation, weatherization, or repair including programs that perform the modifications, teach homeowners DIY skills, or help residents connect with programs that offer financial assistance to accomplish the projects
* Climate action compatible with *Maine Won’t Wait* (the state climate action plan) and Maine Climate Corps; and,
* Environmental/community resilience, adaptation, and sustainability including emergency preparedness.

B. Federal Focus Areas: Congress directed AmeriCorps to focus on specific areas of need. These categories encompass a broad range of service activities and are described on page 5.

## III. Required Timeline and Activities for Successful Applicants

Applicants must commit to accomplishing the tasks outlined in the timeline below.

Pre-Award

* Select Planning Grant Team Director from either existing staff or a new hire.
* Conduct National Service Criminal History Check for Planning Grant Team Coordinator so time can be charged to grant on first day of award.
* Identify members of the internal Planning Grant team and set first meeting for *early* August.
* Meet with Commission Training Officer to introduce planning team.

Month 1 – Grant start

* The Planning Team reads key documents for the planning process:
	+ Full Request for Proposals for the AmeriCorps Planning Grant awarded and the agency application that resulted in the award.
	+ Planning Grant contract
	+ AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions as well as federal General Terms and Conditions
* Identify the stakeholders and constituents to serve on the Advisory Committee
* Issue invitations to serve on Advisory Committee, set first meeting date for *early* September, and set goals/outcomes for first meeting to include:
	+ Member agreement on mission (purpose) and roles
	+ Understanding of AmeriCorps (mission, abilities, basics of operation)
	+ Consensus on proposed approach to addressing identified need
* Grantee financial officer attends AmeriCorps financial management training (Note: Planning Grant funds are AmeriCorps funds and subject to all the requirements, some of which are exceptions to 2CFR200.)
* Attend AmeriCorps Grantee Technical Assistance Meeting
* Meet with Commission Training Officer to schedule dates for meetings on this calendar.

Month 2

* Facilitate first Advisory Group meeting. Establish meeting schedule and share expected agenda topics with members. Confirm participation.
* Research AmeriCorps programs across the nation to determine if one is implementing similar or same solution. Work with Commission Training Officer to set up virtual peer exchange to learn about operation of similar program or ones from which you want to borrow elements.
* Read research about your proposed approach and program model to determine the quality of the research, findings, applicability to your community, and practicality of replicating the researched program.
* Complete the AmeriCorps Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool and identify strengths, clarify perceptions, and identify strategies to enhance capacity to manage operating AmeriCorps program.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.
* Meet with Commission Training Officer at least twice to discuss status of volunteer management practices and results of capacity assessment. Develop outline for addressing areas that need to be strengthened.

Month 3

* Confirm alignment of the community needs and potential program model(s) that could address those needs through service activities of AmeriCorps members.
* Revisit community need description and data presented in planning grant to determine if a sharper focus is warranted and if there should be changes in the data used to present the need.
* Facilitate second Advisory Group meeting. Review what was learned from researching approach and discussions with other AmeriCorps programs. Discuss and reach consensus on the model to implement with the AmeriCorps program.
* Identify community partners and service sites and criteria by which they will be selected. Include required criteria from 45CFR.
* Identify potential in-kind and cash donors.
* Complete the documentation of community need(s) to be addressed by program.
* Research and identify applicable performance measures.
* Review AmeriCorps Knowledge Network section on Evidence Continuum and Levels of Evidence to understand their framework and expectations.
* Begin addressing organizational capacity and volunteer management issues that need to be strengthened.
* Review agency policies and insurance coverages to identify any items that need revision to permit AmeriCorps and community volunteers to deliver services for the agency. Likewise, identify any policies or insurance requirements that need to be incorporated into program design (e.g., confidentiality training, safe driver training).
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.
* Conduct a minimum of two more check-in meetings/calls with SC Training Staff.

Month 4

* Facilitate third Advisory Group meeting. Include review of criteria for program service sites, expectations of sites (host activity only versus host member), process for committing to be a service site in order to be included in the grant proposal.
* Identify the appropriate evidence tier for the program model and draft narrative describing why the tier is appropriate using your research citations as the proof. If adaptations are being made, make an argument for why these are necessary.
* Continue addressing organizational capacity and volunteer management issues that need to be strengthened.
* Read the AmeriCorps program director start up handbook, AmeriCorps regulations (45CFR), and federal AmeriCorps policies.
* Using the framework “a week in the life of AmeriCorps,” outline the operational schedule for a typical week of AmeriCorps program operation.
	+ Identify the tasks and roles AmeriCorps members would fulfill.
	+ Identify the locations where service would occur, who and how many community beneficiaries, for what length of time and how often
	+ Identify the activities members would need to complete to prepare for the service (i.e., contact community residents, secure supplies, schedule meeting space) and factor in time during the typical week’s plan to complete these tasks.
* Consider the number of AmeriCorps members needed, the time for the various roles (all 1700 hours?) and their profiles in terms of education, experience and skill sets.
* Outline the recruitment, selection, and onboarding process (including orientation to the program and host site, if applicable).
* Develop member service agreement template and submit for comment and review by Commission Training Officer.
* Develop site agreement template(s) for review by potential partner sites as they make decisions on committing to the site role. Submit for comment and advice by Commission Training Officer.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.
* Conduct a minimum of two more check-in meetings/calls with Commission Training Officer.

Month 5

* Continue addressing organizational capacity and volunteer management issues that need to be strengthened.
* Determine staffing needs for the program and develop position descriptions, qualifications, and recruitment/selection plan.
* Planning Grant Director and financial officer complete “Financial Grants Management – Building a Strong Foundation” training on the AmeriCorps Knowledge Network.
* Draft program operating budget in consultation with grant applicant’s financial officer.
* Begin securing match commitments.
* Confirm performance measures and develop data collection plan to ensure reliable data is gathered to demonstrate impact.
* Complete review of these Knowledge Network presentations: AmeriCorps Member Orientation and Training; AmeriCorps Member and Site Monitoring and Reporting Requirements; AmeriCorps Member Recruitment; Reasonable Accommodations: Tips for Running and Inclusive National Service Program; and, AmeriCorps Member Supervision and Evaluation.
* Conduct a minimum of one check-in meeting/call with Commission Training Officer.

Month 6

* Facilitate fourth Advisory Group meeting. Review design, implementation plans, and areas or tasks with which Advisory members can assist.
* Draft AmeriCorps Member position description that is ADA compliant and meets all requirements. Submit to Training Officer for review and comment.
* Using AmeriCorps Member position description, draft position listing for federal AmeriCorps portal and draft public advertisement.
* Develop Recruitment and Selection plan for AmeriCorps Members
* Develop list of contents for AmeriCorps Member personal file including required documentation of eligibility to serve, application, references, background check, and evidence of attendance at trainings. Submit to Training Officer for review and comment.
* Develop outline of AmeriCorps Member Handbook for program
* Identify process and procedures for members to document accomplishments, skills developed, and work quality during service. Documentation to be used for future endeavors (employment, training, education, etc.)
* Begin establishing MOU’s with partner sites where members will potentially serve.
* Finalize program budget.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.
* Continue addressing organizational capacity and volunteer management issues that need to be strengthened.
* Conduct a minimum of two more check-in meetings/calls with Commission Training Officer.

Month 7

* Fully develop AmeriCorps member orientation program.
* Outline pre-service and in-service training schedule including costs for trainings and ensure expenses are in program budget.
* Draft AmeriCorps member handbook and submit to Training Officer for comment and advice.
* Develop member supervision process, schedule, and procedures including format for mid-term and end-of-term evaluations.
* (If applicable) Develop site supervisor role description, pre-service orientation, training schedule, monitoring schedule, and cohort team building process.
* Develop plan to achieve community awareness of AmeriCorps program. Address branding issues, communication with public and service beneficiaries, days of service and major National Service celebrations, coordination of communication, etc. Incorporate AmeriCorps and Volunteer Maine communications requirements.
* Continue to secure MOU’s with partner sites where members will potentially serve.
* Continue to secure match Commitments.
* Begin to draft narratives for AmeriCorps Grant Application.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.
* Conduct a minimum of two more check-in meetings/calls with Commission Training Officer.

Month 8

* Facilitate fifth Advisory Group meeting. Update members and solicit assistance in finalizing details.
* Complete draft of AmeriCorps Grant Application including budget.
* Receive Advisory Committee feedback following their review of the draft grant application.
* Finalize sources as well as amounts of cash and in-kind match for program.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.

Month 9

* Determine which Grant Competition is appropriate for the project.
* Submit Grant Application
* Research technologies that could be used in program operation. Complete online training for use of OnCorps reporting system.
* Organize meeting of likely host sites and individuals identified as site supervisors to review expectations and responsibilities.
* Secure MOU’s with partner sites where members will potentially serve.
* Assess change in organizational capacity and volunteer management to identify issues that still need to be strengthened.
* Attend Program Director’s Meeting.

Month 10

* Attend Atlantic Regional National Service Conference
* Attend meeting of the state service commission, Volunteer Maine.
* (If applicable) Address corrections and/or clarification items identified as conditions of award by Commission grant selection members.
* (If applicable) Prepare grant application for final submission to Commission.
* Submit Closeout Report of Activity under AmeriCorps Planning Grant.
* Initiate financial closeout of AmeriCorps Planning Grant.

# C. Grant Selection and Submission

## I. Review Process for AmeriCorps Proposals

### A. State Review by Volunteer Maine, the State Service Commission.

The Commission uses selection criteria and a process that incorporates the mandatory AmeriCorps weighting and scoring of various criteria published in the Code of Federal Regulations as well as Commission policies on funding and performance.

All AmeriCorps Planning Grant proposals are assessed by the using a two-phase process.

Phase One. Proposal narratives and budget submitted in eGrants along with the organizational chart are reviewed and assessed by peer reviewers. The Commission uses the mandated federal weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 50% for Program Design (Need and Rationale), 25% for Organizational Capability, and 25% for Budget Adequacy and Cost Effectiveness for a possible total score of 100 Phase One Reviewer points.

At the end of Phase One, the scores will determine whether proposals receive further consideration. The options for recommendations are:

* Strongly Recommend for Further Review (A comprehensive and thorough proposal of exceptional merit with numerous strengths; total score between 90 and 100).
* Recommend for Further Review (A proposal that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support; it has some weaknesses. Total score between 80 and 89).
* Recommend for Further Review with Hesitation (A proposal with approximately equal strengths and weaknesses. However, the weaknesses are not offset by strengths. Total score between 60 and 79).
* Do Not Recommend for Further Review (A proposal with serious shortcomings. There are numerous weaknesses and few strengths. Total score 59 or below).

Applications not recommended for further review will be excluded from consideration in the Phase Two process.

Phase Two: Applications recommended for some level of review will undergo further assessment by the Grants Selection and Performance Task Force. The Task Force will include in its review documents submitted as part of this competition plus data from publicly available information systems including SAM (the federal System for Award Management).

It also will consider information gathered in a structured interview of representatives of the planning grant applicant. The interview will be conducted through remote technology and recorded. Task Force members will review the recording as part of their assessment tasks.

The Task Force will use the following weighting and selection criteria during this phase: 30 points Funding Priority Alignment, 30 points Commission Preferences (partnerships, support for rural and/or marginalized communities), 10 points Financial Plan, 15 points Fiscal Systems, and 15 points for Grant Readiness for a possible total of 100 points.

Upon completion of the Task Force review, the scores from Phase One and Phase Two will be combined to produce a single review score.

The Grant Selection and Performance Task Force will then make its final recommendations for funding to the full Commission. Proposals that address Commission priorities and preferences will be considered first for awards. If there are sufficient funds remaining, proposals in other categories will be considered.

**B. Commission Vote On Grant Awards**

The Commission will authorize funding the AmeriCorps State Formula applications at the regular May 2023 business meeting.

**C. Proposal Contents Available to the Public**

Once the selection process at the Commission level is complete, all submissions in response to this RFA will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. §§ 401 *et seq.*).

At the federal level, all submissions will become public record and available for public inspection pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act once the award decisions are announced. Portions of submissions will be published on the federal website in compliance with its policy on government transparency.

## II. Unauthorized Applicant Contact with Reviewers or Grants Task Force

During the review period, applicants may not directly contact either Peer Reviewers or Grants Selection and Performance Task Force Reviewers, regarding this AmeriCorps Grant competition. The review period begins at the submission deadline and ends when the Task Force presents its decision to the Commission.

Applicants may only contact the designated RFA coordinator at Volunteer Maine with questions or comments regarding this competition. If an applicant/bidder initiates or attempts direct contact with reviewers, this will result in disqualification of their proposal.

