



**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP BIDDERS CONFERENCE and
SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

RFP NUMBER AND TITLE:	RFP 202102030: Maine AmeriCorps Formula Grants
RFP ISSUED BY:	Volunteer Maine (Maine Commission for Community Service)
BIDDERS CONFERENCE LOCATION:	Virtual
BIDDERS CONFERENCE DATE/TIME:	March 19, 2021 – 8:30 am (1pm session had no attendees)
SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:	March 29, 2021
QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:	March 30, 2021
PROPOSAL DUE DATE:	April 16, 2021
PROPOSALS DUE TO:	Proposals@maine.gov

Provided below are questions asked and the responses given at the Bidders Conference.

1	Question
	Will slides and a recording be available after the presentation?
	Answer The slides can be accessed as a PDF through this link: http://volunteermaine.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Presentation%20ME%20Formula%20AmeriCorps2post-addPolls.pdf

2	Question
	We are building our program from scratch. Is it possible to have the volunteers help with that?
	Answer AmeriCorps state members would not be doing the research and development but they certainly could help “build” the program by implementing something new and getting community members involved as volunteers.

3	Question
	Does “at least 8 members” mean at least 8 people or at least 8 member service years?
	Answer It means at least 8 member service years. See note about minimum hours on pages 2, 8, and 18.

4	Question
	Can the volunteers be used to design the tentacles of our volunteer program?
	Answer If “design” means searching for a model or working with the community to figure out what the service should be – that is effort that would be done by VISTA. AmeriCorps State enters the picture when the plans are complete and ready for implementation.

5	Question
	Can AmeriCorps and Senior Corps working in the same “space”?
	Answer
	The question refers to one of the Senior Corps programs, Senior Companions. Senior Corps was renamed AmeriCorps Seniors but is not part of the trio of programs being discussed. Senior Companions does provide individual support to people but does not take on community-wide implementation of programs.

6	Question
	We are concerned our expectations of the volunteers are too high. [Are they?]
	Answer
	The complexity of work volunteers and AmeriCorps members undertake is not limited. Examples are volunteer tax preparers, volunteers doing medical work, volunteers supporting people in court, etc. The technical level of tasks for volunteers has to be reflected in recruitment and supervision and training. All these steps have to ensure the volunteers have appropriate and related role descriptions, supervision, scope of work, qualifications and training to carry out the service in a high quality way.

7	Question
	Can each department in the UMaine System apply to this competition? How does that work? I am working with University of Southern Maine.
	Answer
	From the Commission’s perspective, there is no limit. An individual campus may have an internal preference or policy. The applicant needs to check with the grant management office on the campus.

8	Question
	What happens after 3 years? Is there an option to extend the grant or apply again?
	Answer
	Grantees may apply for subsequent 3-year grants and compete with any other applicants. There is a limit at the AmeriCorps Formula level – can apply 3 times. After that must go into the AmeriCorps Competitive program which, if a proposal is selected, goes into a federal state vs state competition.

9	Question
	Is the requirement 8 member service years each of the 3 years or over the 3 year period?
	Answer
	The requirement is 8 member service years each year of the 3 years.

10	Question
	Is it okay to collaborate with another entity as part of the volunteer's training?
	Answer
	Yes, definitely. Often AmeriCorps programs will plan joint trainings. Another training approach programs take is to ask community organizations or professional associations to let the AmeriCorps members attend trainings.

11	Question
	What is your website?
	Answer
	It is Volunteer Maine.gov

12	Question
	Does "retention" mean during the grant period or hiring the people after the grant is completed?
	Answer
	Retention means keeping the members in service for their full term during a particular year.

13	Question
	How does minimum wage fit in? What about payroll taxes?
	Answer
	Minimum wage does not apply to AmeriCorps members' living allowance. Under both state and federal law, AmeriCorps members are not employees so employment law is not applicable. In addition, the living allowance is disbursed in equal payments throughout the term of service and not in amounts determined by the hours served in a week. Thus, if someone gets the flu or if there is a holiday in a week, the living allowance is <u>not</u> adjusted. The living allowance is income that is taxable so income tax would be withheld. Also, FICA is applied but not as a result of it being income or wages. When the program was designed, there was a decision to let people earn quarters in the social security system.

14	Question
	It appears there is no funding for overhead and indirect costs?
	Answer
	As with other grants, there is an opportunity to capture a portion of the indirect or overhead. In the AmeriCorps cost reimbursement grants, the law specifies that the AmeriCorps funds can only be charged 5% for indirect. The good news is that, if you have an indirect rate or an agency wants to use the 10% flat rate because it does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, you can use the difference between the total overhead for the project and the 5% that can be charged to the AmeriCorps funds as local share. There is a table and thorough explanation in the RFP. Important to know is that "total costs" means the AmeriCorps grant share PLUS the grantee share.

15	Question
	Do AmeriCorps members start at the same time?
	Answer
	Yes, according to the program design. By that we mean, all the 1700 or 1200 hour members would start at the same time shortly after the grant award. Then, if there are members who will work on seasonal or short-term elements of the project, they start together and experience orientation as well as initial training together.

