



NEW YORK STATE AMERICORPS FUNDING PROCESS

The New York State Commission on National and Community Service (Commission) is required by the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (2009) to conduct a competitive grant award process. This process must comply with federal rules set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation) and New York State regulations and guidelines. Applications are solicited from eligible entities by State Commissions through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

Procurement/RFP Process

Annually in late spring the Corporation issues an AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) which provides anticipated funding for the upcoming federal fiscal year, a program description, and application submission information. The Corporation also sets forth its strategic initiatives and any priority issue areas that would receive special consideration. For example in 2010, programs designed to engage veterans as service recipients or providers were identified as a priority. At a later date in summer, the Corporation releases the formal application instructions.

During this time, the New York State Commission commences planning and development work resulting in a draft Request For Proposal document and schedule for procurement which then is submitted for review and final approval. The completed draft RFP document must be cleared through the formal Office of the State Comptroller internal agency review process, the State Commission's Application Process Committee, the Executive Chamber, and finally through the Division of the Budget.

The Commission follows guidelines set forth in the New York State Procurement Law. The goal of the State's procurement process is to procure commodities, services and technology that enable State agencies to fulfill their respective missions while ensuring fair and open competition. The State's procurement process is designed to: (a) guard against favoritism, improvidence, extravagance, fraud and corruption; (b) ensure that the results meet agency needs; and, (c) protect the interests of the State and its taxpayers. To ensure these goals are met, State statute provides for checks and balances to regulate and oversee agency procurement activities. The Commission maintains a Procurement Record each funding cycle which documents all decisions regarding the procurement process which must be submitted to and approved by the Office of the State Comptroller before contracts can be awarded.

AmeriCorps RFP Development

Following procurement guidelines, the Commission must convene all aforementioned process stakeholders prior to the development of the AmeriCorps RFP. Relevant stakeholders include the State Commission on National and Community Service Application Process Committee, staff from Office of Budget Management, Bureau of Contract Management, Office of Legal Affairs, Strategic Planning and Policy Development, and Grants Management Office. The purpose of the RFP is to specify the required qualifications of applicants, New York State mandatory contract terms and conditions, and any priorities set forth by the Commission.

AmeriCorps RFP Issuance

Once the draft RFP is approved for the public, notice must be posted in the State's Register and an announcement issued to registered users of the State's On-Line Bidder's list. In addition, the AmeriCorps RFP is announced on the State Commission's website, other state and local partner websites, and a blast email distributed to a Commission-maintained database of more than 6,000 volunteer organizations throughout the state. The RFP, Corporation's NOFO and Application Instructions are thereby available to the public on the internet or by hard copy which is mailed upon request.

Subsequent to the issuance of the AmeriCorps RFP, an on-line training and technical assistance session is made available on-demand for the duration of the RFP posting at the State Commission's website. The content of the AmeriCorps Technical Assistance Session includes a thorough presentation of the New York State AmeriCorps RFP, the Corporation's NOFO and Application Instructions, and clarification to common questions. Additional questions from potential applicants may be submitted to the State Commission Office and are published as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) on the State

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Commission website. All material from the AmeriCorps Technical Assistance Session is also available to potential applicants by mail in hard copy as well as on CD-ROM.

Application Submission and Peer Review Process

The AmeriCorps application review and selection process must be documented prior to the receipt of applications and is presented in a format that is consistent with the evaluation process set forth in the RFP.

All applications must be submitted through the Corporation's electronic grants management system (eGrants) by the due date stated in the application. Documents required by and related to the New York State Contracting Process must also be submitted in hard copy to the State Commission Office by the due date. No application can be opened or reviewed until the close of business on the due date. At that time, applications are opened and reviewed for completeness of required components and documents. Those applications that are considered complete are then logged into the State Commission's electronic database. Applications that are not considered complete may be sent to the Office of Legal Affairs for a final determination. Applications that do not meet the mandatory requirements specified in the RFP will not receive further evaluation and are ineligible for funding consideration. Applicants in this situation are notified within 30 days of application submission.

Prior to the submission deadline for applications, independent reviewers are identified and trained to participate in the application review process. The scoring tools are explained and each reviewer is asked to sign a Conflict of Interest form for each application they read. Each application is reviewed by three independent reviewers. Scores are recorded and averaged. If there is a disparity of 15 points or more between any of the three peer reviewer scores, two additional reviews will be conducted by reviewers and the five total scores will be averaged.

To achieve regional diversity, the Commission will submit the highest scoring applicant in each of the ten regions defined in the RFP that receive an average score of 85% or higher. In the event that the highest scoring proposal in any one region is funded by Competitive dollars, this qualification will have been met and there is no requirement that Formula funding be awarded for geographic equality. Statewide or Multi-Regional programs either based in a region or with members serving in that region are not taken into account when determining regional diversity.

Once this process is complete, all scores are final. Applicant scores and pertinent information are then rank ordered by average score, from the highest scoring proposal to the lowest. Thereafter, that ordered is never altered.

AmeriCorps Competitive Recommendations/Funding

Applications with the highest average score that meet or exceed the criteria set forth in the procurement record are then identified and presented by the State Commission Application Process Committee to the full Commission for its review and approval. The Commission-approved portfolio of applications is then sent via the federal government's eGrants system to the Corporation to compete with other states for Competitive funding.

The Corporation for National and Community Service conducts its own review process for the proposals it receives from all State Commissions and National Direct applicants. This review process is independent from the State Commission's review and results in identifying proposals for Competitive funding. Competitive grant announcements are made in late spring.

AmeriCorps Formula Recommendations/Funding

AmeriCorps applications that were not sent to the Corporation for Competitive funding consideration and those applications that were sent but were not selected for Competitive funding, are then considered for Formula funding. The State Commission Application Process Committee reviews applicants eligible for Formula funding and makes a recommendation to the full Commission using the same average score and in the same rank order originally determined. The Commission may accept or amend this recommendation in order to maximize Formula funding that is finite.

The AmeriCorps RFP and award notice is a year-long process beginning with the issuance of the federal NOFO in the spring of one year and ending with the Formula grant awards in early summer of the next year. Successful applicants that are awarded Competitive or Formula funding are required to contract with the State of New York and the programmatic and fiscal components of their AmeriCorps grant is monitored by professional staff of the State Commission Office.

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