## V. Appeal of Grant Decisions

Any person aggrieved by the Commission’s decisions under this RFA may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120>).  The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

## VI. Submission Deadline and Compliance Requirements

1. Proposals Due: Complete proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on the date listed on the cover page of this RFA. Receipt time will be established by the date/time stamp electronically recorded at the time of submission. Proposals received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception.
2. Complete means the proposal is submitted in eGrants (<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>) **and** all required additional documents listed on page 29 are submitted by **email** to the email address provided on the RFA Cover Page (Proposals@maine.gov).
3. Only proposals received through eGrants and email will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt. Applicants are strongly encouraged to add a request for read receipts to emails.
4. The subject line of the applicant’s email submission must read:

“RFA# 202303048 [Bidder’s Name] Proposal Submission”.

1. Applicant submissions are a single file and include:

 File #1- Application ID# (from eGrants) *PDF format preferred:*

 • Proposal Cover Page only (SF424) printed from eGrants

 • Table of Contents

 • Organizational Chart

 • AmeriCorps Readiness Survey

 • Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (if applicable)

 • Federal Financial Management Survey

File #2 Application ID# (from eGrants) *PDF format preferred*

* Audit *PLUS* Management Letters *AND* all findings

 • Organization’s most recently filed Form 990 (not applicable to units of government)

• Explanation if delinquent on Federal Dept (if applicable)

Volunteer Maine, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in proposals received in response to this RFA.

## VII. Questions Regarding This RFA

Questions about this RFA must be submitted by email to Service.Commission@maine.gov ***with the subject line***: “Maine AmeriCorps Planning Grant RFA #202303048. The deadline for written questions is listed on the cover page of this RFA and responses to all substantive and relevant questions will be posted on the same page as the RFA <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants> and at [VolunteerMaine.gov/grants](http://volunteermaine.gov/grants).

## VIII. Information Session

A virtual information session will take place for interested applicants. Details and the registration link are on the cover of this RFA.

## IX. Applicant Resource Page

Attachment F on page 47 contains a compilation of links to documents referenced in this RFA.

# D. Proposal Contents

**Reminder: Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.**

The following application instructions contain the information that new AmeriCorps planning grant applicants must provide in their funding applications.

## I. eGrants Application System

Both Volunteer Maine and AmeriCorps conduct business *primarily* through electronic systems. These systems use the Internet for grant application, award notification, contract negotiation, progress reporting and fiscal and program administration. Grant applicants must ensure *at least* one member of their proposed administrative team has the skills to accomplish this.

All proposal narratives and the budget must be submitted through eGrants, the on-line grant application and management system developed by AmeriCorps. The system is unique to AmeriCorps and can be accessed at <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>.

Proposals received through eGrants will be reviewed, assessed, accepted or rejected by Volunteer Maine. Although the proposals are submitted in AmeriCorps’ eGrants system, the federal agency does not have access to, nor the ability to view proposals until the Maine selection process has been completed.

The eGrants Help Desk is limited to the mechanical operation of the system. The Help Desk staff are not familiar with the various application instructions and cannot answer questions about content or interpret any portion of the instructions. Should you need technical assistance, the Help Desk is available by webform email at all times and by phone via the National Service Hotline (1-800-942-2677). Be prepared to provide your Application ID, your organization’s name and the name of the federal NOFO (FY 2023 AmeriCorps State and Territory Commission -New and Continuations) to which your organization is applying.

## II. Preparations

### Registering for a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in SAM.

All applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM) and have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Obtaining the UEI and registering in SAM can be done from SAM.gov at no cost.

NOTE: SAM no longer uses DUNS identifiers but has set up its own government identifying system, UEI.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain an active valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually.

Applicants not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process at least 30 days in advance of the application due date because some steps in the process may require you to submit an invoice issued to your agency with your physical address on it. This seems to happen when PO Boxes or corporate maildrop numbers are your normal address. The first step in the process is to obtain a UEI.

## III. Starting an Application in eGrants

Applicants will need to establish an eGrants account if they have not submitted to the federal AmeriCorps agency in another competition.

Beginning with slide 6, this presentation by AmeriCorps.gov explains how to manage the organization account and user permissions: <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2021_04_21_Create_and_Manage_an_eGrants_Account_ASN.pdf>

To set up a new account, an authorized person:

1. Goes to <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>
2. Finds the gray text (middle of page) “Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account”
3. On the next screen, selects “Create a Grantee account” and follow the prompts.
4. Information you will need to complete registration includes your organization’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) and UEI number.

The individual who first establishes an account and enters organizational information becomes the person who authorizes subsequent accounts and assigns user rights. This person will receive an email indicating someone new is trying to associate themselves with the organization’s account. Given this system hierarchy, applicants should review their agency policies and internal controls to determine who should initiate set up.

***Note: Anyone within your organization who will be entering information in the application at any point during application preparation and submission in the eGrants system must have their own eGrants account.***

Once an account is established and while you are logged in, use eGrants to complete the following steps in order to access the application sections. The text in parentheses below are guides for making selections from the menus or lists.

* Under the header “Creating An Application” in the bottom left of the eGrants home screen:
	+ Select “New” (meaning New Application document)
	+ Select a program area (AmeriCorps)
	+ Select this NOFA: “FY 2023 AmeriCorps State and Territory Commission (New and Continuation)”. If you see a June 2023 due date, *ignore it*. The federal agency does not update the label for state competitions.
	+ Select the state (Maine)
	+ Select the State Prime ID (use the pull-down menu)

Once these steps are completed, fill out the Applicant Info and Application Info sections.

## IV. Contents of a Complete Application (eGrants and Additional Documents)

Your application consists of information submitted through the eGrants system AND emailed materials that must be submitted to the Maine Division of Procurement Services by the submission deadline. See page 19 for submission instructions.

***Items I to VII: To be completed in eGrants.***

1. **Applicant Info**

Information entered in the Applicant Info, Application Info, and Budget sections will populate the SF424 Facesheet.

* Because you are **applying for the first time,** select **New.**
	+ - First-time applicants: Use the "create a new program" link to enter the information about your program.
		- **Enter “AmeriCorps Planning Grant: [Agency Initials]” as the program name**! Enter the requested information in the fields that appear. The contact person should be the person who can answer questions about the application.

**2. Application Info**

 In the Application Info Section enter:

* Areas affected by your proposed program. For city or county information, please follow each one with the two-letter capitalized state abbreviation. Use commas as separators.
* Requested project period start and end dates. Start dates are generally August 15.
* State Application Identifier: Enter N/A.
* The Application is Subject to Review by State Executive Order 12372 Process: This is pre-filled as “No, this is not applicable.”
* Indicate Yes or No if you are delinquent on any federal debt. If yes, send explanation.

**3. Narratives**

**4. Logic Model** (not required but must have characters in it to submit; see instructions later in this section)

**5. Performance Measures**

**6. Program Information**

**7. Documents**

**8. Budget Narrative** (Budget Summary form is automatically created by eGrants from budget narrative)

**9. Review, Authorize, Submit**

## V. Instructions for Narratives

The application narrative section is your opportunity to convince reviewers your project meets the selection criteria. Below are some recommendations to help you present your project to reviewers.

#### General Advice on Narrative Form

* **Lead from your strengths and be explicit.** Focus on the considerations and priorities that apply to your program idea.
* **Be clear and succinct. Answer the questions asked – don’t waste space on information that is tangential.** Reviewers are interested in learning precisely how your project responds to the selection criteria presented. They want answers to the questions asked, in the order in which they are asked, and without distracting stories or unrelated data. Use local not national data.
* **Explain how. Provide detail.** Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met.
* **Don’t make assumptions.** Do not assume proposal reviewers know anything about your organization, its programs, the geographic area you intend to serve, the local issues, your partners, or your beneficiaries. Explain acronyms the first time used to avoid confusion. A rather famous example is the Commission’s legal initials, MCCS, are also used by the Maine Community College System (MCCS).
* **Use an impartial proofreader.** Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read the selection criteria and critique your project narrative.
* **Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order they are presented in the instructions.** Use headings to differentiate narrative sections according to the criteria.
* **Prepare and save your application first as a word processing document** prior to uploading it into eGrants. Then, copy and paste the text into eGrants. Finally, print out the eGrants narrative to ensure all text made it into the system and the page limit has not been exceeded. The text in eGrants will print as if it is double spaced.
* **Enter narrative text into eGrants at least one week before the submission deadline.** All applicants are strongly urged to leave plenty of time for entering narrative and budget into the eGrant system.
* **Use only uppercase letters for all section headings**. Because eGrants is a web database, it does not recognize text formatting. Bold text, bullets, underlines, or other types of text formatting as well as charts, diagrams, and tables DO NOT copy into eGrants. Do not use any of these in your application.

#### Application Page Limitations

* **Maximum page limit for Narratives is 15** **pages.** Sections included in this page count are SF424 Facesheet, the Executive Summary, Program Design, Organizational Capability, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy sections **as the pages print out from eGrants.** To check the length, go to Review menu and use “View/Print” option.
* You are not required to use all 15 pages, that is just the maximum length.
* This limit **does not include** the Evaluation Summary and Plan narrative, Logic Model, Budget, Performance Measures, nor required supplementary hard copy materials. Do not submit items not required, they will not be considered or returned.
* The Logic Model and the Evaluation Summary and Plan field should print out as single pages since they are not required but cannot be removed from the system.
* Narrative submitted on pages beyond 15 will be removed and not considered by Reviewers, even if eGrants allows you to enter and submit text over the limit.
* *Note:* eGrants handles text differently than word processing programs so, even if your paragraph style is set to double space, the page lengths are not comparable. Volunteer Maine will not consider the results of any alternate printing methods in determining whether an application complies with the page limits.

In eGrants, each of the following narrative sections is a text box field in the application’s Narrative section.

* Executive Summary
* Program Design
* Organizational Capability
* Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
* Evaluation Summary and Plan

*Note*: The Narratives also include fields for Clarification Summary, Amendment Justification, and Continuation Changes. These are *not* required fields.They are used to enter information *after* awards are made. Please **enter “N/A” in these fields**. The verification step in eGrants will not allow you to submit unless this notation (N/A) is entered.

**A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)**

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from the template below.

[*Name of the organization*] proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program to serve [*list the location(s) the program will serve*]. It will address [*community need*] that impacts the lives of [*describe anticipated beneficiaries of service*] in the AmeriCorps focus area(s) of [*list]*. The AmeriCorps federal ARP investment $[*amount of request*] will support planning activities carried out in collaboration with [*list significant program partners*]. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

**B. Program Design (50 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application’s response to the criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

***1. Need and Target Community(ies) (15 points):***

In the narrative

* Identify the geographic community or communities where the program is likely to operate.
* Describe the need the AmeriCorps program will address including the role current or historical inequities faced by underserved communities may play in contributing to the problem
* Demonstrate that it is prevalent and severe in the communities that would benefit. Use relevant local data in the description.
*Note: “community” can be a geographic region, a specific population among residents, or a combination of the two.*
* Describe how people impacted by the need were engaged in identifying it as the priority to address.
* Describe the services, organizations, or planning efforts already working to address this need.
* Describe the service beneficiaries (target population) for AmeriCorps program services including demographic information.

***2. Response to Need (15 points)***

In the narrative

* Provide a rationale for adding AmeriCorps members to community resources targeting the need.
* Describe the gap in current efforts the AmeriCorps program would try to fill, what solution or response the AmeriCorps program is likely to implement, and where service activities are apt to occur.
* Explain the relationship the applicant has now to potential service beneficiaries.
* Describe partners who want to be involved in the program. Are any of them already engaged in meeting the need?
* Have any local resources been identified as available to invest in the AmeriCorps program? These would include expertise, personnel, funding, etc.

***3. Readiness for Planning (15 points)***

In the narrative

* What is the connection between the potential AmeriCorps program and your organization’s mission, goals, and strategic plan or current priorities.
* Describe your organization’s current engagement of volunteers in its services. What do they do? How is volunteer recruitment, selection, supervision, and training handled? What is the system for documenting their time/effort contribution to the agency and impact of their work? If volunteers are not part of the agency’s workforce, what similar experience (interns, loaned executives, etc.) does the agency have?
* Identify the lead staff person for planning and key people (internal and external) who will need to join the planning team. If the lead planner will be a new hire, describe what qualifications the organization will require and how long it will take to recruit and onboard the person.
* Explain how the requirement for an AmeriCorps Advisory group will be met including what constituents or stakeholders will be represented, the roles they will have in program development, and skills or resources they will add to the planning process.

***4. Expertise and Training (5 points)***

Considering the timeline and tasks outlined on page 14 et seq., describe the level of expertise the planning team can apply to the tasks listed below. Identify tasks that will require training to complete. (Note, this section is partially used to plan technical assistance to award recipients.)

