



The New York State Commission on National and Community Service

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers generated during the current and previous New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals process. The questions are organized by issue area.

Notices:

The PowerPoint presentation from the October 14 and 15, 2008 Bidder's Conferences is available online at www.newyorkersvolunteer.org

Applications are submitted to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service through eGrants on [October 31, 2008](#).

The application due date of January 13, 2009 on the Corporation for National and Community Service Website DOES NOT apply to those applying for the New York State 2009 AmeriCorps*State/ AmeriCorps*State Education Award Grant.

Reminder:

Programs that are currently in their first or second year of operation within a three-year grant cycle must submit a proposal for continuation funding. If your program is currently in the final year of its grant cycle, you must apply by referring to the Application Instructions for New and Recompeting programs.

eGrants: (<http://www.nationalservice.org/egrants/index.asp>)

When submitting an application using eGrants, the Corporation for National and Community Service's integrated, secure, web-based system for applications, New and Recompeting applicants for operating grants must select New York as the State to which they are applying, the NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2009 and the following Prime Application ID: 09AC093158

Currently operating programs applying for continuation funding select either the previously mentioned Competitive Prime Application (if you are Competitive and continuing), **or** the following formula Prime Application ID (if you are Formula and continuing): Grant Application ID: 09AC093154

Education Award Program applicants select the following Education Award Prime Application: ID: 09ES093152 Education Award Program (EAP).

Terminology

- Q. What is the "Corporation?"
- A. The Corporation for National and Community Service was established by Congress in 1993 to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community based service through such programs as AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*Vista, Learn and Serve America, the National Civilian Community Corps and the National Senior Service Corps.
- Q. What is an MSY?
- A. Member Service Years (MSYs), one MSY is equivalent to 1700 service hours.

Program Models

- Q. Can you have a centralized program where AmeriCorps members are assigned to different sites?
- A. Yes, there are multiple-site programs. The program and each site should have a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes the roles and responsibilities of the AmeriCorps program. However, AmeriCorps members in programs funded through the New York State Commission on National and Community Service can only be assigned to programs delivering services in New York State.
- Q. Are there a minimum/maximum number of members acceptable for a proposal?
- A. All proposals to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service must request no fewer than 10 Member Service Years (MSY). One MSY is equivalent to 1700 service hours. The maximum number would be determined by the ability to raise the necessary matching funds to support the program, to supervise the members and to administer the program effectively.
- Q. What is the maximum cost per MSY that a program can apply for?
- A. The New York State Commission on National and Community Service is allowing programs to apply for up to \$13,500 per Member Service Year (MSY); however, the average statewide cost per member will be \$12,600 for program year 2009-10. As a result, the Commission reserves the right to make adjustments to individual program requests so that the Commission is able to meet the Corporation's requirement.
- Q. Could you give examples of the type of projects that have been funded, and the type of sponsoring parent organizations?

- A. Visit our website <http://www.newyorkersvolunteer.org/Home.aspx> to see a list of AmeriCorps programs in New York State.
- Q. Can AmeriCorps members be used to take the place of employees?
- A. Programs may not permit a member to fill in for an absent employee. By law, members may not under any circumstances perform services, duties, or activities that had been assigned to an employee or to an employee who has recently resigned or has been discharged. Programs may not use a member in a way that will displace an employee or position. Program requirements are located in the AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520 – 2550 (http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/45CFR_chapterXXV.pdf).
- Q. Can federal work study money be used as match under the single match format?
- A. Programs need to check with their federal funding agency to confirm whether they will allow their funds to be used to match their AmeriCorps grant. Programs should contact any New York State college or university to determine if they are willing to contract with your program to help improve the local community in a way that uses AmeriCorps members. Universities and colleges may provide Federal Work Study funds to students who are AmeriCorps members while your program provides training and service.

Strategic Focus Areas

- Q. Should an applicant submit a proposal with one strategic initiative or should they combine initiatives?
- A. An applicant can combine initiatives in their program design, however, as with any proposal; the request should clearly describe the program design and activities. The Corporation will give special consideration to **projects that address one or a combination of five strategic initiatives** that meet critical needs of our nation, achieve national service goals, and address community problems: Mobilizing more volunteers; Ensuring a brighter future for all of America's youth; Engaging students in communities; Harnessing Baby Boomers' experience; and Helping communities recover from and prepare for disasters. In 2009, the Corporation will also give special consideration to programs designed to engage veterans as service recipients or providers.

Recruitment

- Q. Could you give a profile of the members typically entering the program?
- A. Each program has a different profile, based on the requirements of the service program, the diversity goals of the program, and the member support available through the program.
- Q. Is there a minimum age to be an AmeriCorps member?
- A. Generally AmeriCorps members must be 17 years old. Sixteen year-olds may serve if they are out-of-school, are in a program for out of school youth, and did not leave school to join AmeriCorps.