16	Question
	Is the grantee responsible for employer portion of FICA?
	Answer
	Yes and it is an allowable cost on the grant funds or you can split it between the two columns or put the total amount on the grantee share.

17	Question
	What is the percent for grantee share?
	Answer
	For first time applicants, it is 30%. See the table on page 31 of the RFP.

18	Question
	Are AmeriCorps members entitled to PTO as required by the City of Portland?
	Answer
	PTO doesn't apply because AmeriCorps members are not employees. The fact they don't have PTO doesn't impact their living allowance either. As explained earlier, the living allowance is disbursed in equal amounts that have nothing to do with the number of hours served in a particular time period.

19	Question
	Does local share equal in-kind?
	Answer
	The local share (aka, grantee share) may be comprised of cash plus in-kind from third parties.

20	Question
	What about costs of special needs for people with disabilities? What if the person needs an attendant?
	Answer
	The federal agency is given an appropriation to fund accommodations. Those are not taken out of the budget of the program. There is a process for certifying the accommodation is

	correct and the cost is actual. Both are submitted directly to the federal agency and they pay directly. Maine program's have requested a wide variety of supports over the years. Many years ago, there was a request for "job coach" support that was honored. Would need to see what federal policy is now. Each situation has to be documented and submitted.
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21	Question
	Why is the indirect so complicated?
	Answer
	It is different but the calculation let's grantees put the difference between the capped 5% on AmeriCorps and their organization's rate toward the grantee share. For some, this helps reach the required percent more quickly.

22	Question
	Will we be able to ask questions throughout the grant-writing process?
	Answer
	You will be able to submit questions in writing as described in the RFP. The deadline for submitting questions is March 29, 2021.

23	Question
	What happens if the portfolio doesn't use up all available funds, what do you do?
	Answer
	That has not been the case over the last couple of years. If it is a small amount (\$2-3 thousand), the Commission may offer grantees selected a chance to claim the funds. If something unexpected happens, we will put a hold on the funds at the federal level and run an off-cycle competition.

24	Question
	What are the total amount of funds available or expected number of new grantees?
	Answer
	The allocation for Maine has not been published by the federal agency but last year Maine received \$700,000 for continuations and new. Expecting that, due to recompetes and continuations, the Commission will have room for up to 2 new Rural and/or 2 new Standard grants.

25	Question
	Are there grant-writers in Maine who have experience with AmeriCorps grants? Can the project teach a block of AmeriCorps grant-writers?
	Answer
	It is a rare skill in the state. The Commission is not aware of anyone who has AmeriCorps experience and grant writing experience but is not currently working for an AmeriCorps program. The grantee may not use AmeriCorps funds to train people to write AmeriCorps grants.

26	Question	
	Can we apply for both grants?	
	Answer	
	A proposal for the same program may not be submitted to both competitions. The definition of "Same Program" can be found at the top of page 12 in the RFP.	

Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department's answer.

1	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	C.I. Who is eligible to apply (page 11)	We have never applied for a Maine AmeriCorps grant, but we do have other AmeriCorps programs in other states. We service a 4-state region, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Currently we have an AmeriCorps program running in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Would we still be eligible to apply for the Maine AmeriCorps program since we serve Maine and I live in Maine?
	Answer	
	If the application under this RFP is to operate your program in Maine and members as well as funds would only be used for activities in Maine, the agency could apply.	

2	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
		Would we need an office space for the AmeriCorps program members?
	Answer	
	Grantees must provide the tools and environment that will support not only successful service delivery, but also successful effort by AmeriCorps members. Thus, if members will be expected to travel to community locations to deliver a program service, they should have a base of operations that functionally permits them to store materials, meet and plan, communicate with colleagues and supervisors and customers/clients, and conveys a professional tone to the public. That said, if an organization's culture or operations has all staff teleworking, a grantee will need to develop policies and procedures and training that address a host of issues that arise. These include care and allowable use of grantee issued equipment; what constitutes service when someone is working at home; protocols or safety or expectations when conducting video conferences with customers or colleagues; record storage and sharing; and much more.	

3	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
		Would we be able to have AmeriCorps serve within our organization, but work at the neurology offices of Maine Health to provide direct support services and help families connect with Epilepsy Foundation New England's programs and services?
	Answer	
	It seems this question is asking whether the host site can be a partner in the state of Maine	

	because the office of the applicant is outside of Maine. A host site is an organization that is collaborating on the grant and has AmeriCorps members based within their locations in order to do the service. "Based" means the members have an on-site supervisor who is qualified to help them with the service and who carries out duties that cannot be practically done by a remote program director. It also means the obligation to provide work tools/supplies and access to customers/clients shifts to the host who (presumably) is more proximate to the community being served. In the question asked, if Maine Health (a not for profit) is a host site, the answer would be yes.
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4	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Answer	

5	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Answer	

6	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Answer	

7	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Answer	

8	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Answer	