* 1. Developing the Theory of Change
	2. Developing the Logic Model to show outcomes, outputs, frequency and duration of activities, AmeriCorps member roles, community volunteer roles, resources needed, number of beneficiaries
	3. Identifying the research evidence that the intervention (program approach) is effective for the need
	4. Developing organizational policies, procedures, and documentation systems for involving AmeriCorps members and volunteers in the agency’s activities
	5. Designing AmeriCorps member training and supervision plans
	6. Establishing or negotiating agreements with partners on roles, responsibilities, and commitment of resources.
	7. Develop a plan to keep the community and stakeholders aware of AmeriCorps activities and accomplishments
	8. Design a system for internal monitoring of program compliance and accountability
	9. Establish a protocol for securing the grantee share (match support) for the program

**C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application’s response to the following criteria below.

***1. Organizational Background and Staffing***

* The applicant describes how it has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan the proposed program.
* The applicant describes its prior experience in the proposed area of programming (if any).
* The applicant clearly describes its current organizational capacity (strengths, opportunities, challenges) and the status of its planning or development activities.
* The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information to learn and make decisions.
* The applicant's management and staff submit frequent reports to its governing board, funders, the public, and/or stakeholders on how well the organization is implementing its programs and strategies.

**D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**

Reviewers will assess the quality of the application’s budget using the criteria below. **No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for “See budget”.**

***1. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy***

* Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
* Budget is submitted with adequate equations and description to assess how each line item is calculated.
* Budget complies with the budget instructions.
* Grantee share is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.\*
* The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year.

\*Although the American Rescue Plan “match replacement” option for AmeriCorps will be used for the local share, applicants should enter the funds under “Grantee Share” and on the budget lines to which they would be applied.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget screens:

* Current indirect rate cost rate information.
* Under “Source of Funds”, identify any non-AmeriCorps funding and resources the applicant will use to support planning. If none, leave blank.

**E. Evaluation Plan (0 percent)**

Planning applicants should enter “N/A” in this section.

**F. Amendment Justification**

Enter N/A. This field is used if you are awarded a grant and need to amend it.

**G. Clarification Information**

Enter N/A. This field is used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period. Please clearly label new information added during clarification with the date.

**H. Continuation Changes**

Enter N/A. This field is used to enter changes in application narratives in continuation requests.

## VI. Logic Model

Planning Grant proposals do not require a logic model but this portion of the system cannot be disabled. To ensure your application will submit without a completed logic model, use the eGrants link in the left side navigation menu. This takes you to a part of the proposal that is outside the narratives so you are advised to enter it *after* completing all narrative fields and saving those sections.

In the first blank row of the logic model, click “edit.” This will open a pop-up screen with fields for each column of the logic model. Enter “not required” in the visible fields. When finished, click “save and close.”

## VII. Performance Measures

All applicants must submit performance measures with their application. Follow these directions to enter the universal Planning Grant Performance Measure in the eGrants performance measures module.

**Home Page**

* To start the module, click the “Begin” button on the Home Page. As you proceed through the module, the Home Page will summarize your work and provide links to edit the parts of the module you have completed. You may also navigate sections of the module using the tab feature at the top of each page.
* Once you have started the module, clicking “Continue Working” will return you to the tab you were on when you last closed the module.
* To edit the interventions, objectives, MSYs, and slot allocations for your application, click the “Edit Objectives/MSYs/Slots” button.
* After you have created your performance measure, the Home Page will display a chart summarizing your measure. To edit a performance measure, click the “Edit” button. To delete a measure, click “Delete.” To create a new performance measure, click the “Add New Performance Measure” button.

**Objectives Tab**

* An expandable list of AmeriCorps focus areas appears on this tab. When you click on a focus area, a list of objectives from the AmeriCorps strategic plan appears. A list of common interventions appears under each objective.
* First click on the “Other Community Priorities” focus area. Then click on the “Other” objective and select the “Other” intervention.
* Choose “Other Community Priorities” as your program’s primary focus area in the drop-down list at the bottom of the page. Next, select “other” as your primary intervention.
* Click the next button to continue.

**MSYs/Slots Tab**

* On this tab, you must enter a numerical value of “1” in all MSY and slot fields in order to submit your application. The module does not permit blank fields. Then click the next button to continue.

**Performance Measure Tab**

* To create your performance measure, begin by selecting “other” from the objective drop-down.
* Enter the following title: Planning Grant.
* Enter NA in the problem statement text box.
* Check the box next to the intervention text box. Enter this text in the intervention text field: “*Plan an AmeriCorps program*.”
* Click the button next to the output text box. Enter this text in the output text field: “*Work with grantor staff to design and conduct planning process as outlined in the application*.”
* Check the box next to the outcome text box. Enter “NA” in the outcome text field.
* Enter a numerical value of “1” in the MSYs and slots fields at the bottom left of the page.
* Click “next” to proceed to the data collection tab.

**Data Collection Tab**

* On this tab, enter NA in the intervention text box. Then expand each output and outcome. Enter ”1” for all numerical values required and enter NA in all text boxes. Select “other” as your data collection method for both the output and the outcome.
* After entering data collection information for the output and outcome, click “Mark Complete.” You will return to the Performance Measure tab. To continue to the next step of the module, click “Next.”

**Summary Tab**

* The summary tab shows all of the information you have entered in the module.
* To print a summary of all performance measures, click “Print PDF for all Performance Measures.”
* To print one performance measure, expand the measure and click “Print This Measure.”
* Click “Edit Performance Measure” to return to the Performance Measure tab.
* Click “Edit Data Collection” to return to the Data Collection tab.
* Click “Validate Performance Measures” to validate this module prior to submitting your application

## VIII. Program Information

In the Program Information Section, applicants should only check the boxes for those characteristics that represent a significant part of the program.

**General Information:** select either Yes or No from the drop-down menu

**AmeriCorps Funding Priorities.** Select “No NOFO priority area” to indicate you are not responding to the federal agency’s Notice. This is a state competition.

**Populations Served.** Check “None of the Above.” Planning grants do not support service activities.

**Grant Characteristics.** Check any grant characteristics that are a significant part of the proposed program.

**AmeriCorps Identity/Co-branding Questions.** Select Yes or No.

**Grant Characteristics- AmeriCorps Member Population.** Check “None of the above categories”

## IX. Documents

If the documents you are required to provide in hard copy are part of the pre-filled list, change their status in eGrants from the default “Not Sent” to “Sent” or to “Not Applicable.”

For documents that are not part of the standard list, select “Enter New,” name the new document (e.g., “Financial Management Survey”) and enter status “Sent.”

**These documents must be submitted by email according to the submission instructions on page 19.**

1. Attach a copy of the program’s SF424 face sheet to the document package. It can be obtained from eGrants which generates a PDF version of the page.
2. A contents list enumerating the documents you have included. It should match the documents list in eGrants.
3. Organizational chart for legal applicant showing where the proposed AmeriCorps program would reside.
4. AmeriCorps Readiness Survey
5. Audit (with management letters and all findings) of legal applicant for the last completed fiscal year.
6. The organization’s most recently filed 990. (Not applicable to units of government.)
7. A copy of the organization’s negotiated indirect cost rate. If the applicant does not have one, please include a statement to this effect and indicate if the applicant organization has a cost allocation plan.
8. Volunteer Maine Financial Management Systems Survey (Attachment E, page 45)
9. Explanation if delinquent on Federal Debt (if applicable). Any applicant that checks Yes to the question on federal debt delinquency must submit a complete explanation which will be forwarded to AmeriCorps Office of Grants Management.

## X. Funding and Demographics

In the Funding/Demographics Section enter:

* Other Revenue funds. Enter zero (0).
* Number of Episodic Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members. Please enter zero.
* Number of Ongoing Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members. Please enter zero.

## XI. Operating Sites

This eGrants field is not applicable. It is used by applicants operating in more than one state. ***Do not complete this section.***

# E. Budget Instructions

Funding for these planning grants is from the AmeriCorps portion of the American Rescue Plan which waives the requirement there be local funds. Instead, it uses some ARP funds for “match replacement” to fulfill the 70% AmeriCorps and 30% grantee share requirement.

**How to show ARP match funds in Budget.** Expenses described under CNCS Share column should account for 70% of the Grant Total Cost and AmeriCorps ARP funds should equal 30% of the Grant Total Cost. In no scenario should the Total Cost be more than $60,000.

Example using maximum grant: CNCS Share Total $42,000
 Grantee Share Total + $18,000
 Grant Total Cost = $60,000

**Preparing Your Budget.**

Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your narrative. Reviewers will consider the information you provide in this section in their assessment of the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy selection criterion.

Follow the detailed budget instructions below to prepare your budget. It is recommended you prepare your budget in the same order as indicated in the Budget Worksheets in Attachment B, page 36, because the format parallels the budget narrative section of eGrants. The eGrants system will create the budget summary automatically from the detailed budget narrative information you enter.

After the budget details are entered, eGrants will perform a limited compliance check to validate the budget. If it finds any compliance issues you will receive a warning and/or error messages. Warnings are different from errors. *All* *errors must be resolved* before the budget can submitted. *Warnings* point out information which *may* need correction and edits may or may not be needed.

As you prepare your budget:

* All the amounts you request must be defined for a particular purpose. Do not include miscellaneous, contingency, or other undefined budget amounts.
* Itemize each cost and present the basis for all calculations in the form of an equation.
* Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an allowable activity.
* Do not include fractional amounts (cents).

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and the requirements of the Omni Circular. Please refer to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200) for allowable, allocable, and reasonable cost information, as well as, audit requirements, including the need to provide audits to the Clearinghouse if expending over $750,000 in federal funds as required in the Omni Circular. The OMB Omni circular can be found on-line at [www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200](http://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200)

## Section I. Program Operating Costs

Complete Section I, Program Operating Costs, by entering the “Total Amount,” “CNCS Share,” and “Grantee Share” for items A-I. When a line item is added to the budget, a second pop-up screen appears with each of these fields labeled. The budget work sheets or a spreadsheet can be used to develop the descriptions and formulas that eventually go into eGrants.

**A. Personnel Expenses:**

Under “Position/Title Description,” list each staff position separately and provide salary and percentage of effort as percentage of FTE devoted to this award. Each staff person’s role listed in the budget must be described in the application narrative. Note: all personnel on the grant are subject to the National Criminal History Background Check requirements.

**B. Personnel Fringe Benefits:**

Under “Purpose/Description,” identify the types of fringe benefits to be covered and the costs of benefit(s) *for each staff position*. Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Worker’s Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K. You may provide a calculation for total benefits as a percentage of the salaries to which they apply or list each benefit as a separate item. If fringe benefits are over 30%, you must itemize them and justify the high cost.

Holidays, leave, and other similar vacation benefits are not included in the fringe benefit rates but are absorbed into the personnel expenses (salary) budget line item. Do not enter them.

**C. 1. Staff Travel:**

Describe the purpose for which program staff will travel. Provide a calculation that includes itemized costs for airfare, transportation, lodging, per diem, and other travel-related expenses multiplied by the number of trips/staff. Where applicable, identify the current standard reimbursement rate(s) of the organization for mileage, daily per diem, and similar supporting information. The standard mileage reimbursement should not exceed the federal mileage rate unless a result of applicant policy and justified in the budget narrative. Only domestic travel is allowable.

We expect all applicants to include funds in this line item for travel for staff and site staff to attend Commission and AmeriCorps -sponsored technical assistance meetings. These include the Annual Grantee Training (central Maine), the Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference (October), and monthly grantee meetings. Attendance at the regional conference of AmeriCorps grantees (May, mid-Atlantic or south) is required for program staff and fiscal staff of the legal applicant who are responsible for grant finances.

*Sample Travel calculation: 2 staff to the Corps Network Conference in Buffalo, NY: 2 staff X $300 airfare + (3 day) X $400/day shared lodging+ $50 shared ground transportation + $35 per diem per person =$1,760.00 for regional conference.*

**C. 2. Member Travel:**

N/A. Enter zeros.

**D. Equipment:**

Equipment is defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year AND an acquisition cost of **$5,000 or more per unit** (including accessories, attachments, and modifications). Any items that do not meet this definition should be entered in “E. Supplies” below. Purchases of equipment are limited to 10% of the total Corporation funds requested. If applicable, show the unit cost and number of units you are requesting. Provide a brief justification for the purchase of the equipment under Item/Purpose.

**E. Supplies:**

Include the amount of funds to purchase consumable supplies, materials, or equipment that does not fit the definition above. You must individually list any single item costing $1,000 or more.

**F. Contractual and Consultant Services:**

Include costs for consultants related to the project’s planning. There is no maximum daily rate. It is not necessary to include a figure in that data field.

**G. 1. Staff Training:**

Include the costs associated with training staff on project requirements and training to enhance the skills staff need for effective project implementation (project or financial management, volunteer supervision, etc.) If using a consultant(s) for training, indicate the estimated daily rate.

Staff training should include registration fees for AmeriCorps regional meetings ($150 pp), Maine Volunteer Leadership Conference ($50 pp), and the fee for either a training/education event related to the competencies for National Service Program Staff or Certified Volunteer Administrator ($300) qualification.

**G. 2. Member Training:**

N/A. Enter zeros.

**H. Evaluation:**

N/A. Enter zeros. Planning grant recipients are not required to evaluate the effort.

**I. Other Program Operating Costs:**

Allowable costs in this budget category should include when applicable:

* Criminal history background checks are required for all employees or other individuals who receive a salary or stipend or similar payment from the grant under Personnel Expenses. Include the cost for these checks for staff (at least $54 per individual) or explain how your program will be covering the cost in the budget narrative. Program consultants and contractors are not required to have criminal history background checks.
* Office space rental for projects operating without an approved indirect cost rate agreement that covers office space. If space is budgeted and it is shared with other projects or activities, the costs must be equitably pro-rated and allocated between the activities or projects.
* Utilities, telephone, Internet and similar expenses that are specifically used for planning the AmeriCorps program and are not part of the organization’s indirect cost/admin cost allocation pool. If such expenses are budgeted and shared with other projects or activities, the costs must be equitably pro-rated and allocated between the activities or projects.

## Section II. Member Costs

This section should not be visible in eGrants but, in case it is, please enter N/A or zeros as appropriate.

## Section III. Administrative/Indirect Costs

**Definitions**

Administrative costs are general or centralized expenses of the overall administration of an organization that receives CNCS funds and do not include particular project costs. These costs may include administrative staff positions. For organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs mean those costs that are included in the organization’s indirect cost rate agreement. Such costs are generally identified with the organization’s overall operation and are further described in Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance.

**Calculating Administrative/Indirect Costs**

In operating grants, there are several options for claiming indirect and using negotiated indirect cost agreements. However, in this planning grant application, all funds will be AmeriCorps ARP monies and subject to a statutory restriction. Under section 121(d) of the NCSA and CNCS’s regulations at 45 C.F.R. 2517.710, no more than 5% of the total CNCS funds expended may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps grants. That means, the 5% must be used for both the CNCS Share column and Grantee share column since the latter are actually federal AmeriCorps funds. The Commission 1% retained covers central accounting processing of payments and the grant report system.

***Five Percent Fixed Administrative Costs Option***

1. To determine the CNCS grant share for Section III and at the same time determine the allocation between the grantee and Commission use these formulas:

**([Total CNCS share of Section I] + [Total CNCS share of Section II] x 0.0526) x (0.20) = Commission Fixed Amount**

**([Total CNCS share of Section I] + [Total CNCS share of Section II] x 0.0526) x (0.80) = CNCS Fixed Amount
 (grantee share)**

The factor 0.0526 is used to calculate the maximum amount of federal funds that may be budgeted for administrative (indirect) costs, rather than 0.0500, as a way to mathematically compensate for determining Section III costs when the total budget (Sections I + II + III) is not yet established. Enter this amount as the Corporation share for Section III A.

2. To determine the Grantee share for Section III: Repeat the steps in #1 and enter this amount as the grantee share for Section III A.

3. Enter the sum of the CNCS and grantee shares under Total Amount.

## Section IV. Source of Funds

Planning Grant awards are not likely to cover all the costs incurred in the planning process. To demonstrate that the process will not be hindered, enter a brief description of any source of support and the total value in the “Source of Funds” fields that appear at the end of Budget Section III. It is not necessary to indicate what expense the funds cover. Identify whether it is secured or proposed. Include dollar amount, the classification (cash or in-kind), and the source type (Private, State/Local, or Federal). Include indirect costs. Define all acronyms the first time they are used.

# F. Review, Authorize, and Submit

The review, authorize and submit procedures are the same for all grant applications.

eGrants requires that you review and verify your entire application before submitting, by completing the following sections in eGrants:

* Review
* Authorize
* Assurances - use this link to read: <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/EASSUR.HTM>
* Certifications - use this link to read: <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/ECERTS.HTM>
* Verify Budget, Performance Measures, and Narrative contents
* Submit

Read the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications carefully. Complete each section of the Assurances and Certifications. Each assurance or certification must be opened and read before eGrants will record it as read and authorized. Each section must also be checked and submitted individually. eGrants does not recognize multiple selections for assurances and certifications.

The person who authorizes the application must be the applicant’s authorized representative. A copy of the governing body’s authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant’s office.

The applicant’s authorized representative must log into his/her eGrants account and proceed with Authorize and Submit. After signing off on the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications, his/her name will override any previous signatory that may appear and show on the application as the Authorized Representative.

Be sure to check your entire application to make sure that there are no errors before submitting it. eGrants will also validate the proposal and generate a list of errors if there are sections that need to be corrected prior to submission. A reminder, warnings are informational and acting on them is optional.

# Attachment A: Sample View of Facesheet Generated by eGrants(eGrants Inserts Data Using Applicant Info and Application Info Sections)

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev. 11/02 to conform to the Corporation’s eGrants system)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE**Standard Form 424 (Rev. 2-2007) Prescribed by OMB Circular A-102 | **1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:** [x]  Application [x]  Non-Construction |
| **2. a. DATE SUBMITTED:** | **3. a. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:**      | 3. b. STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:      |
| 2. b. APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:       | **4. a. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:**      | 4. b. FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: (Staff Only)      |
| **5. APPLICANT INFORMATION** |
| 5. a. LEGAL NAME:       5. b. UEI NUMBER:      5. c. DUNS:       | 5. e. NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ONMATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION *(give area code):*NAME:      TELEPHONE NUMBER: (     )       - FAX NUMBER: (     )       - EMAIL:      INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: WEBSITE:  |
| 5. d. ADDRESS *(give street address, city, county, state and zip code):*STREET:       CITY:       COUNTY:      STATE:       COUNTRY:       |
| **6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER *(EIN):***                   | **7. a. TYPE OF APPLICANT: (*enter appropriate letter in box)***  A. State H. Independent School District B. County I. State Controlled Institution of Higher Learning C. Municipal J. Private University  D. Township K. Indian Tribe E. Interstate L. Individual F. Intermunicipal M. Profit Organization G. Special District N. Private Non-Profit Organization O. Federal Government P. HQ Internal Organizations Q. State Education Agency R. Territory  S. Other (specify) 7. b. CNCS APPLICANT CHARACTERISTICS *Enter appropriate codes:*  |
| **8. TYPE OF APPLICATION** [ ]  NEW [ ]  NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE  [ ]  CONTINUATION [ ]  REVISION If Revision, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):      A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION: C. NO COST EXTENSION to       *(enter date)*E. OTHER (*specify)*   |
| **9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:**Corporation for National and Community Service |
| **10. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:**           | **11. a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT’S PROJECT:**        |
| **12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT *(List Cities, Counties, States, etc.):***             |  11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):   |
| **13. PROPOSED PROJECT:** START DATE:       ENDING DATE:       **14. Performance Period (Staff Use Only**             |
| **15. ESTIMATED FUNDING:** Check applicable box: Yr 1: [ ]  Yr.2: [ ]  Yr. 3: [ ]   | **16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE** **ORDER 12372 PROCESS**? a. YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ b. NO. [x]  PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?** [ ]  YES If “Yes,”attach an explanation. [ ]  NO |
| a. FEDERAL | $       |
| b. APPLICANT | $       |
| c. STATE | $       |
| d. LOCAL | $       |
| e. OTHER | $       |
| f. PROGRAM INCOME | $       |
| g. TOTAL | $       |
| **18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN** **DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.** |
| a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:       | b. TITLE:       | c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:       |
| d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:       | e. DATE SIGNED: |

# Attachment B: Budget Worksheet

**Section I. Program Operating Costs**

**A. Personnel Expenses**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Position/Title/Description** | **Qty** | **Annual Salary** | **% Time** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**B. Personnel Fringe Benefits**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose/Description** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**C.1. Staff Travel**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**C. 2. Member Travel**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
| **N/A** |  | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
|  |  | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| **Totals** | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

**D. Equipment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Quantity** | **Unit Cost** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**E. Supplies**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**F. Contractual and Consultant Services**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**G.1. Staff Training**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**G.2. Member Training**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
| N/A |  | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| **Totals** | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

**H. Evaluation**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

**I. Other Program Operating Costs**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Subtotal Section I:  | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |

**Section II. Member Costs – Enter nothing. Skip this.**

**Section III. Administrative/Indirect Costs**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | **Calculation** | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
| CNCS (grantee) share |  |  |  |  |
| Commission (State of Maine) share |  |  |  |  |
| Totals |  |  |  |
| Total Sections I + II + III:  | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share** | **Grantee Share** |
|  |  |  |

**Source of Funds - Indicate source, type, and amount if any local resources will be used.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Match Description**  | **Amount** | **Type** | **Source** |
| **Briefly describe match source and include if match is *Proposed or Secure*** | **Dollar amount** | **Cash or In-Kind** | **Private, State/Local, or Federal**  |
|  | **$** |  |  |
|  | **$** |  |  |
|  | **$** |  |  |
| **Total Source of Grantee Share** |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Budget Total: Validate this budget using the labeled function in eGrants.Required Match Percentages:  | **Total Amount** | **CNCS Share**  | **Grantee Share** |
| 100% |  |  |

# Attachment C: eGrants Indirect Cost Rate (IDCR) Upload Instructions

If you do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate, skip this process.

eGrants users can upload Indirect Cost Rate information into their eGrants account. Grantees that claim indirect costs on CNCS awards are required to enter the following indirect cost rates in eGrants: federally negotiated rates, state negotiated rates, and the use of de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). Recipients of AmeriCorps State and National awards may only charge 5% of their negotiated rate to the federal share of the award, with the remaining balance being charged to match (See [45CFR §§2521.95](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2ea79b2eb0c09e5c1ad42ea96846484e&node=se45.4.2521_195&rgn=div8) and [2540.110](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2ea79b2eb0c09e5c1ad42ea96846484e&node=se45.4.2540_1110&rgn=div8)).

**Once a rate is entered & saved in eGrants, it cannot be edited.** If users inadvertently enter incorrect information, a new entry must be submitted with the correct information.

**Entry for the IDCR screen can be accessed using the following steps:**

1) From the **eGrants Home** screen, in the lower panel under **Managing My Account**, click on **My Account**


2) From the **My Account** screen, under **Edit My Organization Info**, click on
**Add and View Indirect Cost Rate**



3) From the **Add and View Indirect Cost Rate** screen,
select **add a new** to add a rate
or **cancel** to back out of the screen.

Field by field instructions can be found by clicking the “**?”** located next to Indirect Cost Rate or Indirect Cost Rate Record.

If **add a new** is selected, this screen will pop up.

1. **Do you have an Indirect Cost Rate to record?** Respond Yes or No.

If **NO** is selected, users cannot go any further & nothing will be recorded.
If **Yes** is selected, users can continue on.

If your organization will be claiming or budgeting with a current, approved indirect cost rate on any AmeriCorps awards, it must be reported here.  The rate information you record will be used in all award negotiation and reviews until it is superseded by a new approved rate, or expires. Applicants will have an opportunity to identify, in applications, if they will be using a lesser percentage of an approved rate, if you so choose.

1. **Rate Type:** If your rate type is not one of the following options, contact your grants officer for guidance:

**Federally Negotiated –** select if your rate has been negotiated by your cognizant federal agency. Cognizance is determined by the agency which provides the highest amount of direct federal funding;

**State Negotiated –** select if your rate has been negotiated by a state agency or other pass through entity; or

**10% of MTDC** – select if your organization qualifies for & elects to use the 10% de Minimus rate of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Organizations qualify for this rate if they have NEVER had a federally negotiated rate. State entities must not receive more than $35 million in direct federal funding.

**Rates must be used consistently across ALL federal awards.**

1. **Issuing Agency.**  Respond by selecting the federal agency that approved your rate, or if the federal agency who issued your rate is not listed, select **Other**, or if your rate is issued by a state agency select **Other**.

Identify federal agencies using the drop-down list.  If your rate is approved by a federal agency other than the ones listed, notify your grants officer. Other federal agencies may be added as needed.

1. **Acceptance Date.** Enter a valid date.

The acceptance date is usually identified where the rate was signed by the issuing state or federal agency.

1. **Rate Status.** Select one of the following options: **Final**, **Provisional**, **Predetermined**, **Fixed**, **Other**, or **Other – 10%**.

Rates issued by federal agencies will almost always be final or provisional.  However, if your organization has formally notified a federal or state agency of your eligibility and intent to use the 10-percent of MTDC rate, select **Other – 10%**.  If your organization has a **predetermined** or **fixed rate**, select those options accordingly. If a state rate indicates a term that is not listed here, select **Other** and notify your grants officer. Additional rate status options may be added as needed.

1. **Effective From.** Enter a valid date.

The effective from date is found on your indirect cost rate document. If using the 10-percent of MTDC rate, enter today’s date or the date your organization formally started charging costs under the 10-percent of MTDC rate.

1. **Effective To.** Enter a valid date.

The effective to date is found on your indirect cost rate document. If your organization has received approval to extend your rate, enter the end date of the extension.

1. **No Expiration.** Check or leave unchecked.

If your rate does not have an expiration date, as is the case with the use of the 10-percent of MTDC rate, check this box, otherwise, leave unchecked.

1. **Extended?** Respond Yes or No.

If the rate “effective to” date has been extended with approval of the federal cognizant agency under authority of the 2014 Omni Circular, respond **Yes**.  If it is not an extended rate effective to date, respond **No**.

1. **Rate Base.** Enter up to 500 characters including spaces.

Enter the text as found on your indirect cost rate approval document.  For rates issued by state agencies, enter either the rate base used to determine the indirect cost pool as stated on your indirect cost rate approval document or “State Rate N/A.” If you need more than 500 characters, indicate “Summary” and record the most important content.

1. **Treatment of Fringe Benefits.** Enter up to 500 characters including spaces.

Enter the text as found on your indirect cost rate approval document.  For rates issued by state agencies, enter either the how fringe benefits were treated in determining the indirect cost rate as stated on your indirect cost rate approval document or “State Rate N/A.” If you need more than 500 characters, indicate “Summary” and record the most important content.

1. **Treatment of Paid Absences.** Enter up to 500 characters including spaces.

Enter the text as found on your indirect cost rate approval document. For rates issued by state agencies, enter either the how paid absences were treated in determining the indirect cost rate as stated on your indirect cost rate approval document or “State Rate N/A.” If you need more than 500 characters, indicate “Summary” and record the most important content.

1. When you have completed all of the above entries, click the **“save & close”** button at the bottom of the page.



* If you would like to cancel your entry, click the “**cancel**” button and the entry will be cancelled. All entry information will be lost & no entry will be shown.
* **Once a rate is saved it cannot be modified**.
* If users inadvertently enter incorrect information, a new entry must be submitted with the correct information.
1. **Order of Rates** - Once an entry is saved, users will be able to see the rates they have entered. Rates will display in the order of entry. Entry of rates will provide users and AmeriCorps with a historical record which can be used to clarify indirect cost rate inquiries for monitoring, consistent record maintenance, & audits.

# Attachment D: AmeriCorps Readiness Assessment

This tool is designed to assess the organizational readiness of applicants to complete development and prepare to administer an AmeriCorps State program. There are two sections: organizational and volunteer management.

**Section 1. These responses pertain to the organization/legal applicant. Check the appropriate box.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | No | Unsure |  |
|  |  |  | 1. Does your organization have a written mission statement that clearly expresses its reason for existence? (if no, skip to question 3) |
|  |  |  | 2. Is the mission frequently referred to (e.g. in annual planning, public relations, communication with stakeholders?) |
|  |  |  | 3. Does the organization have a written strategic plan? (if no, skip to question #9) |
|  |  |  | 4. Does the strategic plan have well defined goals, objectives, and action steps with timeframes? |
|  |  |  | 5. Are the objectives measurable? |
|  |  |  | 6. Is the strategic plan linked to the overall mission, vision and purpose of the organization? |
|  |  |  | 7. Is the strategic plan broadly known by the staff and board? |
|  |  |  | 8. Is this annual plan consistently used at all levels of the organization to direct operations? |
|  |  |  | 9. Is the AmeriCorps program concept you want to develop aligned with the goals and objectives of the strategic plan? |
|  |  |  | 10. Does your organization conduct frequent assessments of the community needs? |
|  |  |  | 11. Does your organization analyze the results of needs assessments and implement changes? |
|  |  |  | 12. Does the organization have a track record of growing and/or creating programs to meet needs of its customers/clients/constituents? |
|  |  |  | 13. Do you have and use a comprehensive evaluation system to measure the impact of programs and services? |
|  |  |  | 14. Do you analyze evaluation or performance data and report findings to stakeholders in a timely manner? (e.g. issue a public annual report) |
|  |  |  | 15. Does the organization conduct frequent assessment of existing programs’ effectiveness in meeting recipient needs AND identify areas for improvement? |
|  |  |  | 16. Does the organization assess internal operations to assess efficiency and effectiveness? |
|  |  |  | 17. If yes to questions 15-16, are adjustments and/or improvements always made? |
|  |  |  | 18. Does your organization have networked computing hardware with a comprehensive range of up-to-date business software applications?  |
|  |  |  | 19. Does every key staff member have a computer with up-to-date software? |
|  |  |  | 20. Does every key staff member have internet access and e-mail capabilities? |
|  |  |  | 21. Is computer technology used regularly by staff? |
|  |  |  | 22. Does the organization have a documented (written) process to recruit, develop and retain employees? |
|  |  |  | 23. Does the organization provide relevant and regular internal and external training? |
|  |  |  | 24. Are employee performance appraisals done annually, consistently, and in writing? |
|  |  |  | 25. Does the organization recruit, develop, and deploy volunteers to deliver mission-related services to its customers/constituents? |
|  |  |  | 26. Does your organization have more than 2 significant sources of operating funds? |
|  |  |  | 27. Does your organization have an active board of directors or other governing body? |
|  |  |  | 28. Does your organization have written administrative and personnel policies and procedures?  |
|  |  |  | 29. Does staff understand and consistently follow the written policies and procedures? |

**Section 2. Essential Practices of Volunteer Management**

For some organizations, AmeriCorps is the first introduction to implementation of all the essential practices of volunteer management. Please use this section to show the stage of volunteer management development in your organization. Check the box that best fits.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Elements of Volunteer****Resources Management** | Fully implemented | Partially implemented | Not being done |
| Written statement of philosophy related to volunteer involvement |  |  |  |
| Orientation for new paid staff about why and how volunteers are involved in the organization's work |  |  |  |
| Designated manager/leader for overseeing management of volunteers agency-wide |  |  |  |
| Periodic needs assessment to determine how volunteers should be involved to address the mission |  |  |  |
| Written position descriptions for volunteer roles |  |  |  |
| Written policies and procedures for volunteer involvement |  |  |  |
| Organizational budget reflects expenses related to volunteer involvement |  |  |  |
| Periodic risk management assessment related to volunteer roles  |  |  |  |
| Liability insurance coverage for volunteers |  |  |  |
| Specific strategies for ongoing volunteer recruitment  |  |  |  |
| Standardized screening and matching procedures for determining appropriate placement of volunteers |  |  |  |
| Consistent general orientation for new volunteers |  |  |  |
| Consistent training for new volunteers regarding specific duties and responsibilities |  |  |  |
| Designated supervisors for all volunteer roles |  |  |  |
| Periodic assessments of volunteer performance |  |  |  |
| Periodic assessments of staff support for volunteers |  |  |  |
| Consistent activities for recognizing volunteer contributions |  |  |  |
| Consistent activities for recognizing staff support for volunteers |  |  |  |
| Regular collection of information (numerical and anecdotal) regarding volunteer involvement |  |  |  |
| Information related to volunteer involvement is shared with board members and other stakeholders at least twice annually |  |  |  |
| Volunteer manager and fund development manager work closely together |  |  |  |
| Volunteer manager is included in top-level planning |  |  |  |
| Volunteer involvement is linked to organizational or program outcomes |  |  |  |

# Attachment E: Financial Management Systems Survey

This survey is intended to collect information about the capacity of applicants to manage federal grant funds. Per 2 CFR §200.205, the AmeriCorps must evaluate the degree of risk posed by an applicant. Information from the survey will be used to assess an organization’s operational and financial management capabilities prior to receiving a federal award. Completion of this survey is required but is independent from the competitive grant process. Responding organizations are advised to ensure that the person or persons preparing this form are those responsible for, and with sufficient knowledge of, the organization’s operational and financial management functions. The information provided will be used to support future monitoring activities, should the applicant receive federal funds from AmeriCorps. In completing this form, each question requires a response. Please include the completed form within the application materials that are submitted.

|  |
| --- |
| **General Information** |
| Organization Legal Name  |  |
| EIN  |  |
| City, State Associated with EIN  |  |
| DUNS Number  |  |
| CFDA Number Associated with Funding Opportunity  |  |
| **Operational Management** |
| The policies identified below address some of the most critical elements for administration of a federal grant. As a recipient of federal funds, organizations are required to have a full complement of programmatic, financial, and administrative policies, as well as internal controls in place, as applicable. Policies and procedures should be reviewed and refined, as applicable, at least once every two years. Should the applicant receive federal funding from AmeriCorps, full copies of the policies and procedures may be requested for monitoring purposes. Please indicate whether the organization has current **written policies and procedures** in the following areas (answer Yes or No):  |
| Personnel/Employee Handbook  |  |
| Financial/Internal Controls  |  |
| Sub-award Monitoring and Oversight  |  |
| Timekeeping  |  |
| Travel Guidance, including purchase/travel credit card use  |  |
| Procurement  |  |
| Standards for Use of Federal Funds  |  |
| Code(s) of Conduct/Ethics, applicable to employment/purchasing  |  |
| Document Retention  |  |
| Please indicate the **training** areas below that are **provided to employees** by the organization. (Answer Yes or No)  |
| Personnel/HR Issues  |  |
| Financial Accounting  |  |
| Risk Management  |  |
| Cyber-security  |  |
| Fraud, Waste, and Abuse  |  |
| **Financial Management** |
|  | (Yes, No, narrative text) |
| Are financial reports (profit and loss, budget vs. actual, etc.) provided to and reviewed by leadership level staff, at least quarterly?  |  |
| Does the organization use an automated accounting system?  |  |
| Can the organization’s accounting system separate the receipts and payments of a federal grant from the receipts and payments of the organization’s other activities supported by separate funding streams?  |  |
| Can the organization’s accounting system summarize expenditures from a federal grant according to different budget categories such as salaries, rent, supplies, and equipment?  |  |
| How often does the organization post transactions to the accounting system ledger(s)?  |  |
| Does the organization use an automated payroll system?  |  |
| Has the organization issued loans to an employee or officer of the organization or forgiven/written-off any loans or debts in the last year?  |  |
| Please identify who is authorized to write-off any debt owed to the organization as a bad debt.  |  |
| Has the organization experienced cash flow deficits an any point in the previous 2 years?  |  |
| Please indicate whether organizational leadership approval is required for any of the following financial transactions. (answer Yes or No) |
| Opening/Closing Bank Accounts  |  |
| Opening Lines of Credit  |  |
| Assigning Credit Cards  |  |
| Buying/Selling Property  |  |
| Financial Investment/Divestment  |  |
| **Compliance** |
| Has the organization received federal funds for similar programs or projects?  |  |
| If so, has your organization met federal program requirements for similar programs?  |  |
| Has an audit been performed on the organization’s financial accounts?  |  |
| If so, what was the audit opinion?  |  |
| If applicable, has the organization addressed any outstanding deficiencies identified in the most recent audit?  |  |
|  |
| Please provide any clarifications or similar remarks/information in the section below (optional):  |
|  |
| **Preparer’s Certification** |
| I certify that the above information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and ability.  |
| Preparer’s Name (First, Last)  |  |
| Preparer’s Position Title  |  |
| Date of Certification  |  |

Privacy Statement -- In compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974, the following information is provided: The collection of this information is authorized by the provisions of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, and the Serve America Act of 2009. The primary purpose of the information is to determine if appropriate systems are in place to manage federal grant funds or, if not, to identify training and technical assistance a grantee may need to develop or enhance appropriate systems. Completion of this survey is required as an element of AmeriCorps’ pre-award risk assessment process. The information provided will be maintained and treated confidentially. However, appropriate federal, state, and local law enforcement entities may request and obtain this information under certain circumstances. Otherwise, the information provided will not be disclosed without express written permission.

# Attachment F: Compilation of Links in RFA

USDA RUCA codes

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/>

Maine Division of Procurement Services grants

<https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants>

Volunteer Maine

<http://www.maineservicecommission.gov/>

The Corporation for National and Community Service now doing business as AmeriCorps

[AmeriCorps.gov](https://americorps.gov/)

5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120

<https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120>

2 CFR Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, And Audit Requirements For Federal Awards

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>

AmeriCorps Grant Application Assurances <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/EASSUR.HTM>

AmeriCorps Grant Application Certifications <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/ECERTS.HTM>

45 CFR Part 2520 - General Provisions: Americorps Subtitle C Programs

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2520>

AmeriCorps Grant Terms & Conditions - <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2022ASNProgram508TC.pdf>

General Terms and Conditions - <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/FY2023-General-Terms-Conditions-508-20221028.pdf>

National Service Standard Performance Measures

<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2023_PerformanceMeasures_508_072722.pdf>

In-Kind Value Of Volunteer Time for Maine

<https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>

Education Award, forbearance, and the National Service Trust, visit: <https://americorps.gov/members-volunteers/segal-americorps-education-award/find-out-more>

National Service Criminal History Check Requirements

<https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check>

National Sex Offender Public Website

<https://www.nsopw.gov/>

eGrants

<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>

eGrants account set up tutorial

<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2021_04_21_Create_and_Manage_an_eGrants_Account_ASN.pdf>

System for Award Management (SAM)

<https://sam.gov/content/home>

AmeriCorps State and National awards may only charge 5% of their negotiated rate to the federal share of the award 45CFR §§2521.95

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2ea79b2eb0c09e5c1ad42ea96846484e&node=se45.4.2521_195&rgn=div8>

# Attachment G. What is AmeriCorps? Program Details

 AmeriCorps is a national service program with three distinct branches:

* AmeriCorps State and National (team-based programs),
* AmeriCorps VISTA, and
* The National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

The **AmeriCorps State** program s is the one funded through the State Service Commission. AmeriCorps National programs are multi-state or national nonprofit organizations that submit proposals directly to AmeriCorps. The chart on the following page shows a comparison of major program traits.

| **Comparison of AmeriCorps program types and grants (examples; not complete)** | AmeriCorps State/National | AmeriCorps VISTA | AmeriCorps NCCC |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AC State/National Grant types:****CR**= Cost Reimbursement Grant; **FA**= Fixed-amount Grant;  | CR | FA |  |  |
| Grant $$ are awarded to local or national agencies | X | X |  |  |
| Grants consist of 1) authorization of AmeriCorps positions at levels needed to achieve targets set in performance measures and 2) federal funds to support members in the positions  | X | X |  |  |
| Grant requires that local cash and in-kind resources used to carry out program services be reported as match in order to qualify for and receive the funds. | X |  |  |  |
| Grant relieves program of financial reporting requirements, ties reimbursement to enrollment, and limits AmeriCorps member terms to full-time (40 hours/week) no matter the term duration.  |  | X |  |  |
| Categories of community needs addressed include Healthy Futures, Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, Environmental Stewardship, Capacity Building | X | X | X |  |
| Grantees are required to mobilize local volunteers who become the future providers of the service | X | X |  |  |
| Program is required to use at least one of the standardized national performance measures. | X | X |  |  |
| Members serve in teams | X | X |  | X |
| Members can serve terms of less than 1700 hours over a 12-month period | X | X[[1]](#footnote-1) |  |  |
| Members who successfully complete service always qualify for an education award | X | X | may choose end of term cash stipend | X |
| Members may have other employment or be in college if it does not interfere with their service term | X | X | X |  |
| Members must be at least 17 years of age and out of school. There is no upper age limit. | X | X |  |  |
| Members who are 55 years of age or older and successfully complete a term of service may transfer the use of the Education Award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. | X | X |  |  |
| Grants include only authorization (allocation) of AmeriCorps positions at levels needed to achieve targets set in performance measures. Grantees may be required to reimburse the federal agency for living allowance expense of several AmeriCorps positions. |  |  | X |  |
| Payment of AmeriCorps member stipends and benefits is handled directly by the federal agency  |  |  | X | X |
| Primary mission is poverty alleviation |  |  | X |  |
| Primary mission is disaster response and recovery |  |  |  | X |
| Members must be between 18 and 24 years of age |  |  |  | X |
| Members generally need some college or a degree  |  |  | X |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

## I. National Reference Materials

There are four sources of critical background information. They can all be found online.

1. **Official Guidance.** All AmeriCorps active Guidance is available on the agency’s Guidance webpage: <https://www.americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/official-guidance>. The contents of these documents do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way unless incorporated into a contract or grant agreement. These documents are intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.
2. **The Code of Federal Regulations** sections on AmeriCorps (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2520>). The table below highlights sections that are useful in designing a program; however, applicants are urged to review the full text of 45 CFR §2520, §2521, §2522 to acquire a full understanding of AmeriCorps regulations.

**Key to Selected Program Elements in the AmeriCorps Regulations[[2]](#footnote-2)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Requirements and Selection*  | *Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations* |
| Member Service Activities | §2520.20 - §2520.55 |
| Prohibited Activities | §2520.65 |
| Minimum Requirements for Every AmeriCorps Program Type | §2522.100 |
| Types of AmeriCorps Programs | §2522.110 |
| Tutoring Programs | §2522.900-2522.950 |
| Matching Funds | §2521.35-2521.90 |
| Member Benefits | §2522.240-2522.250 |
| Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY) | §2522.485 |
| Performance Measures | §2522.500-2522.650 |
| Evaluation | §2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740  |
| Selection Criteria and Selection Process | §2522.400-2522.475 |
| Standards for Financial Management Systems. | §2541.200    |

1. **National Performance Measures.** A text document version of the measures can be found using the link below.

<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2023_PerformanceMeasures_508_072722.pdf>

## II. Program Elements

AmeriCorps strengthens communities by mobilizing local resources to address one or more critical issues in one of the identified focus areas. One of the most important roles AmeriCorps plays for an organization is expanding the number of volunteers. On average, each AmeriCorps member recruits and manages twelve community volunteers who devote 4-10 hours a month to the same community need. In other words, AmeriCorps is a “force multiplier.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Members help nonprofit, public, charitable, faith-based, and community organizations by serving in ways that improve and expand critical services in one of three ways:

1. Increasing the amount of service provided through an evidence-based program in order to overcome unusual demand or delay in accessing the service.
2. Providing new services to an organization’s clients/customers through an evidence-based program in order to address a new need or issue.
3. Extending to a new population or region a proven program model that addresses a critical need.

In rural states, AmeriCorps programs often partner with near-by organizations whose mission and service interests are closely aligned with that of the AmeriCorps grantee. Partners commit to addressing the problem targeted in the grant by implementing the same evidence-based AmeriCorps program model under the direction of the grantee organization. The AmeriCorps members serve at partner/host sites under formal agreements (including member work plans) with the AmeriCorps grantee.

Partners that serve as host sites must be selected in a manner that reflects the criteria outlined in 45 CFR 2522.475:

1. The quality of the national service program proposed to be supported by a grant
2. The innovative aspects of the national service program, and the feasibility of replicating the program.
3. The sustainability of the national service program.
4. The quality of the leadership, the past performance, and the extent to which the program builds on existing programs.
5. The extent to which participants of the national service program are recruited from among residents of the communities in which projects are to be conducted, and the extent to which participants and community residents are involved in the design, leadership, and operation of the program.
6. The extent to which projects would be conducted in one of the areas listed in §2522.450(c)(1) through (5) of this subpart.
7. The extent to which the application is consistent with the application [approved by] the State in which the projects would be conducted.
8. Such other criteria as the Corporation considers to be appropriate

Organizations that are awarded AmeriCorps grants are responsible for recruiting the AmeriCorps members to serve in their program. Programs are required to develop separate role descriptions for each service position category in their program design (e.g., tutor, health educator, coach) so applicants understand what their duties will be, what is expected of them, and what training as well as supervision they will receive.

AmeriCorps grants *partially* cover the expense of operating an AmeriCorps program and *do not* cover general organizational expenses. Additional cash and in-kind resources are required and, need to be reported as grantee share (aka “match”).

In AmeriCorps, the term “in-kind” is restricted to non-cash resources provided to the program by external partners, host sites, or supporters. Resources paid by the applicant organization from unrestricted funds (space, office supplies, etc.) are considered cash support for the program because these can be identified in the agency accounting system. Both in-kind and cash typically make up the grantee share.

State or municipal public funds as well as private donations from corporate, philanthropic, nonprofit, or individuals can be used as the grantee share. *Under certain conditions*, AmeriCorps programs may operate on a fee-for-service basis. These fees, called program income, are subject to very specific uses and reporting requirements.

Some federal agencies have agreed that their funds may be used as part of AmeriCorps match under certain conditions. The program officer for the federal agency needs to agree to the use.

Under National Service laws, the time of community volunteers may *not* be counted as in-kind match; however, pro-bono professional services contributed to the program (training members, accounting, marketing, evaluation, etc.) may be included. The in-kind value of volunteer time for Maine can be found at <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/> .

There are six options for AmeriCorps members’ terms of service. These terms of service must be completed within 12 months. The duration and intensity of their effort (a few hours a week or 40 hours per week) is determined by the amount and type of activity that needs to be done. Some projects have a few people who serve 10-12 months and add many part-time AmeriCorps members for a “high activity” period. Examples would be weather-dependent service such as housing rehab or the hours after school when youth programs are in full operation.

A single Member Service Year (MSY) is at least 1700 hours which a person serving full-time completes within 12 months (52 weeks). Many programs do not have sufficient work to keep 8 people fully occupied for 1700 hours each year. That is where the other levels of service (terms of service) become useful.

A single Member Service Year can be split into multiple positions as shown on the following chart.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SERVICE TERM OPTIONS FOR MEMBERS** | **Service term minimum hours**  | **MSY Value** | **1 MSY converts to no more than...** | **MSY equivalent** | **# of weeks needed to complete term if serving 40 hrs./wk.** | **# hours/week required if term of service is 1 yr. (52 wks.)** |
| Full-time | 1,700 | 1.00 | -------------- | --------------- | 42.5 weeks | 33 hrs./wk. |
| Reduced Full-time | 1,200 | 0.70 | No conversion | 0.7 MSY | 30.0 weeks | 23.1 hrs./wk. |
| Half-Time |  900 | 0.50 | 2 slots | 0.5 MSY | 22.5 weeks | 17.5 hrs./wk. |
| Reduced Half-Time |  675 | 0.381 | 2 slots | 0.381 MSY | 17 weeks | 13 hrs./wk. |
| Quarter-Time |  450 | 0.265 | 3 slots | 0.265 MSY | 11.25 weeks | 9 hrs./wk. |
| Minimum-Time |  300 | 0.212 | 4 slots | 0.212 MSY | 7.25 weeks | 6 hrs./wk. |

Service benefits those who serve, as well. Research shows AmeriCorps members develop an ethic of service and the leadership skills needed for active, productive citizenship if the program in which they serve actively cultivates these as part of Member development.

The degree to which AmeriCorps members are successful is directly related to the program plans for recruiting, selecting, training (initial and on-going), supervising, and giving feedback to the members. Something to keep in mind is that a strong AmeriCorps program design relies on implementation of all the essential practices in volunteer management from “day one” of operations.

Examples of the essential volunteer program practices that are foundational to AmeriCorps include

* a selection process consistent with the published role description and includes a background check;
* pre-service orientation to the program purpose and goals;
* a service agreement specifying the responsibilities, expectations, length of service, causes for dismissal and so forth;
* skill training before and during the term that assures quality service;
* documentation of hours served and the work accomplished;
* assignment to a supervisor and orientation of the supervisor to the program goals and expectations.

In other words, a well-organized volunteer program plan is a strong base for an AmeriCorps proposal.

## III. Other Program Requirements

* An applicant for an operating grant has done sufficient planning such that all is ready to implement the required program elements for AmeriCorps. 45 CFR § 2522.100 (“What are the minimum requirements that every AmeriCorps program, regardless of type, must meet?”) has the complete text describing these requirements.
* AmeriCorps Members are to perform direct service activities and may perform limited capacity-building activities.
* Members are prohibited by law from doing any of the following:

(a) while charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

(1) attempting to influence legislation;

(2) organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;

(3) assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;

(4) impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;

(5) engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;

(6) participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that is likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;

(7) engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;

(8) providing a direct benefit to--

(i) a business organized for profit;

(ii) a labor union;

(iii) a partisan political organization;

(iv) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and

(v) an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities; and

(9) conducting a voter registration drive or using AmeriCorps funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
(10) providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and

(11) such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

(b) AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

* Members may spend up to 10% of their direct service time raising funds in support of the AmeriCorps program activities so long as the funds do not support:
	+ Any portion of the match for AmeriCorps member living allowances or benefits;
	+ The sponsor’s general operating expenses or an endowment;
	+ Any facet of preparing grant application for funding by AmeriCorps or any other federal agency.
* Programs are required to recruit and support community volunteers as an integral part of the program. Note there is a clear prohibition against AmeriCorps members displacing any unpaid volunteers.[[4]](#footnote-4) Programs may recruit and enroll AmeriCorps members from their current volunteers.
* All grantees must conduct criminal history checks on individuals receiving a living allowance, stipend, national service education award, or all or part of a salary through a program receiving assistance under national service grants, even if the activities don’t involve service with vulnerable populations. This requirement also applies to positions used as in-kind match. As of 2021, programs are required to conduct FBI background checks on covered individuals who will be working with vulnerable populations.
* Programs are expected to fill (enroll) all the member slots awarded in the grant. Enrollment rates have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in continuation (budget years 2 and 3) as well as in recompetition. Continuation and recompeting grantees that have not achieved full enrollment in the prior year must provide an explanation and corrective action plan. Grantees with a history of under-enrollment are likely to receive a funding decrease in subsequent years. Fixed amount grantees are not reimbursed for unfilled positions.
* The project start date is proposed by the applicant. The project start date may not occur prior to the date of the grant award. AmeriCorps members may not enroll prior to the start date of the award. AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period stated in the grant award. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period.
* Programs are expected to pursue very high retention rates. These will have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in the continuation and recompete processes. Successful applicants that do not retain their members are likely to receive a decrease in funding in subsequent years. They will also be required to submit an explanation and corrective action plan with continuation or recompete applications. Under-enrolled Fixed Amount grantees do not receive their entire award.
* Programs may institute “fee for service” practices so long as the service activities relate to the program performance measures and the fees collected are used only to finance the match share of the AmeriCorps program costs.
* *Cost or contributions counted towards other Federal costs-sharing requirements.* Neither costs nor the values of third-party in-kind contributions may count towards satisfying a cost sharing or matching requirement of a grant agreement if they have been or will be counted towards satisfying a cost sharing or matching requirement of another Federal grant agreement, a Federal procurement contract, or any other award of Federal funds.
* Costs financed by program income, as defined in [2 CFR §200.307](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/section-200.307), shall not count towards satisfying a cost sharing or matching requirement unless they are expressly permitted in the terms of the grant award. (This use of general program income is described in 2 CFR §200.307).)
* Up to 20% of a program’s aggregate member service hours may be spent in training related to the skills, knowledge, and abilities essential to their assignment.
* If the proposed service activities require specialized member training and/or qualifications (for example, tutoring programs as outlined in [45CFR §2522](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2522).910-940 the applicant must describe how the program will meet those requirements in the “Member experience” portion of the narrative.
	+ There are very specific AmeriCorps Rules related to tutoring programs. If you are considering a tutoring program, these should be read in full as they address the training of members, curriculum standards, student assessment, and Member supervision. See 45 CFR [§2522.900](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2522)-2522.950
* Operating Grants with annual AmeriCorps funding of $500,000 or more are required to arrange for an independent external program evaluation. Grantees with lesser amounts must perform a program evaluation but may use internal resources. Appropriate budgeting for evaluation expense is an expectation.

## IV. Restrictions on the Use of AmeriCorps Funds (CFR § 2540)

The following section may be useful to organizations hoping AmeriCorps can assist with local challenges:

(a) *Supplantation.* Corporation assistance may not be used to replace State and local public funds that had been used to support programs of the type eligible to receive Corporation support. For any given program, this condition will be satisfied if the aggregate non-Federal public expenditure for that program in the fiscal year that support is to be provided is not less than the previous fiscal year.

(b) *Religious use.* Corporation assistance may not be used to provide religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytization.

(c) *Political activity.* Corporation assistance may not be used by program participants or staff to assist, promote, or deter union organizing; or finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of a Federal, State or local election to public office.

(d) *Contracts or collective bargaining agreements.* Corporation assistance may not be used to impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements.

(e) *Nonduplication.* Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless the requirements of paragraph (f) of this section are met, Corporation assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.

(f) *Non-displacement.*

(1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

(2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

(3) A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.

(4) A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.

(5) A participant in any program receiving assistance under this chapter may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—

(i) Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or

(ii) Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.

(6) A participant in any program receiving assistance under this chapter may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—

(i) Presently employed worker;

(ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;

(iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;

(iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or

(v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

## V. Member Eligibility, Selection, and Accommodation

Eligibility to Serve in AmeriCorps. The federal law that authorized AmeriCorps defines who may serve and requires grantees to document that Members selected to participate in a program are eligible to serve. Accordingly, an eligible member is an individual who:

* is a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States. See 45 CFR [§2522](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2522).2 for documents that are acceptable means of certification is at least 17 years of age at the commencement of service unless the member is out of school and participating in a program described in [§ 2522.110(b)(3)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/section-2522.110#p-2522.110(b)(3)) or [(g)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/section-2522.110#p-2522.110(g)), or
* has a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate [or agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using an education award] and who has not dropped out of elementary or secondary school in order to enroll as an AmeriCorps member (unless enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 484 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, [20 U.S.C. §109](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/20/1091)1 ***OR***has been determined through an independent assessment conducted by the Program to be incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent (provided that AmeriCorps has waived the education attainment requirement for the individual).
* has not been convicted of murder
* does not appear on the National Sex Offender Public Registry Website *(*[www.nsopr.gov/](http://www.nsopr.gov/) )

Selection. Each AmeriCorps program selects its members at the local level. The selection criteria must reflect the program service roles and work to be performed that is defined in the member position description. In all cases, however, selection must be conducted in a fair and non-discriminatory manner that complies with [§2540](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2540?toc=1) of the AmeriCorps rules. Under no circumstances may AmeriCorps members displace any existing paid employees.

Programs must establish minimum qualifications (skills, knowledge, abilities) according to the service that members will provide. These qualifications along with responsibilities or duties and essential as well as desired functions must be stated in a member position description (similar to a standard volunteer role description). Successful completion of an AmeriCorps orientation period is a mandatory qualification for members.

There are specific guidelines for determining whether someone who has done a term of service in AmeriCorps can serve again and earn an education award. Applicants who are awarded AmeriCorps grants will receive technical assistance on this topic as they implement their recruitment process.

Reasonable Accommodation For People with Disabilities. Increasing the participation of people with disabilities in national and community service programs is a key interest of AmeriCorps. In fact, its commitment to including people with disabilities in service has been expressed in providing programs with additional positions and funding during second and third years of grants. In addition, not only are AmeriCorps programs encouraged to actively reach out to and include people with disabilities but role descriptions must identify essential and desired functions so that potential AmeriCorps members can identify opportunities for themselves.

Programs and activities must be accessible. They must provide reasonable accommodation to known mental or physical disabilities of otherwise qualified members, service recipients, applicants, and program staff. All selections and project assignments must be made without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodation.

Participation of Individuals Receiving Supplemental Security Income. On June 17, 2008, H.R. 6081: the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (“[the HEART Act](https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ245/PLAW-110publ245.pdf)) was signed into law, making AmeriCorps more accessible to people with disabilities.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal program that provides a monthly cash benefit to low-income individuals who are aged, blind, or who have a disability. In the past, receiving an AmeriCorps living allowance could disqualify an individual from eligibility. The Heart Act directs the Social Security Administration to ignore an individual's receipt of AmeriCorps benefits for purposes of SSI eligibility. The Act excludes “any benefit (whether cash or in-kind)” and so covers the living allowance, health insurance, child care, and the education award (and related interest payments). This brings all AmeriCorps members under one treatment of benefits rule for SSI. In the past, only AmeriCorps VISTA benefits were excluded by law from countable income for SSI purposes.

Why doesn't the law cover both SSI and SSDI?Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is a Federal program that provides money to individuals with disabilities based on their having paid into the insurance program. There are separate laws and regulations for SSDI eligibility and the HEART Act moved through Congress too quickly to include SSDI.

## VI. Member Benefits.

Member Living Allowance. Only AmeriCorps members whose service assignments require an intense concentration of time (i.e., 40 hours or more weekly) may receive a living allowance or stipend. The living allowance is not a wage but, rather, support that allows the member to give nearly all their time to the program’s service activities and have some funds for rent, heat, food, and transportation. Unlike a wage, the living allowance is the same for all members serving the same types of service terms (minimum hours and position description) and does not vary according to the person’s skills, prior experience, service assignment in your program, or prior experience in AmeriCorps. In Maine, by law, members are not employees and do not qualify for unemployment insurance.

Usually the service terms that provide stipends as benefits are one of the following types:

* Full-time, minimum 1700 hours in 52 weeks;
* Reduced full-time, minimum 1200 hours in 30 weeks;
* Half-time 900-hour positions that are completed in 22.5 weeks, or
* Seasonal positions (summer, school year, etc.) that require full-time effort (e.g., 40 hrs/wk).

For positions requiring less than 1700 hours, the full living allowance is pro-rated.

Terms of service that are designed so a member serves only a few hours per week do not entail living allowances; however, students who are AmeriCorps members may receive a Work-study benefit as part of their service. If the work-study benefit does not equal the living allowance then the program makes up the difference. In any case, the value of work-study for eligible members can be included as local share (match).

Cost Reimbursement budgets must include a living allowance for full-time members that is between the minimum and maximum per member. Cost Reimbursement applicants enter in the budget the amount of living allowance planned under either AmeriCorps or grantee share. The cost may be shared between AmeriCorps and the grantee share.

For the sake of clarity, “Full-time” is used below to refer only to 1700-hour terms of service and not the number of hours per week a member must serve to complete a term on time.

As shown below for programs operating in 2022, the *minimum* living allowance for a full-time (1700 hour) member was $20,000. The maximum living allowance for a full-time member was $33,004. By Commission policy, the minimum living allowance is set at the start of each grant competition cycle (competitive and formula) by multiplying the prevailing minimum wage in Maine and 1700 hours. The maximum living allowance is determined using the federal table in guidance to states.

Examples of programs that might set stipends at a higher rate include those that recruit members to serve in rural communities where living costs may be higher. Applicants are not required to provide a living allowance to half-time, reduced half-time, quarter-time, or minimum-time members who serve less than 40 hours/week.

Programs may also provide added benefits for members such as housing assistance. This is encouraged since applicants tend to favor programs that help support them during service.

Exceptions. The AmeriCorps rules contain exceptions related to living allowances. If a program existed prior to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (September 21, 1993), the law does not require it to provide living allowances to members.

### Terms of Service, Education Award Amounts, Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance Rates

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Term** | **# of Hours** | **Education Award** | **Minimum Living Allowance** | **Maximum Living Allowance** |
| Full-time | at least 1700 | $6,895.00 | $20,000 | $30,200 |
| Reduced Full-time | at least 1200 | $4,826.50 | $14,000 if 40 hrs./wk. | $21,140 |
| Half-time | at least 900 | $3,447.50 | Not required | $15,100 |
| Reduced half-time  | at least 675  | $2,627.00 | Not required | $ 11,506 |
| Quarter-time | at least 450  | $1,823.72 | Not required | $ 8,003 |
| Minimum-time | at least 300  | $1,458.98 | Not required | $ 6,402 |

Education Awards. Funds for Education Awards are not part of program budgets. Congress makes a direct appropriation to the National Service Trust for these. AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service will receive education awards for each term. Members may serve up to four terms but may not earn more than the equivalent of two full-time education awards.

Members who use the awards for their own educational goals have up to seven years from completion of service to use their education award. They may use their awards to pay for any combination of: (1) the costs of attendance at a qualified institution of higher education where the member is pursuing a degree or certificate; (2) the costs of approved school-to-work programs; or (3) the costs of repaying qualified student loans.

Members who are age 55 or older when they begin service may opt to transfer their education award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. In such cases, the education award is available to the person receiving it for 10 years after the AmeriCorps member completes his/her term of service.

While they serve, members who have outstanding qualified student loans may be eligible for forbearance on their payments. To qualify, they must contact their loan holders. Upon successful completion of a term of service, the National Service Trust will make payments for some or all interest that accrued during the period of forbearance.

For additional information on the Education Award, forbearance, and the National Service Trust, visit: <https://americorps.gov/members-volunteers/segal-americorps-education-award/find-out-more>.

Child Care. For full-time members who need child care in order to participate, grantees must assist members in accessing the AmeriCorps childcare benefit (either child care through an eligible provider or a child care allowance in an amount determined by the Corporation). AmeriCorps makes direct payments to child care providers.  Therefore, this benefit is ***not paid*** from the grantee budget and should not be included as an expense.

AmeriCorps will not cover childcare costs for less than full-time members. Programs may provide child care to less-than-full-time members serving in a full-time capacity, but they are not required to do so.

Health Insurance. The grantee must provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time the member begins his/her term of service. The grantee must also provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who lose coverage during their term of service as a result of service or through no deliberate act of their own. AmeriCorps will not cover healthcare costs for dependent coverage.

Less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (e.g. 1,200-hour members serving 40 hrs./wk. during school year) are eligible for healthcare benefits. Programs may provide health insurance to less-than-full-time members serving in a full-time capacity, but they are not required to do so. For purposes of this provision, a member is serving in a full-time capacity when his/her regular term of service will involve performing service on a normal full-time schedule for a period of six weeks or more. A member may be serving in a full-time capacity without regard to whether his/her agreed term of service will result in a full-time Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

Any of the following health insurance options will satisfy the requirement for health insurance compliant with Minimum Essential Coverage for full-time AmeriCorps members (or less than full-time members serving in a full-time capacity): staying on parents’ or spouse plan; insurance obtained through the Federal Health Insurance Marketplace of at least the Bronze level plan; insurance obtained through private insurance broker that is MEC compliant; Medicaid, Medicare or military benefits.

If coverage is being provided via the Healthcare Marketplace, and thus third-party payment is not an option, programs must develop a process to reimburse members for monthly premiums. Reimbursements for health insurance premiums are considered taxable income for the member, and programs must have a way to document such reimbursements. It is not permissible to increase reimbursement amounts to cover the tax.

Grant Terms and Conditions, Policies. These documents contain post-award details that should be considered in program design. Applicants would do well to review these documents in order to gauge the administrative systems that will be required.

AmeriCorps Grant Terms & Conditions - <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2022ASNProgram508TC.pdf>

General Terms and Conditions - <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/FY2023-General-Terms-Conditions-508-20221028.pdf>

Examples of what will be expected include developing role descriptions, member service agreements, codes of conduct, notice of circumstances that would be grounds for immediate release, and development of a grievance procedure for members or other interested parties.

Samples of issues with financial implications are listed below; however, this list is not exhaustive, and applicants should review the regulations, provisions and policies directly.

* The grantee must have adequate general liability coverage for the organization, employees and members, *including coverage of members* engaged in on- and off-site project activities.
* The grantee must withhold Federal personal income taxes from member living allowances, requiring each member to complete a W-4 form at the beginning of the term of service and providing a W-2 form at the close of the tax year. The grantee must comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements. Note that members are exempt from state unemployment coverage and not eligible for benefits at the end of service.
* Worker’s Compensation is an allowable cost to the grant. Maine law does not require provision of worker’s compensation for members although it is encouraged if the applicant’s carrier offers the option. If a program opts not to provide worker’s compensation, it must obtain Occupational Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance coverage for members to cover in-service injury or incidents.
* Unless exempted by the IRS, all AmeriCorps programs must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance even when AmeriCorps funds are not funding the living allowance. Participation in FICA helps members earn quarters in the system and is particularly beneficial to individuals who may be older or have spent considerable time out of the workforce.
* A living allowance is not a wage. Programs ***may not*** pay a living allowance on an hourly basis. Programs should pay the living allowance in regular increments, such as weekly or bi-weekly, paying an increased increment only on the basis of increased living expenses such as food, housing, or transportation. Payments should not fluctuate based on the number of hours served in a particular time period and must cease when a member concludes a term of service.
* Grantees may enroll Federal Work Study students as AmeriCorps members. Only individuals who enroll in an AmeriCorps position in a program that has been approved by the Corporation are eligible to receive AmeriCorps member benefits. Except as required by Federal Work Study regulations, AmeriCorps members may not be paid on an hourly basis**.** The Corporation does not consider a wage under the Federal Work Study program to be a living allowance for purposes of the National and Community Service Act. The grantee is not required to report such wages in the AmeriCorps grant.

## VII. Federal Financial Management & Grant Administration Requirements

As with all Federal grant programs, grantees funded by AmeriCorps are responsible for ensuring the appropriate stewardship of Federal funds entrusted to them. Under AmeriCorps regulations, each grantee must maintain financial management systems that provide accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial results of its program.

**Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.** Grants under this program are subject to [2 CFR Part 200](file:///%5C%5Csom.w2k.state.me.us%5Cdata%5CED-DATA%5CSERVICE%5CFED%20CNS%5CAC%20GRANT%5C2023%20AC%20State%20New%2BContinuation%5CMaine%20Docs%2BRFAs%2BApps%5CState%20Formula%20Planning%5Cecfr.gov%5Ccurrent%5Ctitle-2%5Csubtitle-A%5Cchapter-II%5Cpart-200%3Ftoc%3D1) and AmeriCorps regulations issued to implement the Part 200. These regulations supersede and streamline requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, and A-122 ; Circulars A-89, A-102, and A-133; and the guidance in Circular A-50 on Single Audit Act follow-up.

**National Service Criminal History Check Requirements.** The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. The law requires recipients to conduct and document NSCHCs on any person (including award-funded staff, national service participant, or volunteer) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend, or education award through a program receiving AmeriCorps funds.  An individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives such AmeriCorps funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. The cost of conducting NSCHCs is an allowable expense under the award.

All program staff, national service participants, and volunteers must have a National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) that includes:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the [National Sex Offender Public Website](https://www.nsopw.gov/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)
2. A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check; and
3. A search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person’s state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work

*See* [45 C.F.R. § 2540](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2540?toc=1).200–§ 2540.207 for complete information. In Maine, the Commission helps grantees connect with a system operated by the Dept. of Public Safety that conducts the required checks. Vendor checks (checks performed by commercial vendors) are often noncompliant with these requirements. Inability of a grantee to demonstrate that they have conducted an NSOPW and other required criminal history checks, as specified in AmeriCorps’s regulations, may result in disallowance of all or part of the costs associated with noncompliance.

**Use of Material.** To ensure that materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, AmeriCorps reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so.45 CFR § 2543.36; 2541.30

**Civil Rights and Accessibility Compliance**. As with all Federal grant programs, you must assure that your programs will be conducted, and facilities operated, in compliance with the applicable civil rights statutes and their implementing regulations. You must obtain assurances of such compliance prior to extending Federal financial assistance to partner organizations that host AmeriCorps members. For civil rights purposes, all programs and projects funded or receiving service members under the National and Community Service Act, as amended, are programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance.

## VIII. Reporting and Compliance Requirements

Every program must develop policies and a system for collecting, organizing, and analyzing data on an ongoing basis. The categories of data include member records, service activities and impact, identities of partners, as well as financial (in-kind and cash). The most common reporting mechanisms are fiscal reports, quarterly progress reports, and final reports.

All grantees will be expected to have data collection and data management policies and practices that provide reasonable assurance that they are providing Volunteer Maine with high quality programmatic and financial data. At a minimum, grantees should have policies and practices which address the following five aspects of data quality:

* The data measures what it intends to measure;
* The grantee collects data in a consistent manner;
* The grantee takes steps to correct data errors;
* The grantee ensures that the data reported is complete; and
* The grantee actively reviews data prior to submission.

In addition, the program must cooperate with state or national program evaluation studies the funders may undertake. These studies do not supplant the evaluation requirements of each grantee. Also, if selected you must compile data on civil rights compliance, as detailed in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions that are part of your grant award.

## IX. Continuous Improvement

Every program that receives AmeriCorps funding must design and implement a continuous quality improvement system. Such a system assesses management effectiveness, the quality of services provided, and the satisfaction of AmeriCorps members, project volunteers, and persons served. Internal evaluation activities should seek frequent feedback and provide for quick correction of weaknesses. Typical components of internal evaluation are community advisory councils, participant advisory councils, quality control inspections, and customer and participant surveys. In continuation applications, the results of continuous improvement systems are used to explain changes in program operations, services, or plans.

## X.  Performance Measures

Performance measurement is the process of systematically and regularly collecting and monitoring data related to observed changes (positive or negative) in communities, members, or end beneficiaries receiving your program’s services. Performance measures track how much is being done (units of service; outputs), how often, for what duration of time, by how many AmeriCorps members, for how many community beneficiaries, and how much change is occurring as a result (intermediate outcomes).

All applicants will select one set of aligned performance measures in each of these areas: 1) Service Activities (primary intervention), 2) Member Development, and 3) Capacity Building.

Service Activity options are in the National Performance Measure Instructions (<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2023_PerformanceMeasures_508_072722.pdf>). Applicants may propose their own aligned set of measures if no suitable National Performance Measure exists. The Service Activity performance measures (output and outcome) must tie to the primary intervention of the program. A second performance measure can be submitted if it reflects an equally significant activity in the program. AmeriCorps does not want applicants to select performance measures for every activity or impact.

For applicant planning purposes, the Post Award Performance Measures are these:

Member Development (training and professional development), all programs will use these Commission-defined performance measures. Note the measurement instructions.

* *Output*: Number of AmeriCorps program training and formal member development events that result in increased AmeriCorps member skills, knowledge, and abilities related to the service assignment (community, tasks, and sector).

*How to calculate/measure*: Count of program sponsored/conducted events with pre/post or other assessments showing a majority of participants acquired service-related skills, knowledge, abilities.

*How to collect data*: To verify occurrence: Event agenda/curriculum outline with enrollment, date, instructor, duration, and location details. To verify increased skills, knowledge, abilities use an assessment of leaner change

* *Outcome*: Number of AmeriCorps members demonstrating increased competency in skills or application of knowledge during their service activities.

*How to calculate/measure*: Unduplicated count of members who demonstrate increased competency while carrying out their service assignment.

*How to collect data*: Documented assessment by supervisor or program staff of specific competencies in Member mid-term and/or final evaluations.

For Capacity Building, all programs will use these Commission-defined performance measures. Note the measurement instructions.

* OUTPUTS: 1) Number of community volunteers recruited and/or managed by AmeriCorps members and 2) Number of hours those volunteers contributed to program or host site services.
* OUTCOME: Number of additional direct service activities and/or units completed for organizations by volunteers recruited/managed by AmeriCorps members.

*How to calculate/measure*: Recruited means enlisted or enrolled as a direct result of an intentional effort to do so. In the measure, the applicant/grantee should indicate a minimum number of days or hours, or other units of service, that must be performed by the individual in order for him or her to be counted as a recruited volunteer.

*How to collect data*: The organization must use some form of volunteer management system, having processes or capabilities that allow them to track information about individual volunteers such as but not limited to: the volunteer’s name, relevant demographic information including location of residence, method of recruitment, participation in orientation and/or training activities, planned and actual role, assignment(s) or activities, start and end dates of service, and hours served related to the program that the capacity building activities were intended to support or enhance

The total number of volunteers recruited or managed should be an unduplicated count of community volunteers engaged during the program year. Applicants/grantees should control for double counting.

National service participants may not recruit volunteers to do activities that they themselves are prohibited from doing.

Note that all performance measures must be consistent with the program’s Theory of Change as described in the narrative and reflected in the logic model. AmeriCorps also values thorough data collection plans. These are outlined in the application logic model and performance measurement fields.

## XI. Evaluation and Data Collection

Evaluation vs. Performance Tracking and Data. Evaluation is a more in-depth, rigorous effort to measure the impact of programs. It uses scientifically-based research methods to assess the effectiveness of programs by comparing the observed program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program.

Requirements Differ According to Applicant Type. AmeriCorps has established a tiered approach to content in the evaluation narrative of the application that uses experience with AmeriCorps as the distinguishing criteria. Note that data collection elements are required of everyone in performance measures and logic models.

AmeriCorps Applicant Experience and Evaluation Submission Requirements

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *What to submit 🡪* | **Data Collection Plan** | Evaluation Plan | Evaluation Results Report | Learning Memo |
| *How to submit 🡪* | **Use “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field** | Use “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field | Submit as hard copy attachment | Submit as hard copy  |
| **Applicant with no prior AmeriCorps grant** | **X** |  |  |  |
| Applicant funded for the first time within the past 5 years; this proposal is first recompete and is for same project (see definition of same project on page 9) |  | X |  |  |
| Applicant funded for the same project more than once within the past 5 years; this application is second or subsequent recompete for the same project (see definition of same project) |  | X | X | X |

## XII. Data Collection Training for Sites and Members

Program models that propose to locate members in host organizations to perform service must orient and train both host supervisors and members on the program’s objectives, performance measures, continuous quality improvement system, and evaluation plan. Experience shows that most data is collected at the host sites as part of the service activities. Therefore, the most critical players in a program’s data collection need to have a thorough understanding of what information is needed, the format, the source, who needs to provide it, the frequency, and the methods by which it will be collected at the program level. These elements must be included in the required host site agreements.

## XIII. Cost-per-Member

The Corporation for National and Community Service annually sets a maximum cost per Member Service Year (MSY = 1700 hours). This amount is a formula for determining the ***maximum amount of funds*** that can be awarded. In 2023, these amounts are

* Cost Reimbursement Grant - $28,000 per MSY
* Fixed Price Grant - $28,000 per MSY

## XIV. Grantee Share Requirements

The required match rate is specific to the legal applicant and not the proposal. Proposals from applicants funded within the last 5 years must provide match at the level reflecting the number of years they have operated AmeriCorps programming. This is true even if the applicant proposes a new program.

**Match levels required for Maine AmeriCorps State Operating Grants.**

The AmeriCorps share and Local match shares in this table refer to the “Grand Total” of the program budget.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grant Cycle** | **First Year** | **Second Year** | **Third Year** |
| New ApplicantFirst Operating Grant | 70% CNCS share30% Local match |  70% CNCS share 30% Local match  | 70% CNCS share 30% Local match  |
| First Recompete GrantSecond Operating Grant |  60% CNCS share 40% Local match | 60% CNCS share 40% Local match  | 60% CNCS share 40% Local match  |
| Second Recompete GrantThird Operating Grant | 45% CNCS share 55% Local match  | 45% CNCS share 55% Local match | 45% CNCS share 55% Local match |
| Third Recompete GrantFourth Operating Grant | 1. **Formula Programs must apply under State Competitive rules.**
2. May apply for full Cost-per-Member allowed.

Match split changes to 40% CNCS share60% Local match |

1. Members serving less than 1700 hours must do so at the rate of 40 hours/week for consecutive weeks. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that regulations direct states to establish their own policies in certain areas. This RFA contains applicable details and takes precedence over the minimum federal requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A capability that, when added to and employed by a service-delivery program, significantly increases the potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See 45 CFR 2520.35 for waiver information related to this requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)