- Q. What are the eligibility requirements to be a member?
- A. To be eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps, an individual must:
Be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national or a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States; be at least 17 years-old (or at least 16 years of age if the member is out of school and a participant in a youth corps or a program for certain disadvantaged individuals); has a high school diploma, or agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using an education award.
- Q. How do programs recruit AmeriCorps members?
- A. Each program recruits differently, based on its needs, program model and access to potential AmeriCorps members. Some examples include: the national AmeriCorps Recruitment website, newspaper ads and radio spots, asking partner agencies to recruit, working with social service agencies, working with local colleges, etc.

Partnering

- Q. Elaborate on the concept of agency collaboration.
- A. Most importantly, programs should not duplicate services in the community that are already being provided by other agencies. We strongly encourage agencies interested in applying for an AmeriCorps program to seek support from other agencies within the community. Support can be as true partners, responsible for developing the program with you, supervising AmeriCorps members within their agency, helping to meet matching requirements, etc. Support can also be less formal through sitting on an advisory committee, providing training for members and staff, providing other in-kind support such as space or supplies, etc.

Written commitments with defined roles and responsibilities of partnering agencies are encouraged as they demonstrate support in any final proposal.

- Q. Are there limitations on the number of partner agencies?
- A. No, however any collaborative relationships should be beneficial to all parties involved.
- Q. Do you think that a collaborative will be a stronger proposal?
- A. Typically yes. While each proposal is evaluated on its individual merits, we have found that those agencies that hold planning meetings and seek support from within the community submit stronger proposals and run stronger programs.

Application Process

- Q. When are applications due?
- A. Applications are submitted to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service via eGrants, the Corporation for National and Community Service's integrated, secure, web-based system for grant applications. **on October 31, 2008. The application due date of January 13, 2009 on the Corporation for National and Community Service Website DOES NOT apply to those applying for the New York State 2009 AmeriCorps*State/ AmeriCorps*State Education Award Grant.**

If you are not submitting in eGrants, you may submit a paper application postmarked by October 31, 2008 to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. See Section 2.3 Application Submittal Process if submitting a hard copy paper application.

- Q. Does a program have to have secured their match prior to submission of the grant application, or can the program continue to fund raise during the year?
- A. Programs should identify their match sources. The AmeriCorps Application Instructions describe the information related to Budget/Cost effectiveness. Your description of commitments will be reviewed as part of the evaluation of your proposal. Even if not fully secure or committed, applicants should indicate potential match sources.
- Q. Can you use state and city funds as matching funds?
- A. Yes, however, you should track the source of those funds. If the original source is federal, you may not be able to use those funds as matching funds. Contact your federal funding source for further information.
- Q. Can you apply as a National Direct and to the NYS Commission for the same project?
- A. Please refer to Page 6 in the Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity. "Multiple Submissions: The same project cannot be funded by multiple AmeriCorps grants. If you have more than one application pending before the Corporation for the same project, you must state this fact in each application. You will be required to withdraw all but one if two or more are approved for funding."
- Q. If programs utilize the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) system to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire, do they also need to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire Form provided as an attachment to the Request for Proposal (RFP), or can they just attach a copy of their OSC form?
- A. Vendors are invited to file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online through the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) New York State VendRep System or may choose to complete and submit a paper questionnaire "Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire Form".

To enroll in and use the OSC New York State VendRep System all vendors may view the VendRep System Instructions available at www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep or go directly to the VendRep System online at <https://portal.osc.state.ny.us>. For direct VendRep System user assistance, the OSC Help Desk may be reached at 866-370-4672 or 518-408-4672 or by email at helpdesk@osc.state.ny.us.

Performance Measures

- Q. What do you mean by "aligned" performance measures? Does this apply to New and Re-competing Applications?
- A. A set of aligned performance measures contains one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end-outcome. Each of these results should relate to the same service activity. In addition, each result flows sequentially, from output to intermediate outcome, and from intermediate outcome to end outcome. The following web address will link you to a Corporation-sponsored

AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit: <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/star/acprogram-toolkit>. In eGrants, you will align the measures by entering three different Result Types and Result Statements for one Performance Measurement Title. The three Result Types are Output, Intermediate Outcome, and End Outcome.

The New York State Commission requires New or Recompeting applicants to provide performance measures upon submission of the application. All Performance Measures will be developed in more detail if you are approved for funding.

For Continuation Applications in the Performance Measures Section, performance measures are copied from the information you entered after you received your grant into the continuation request. Changes are described in the Continuation Change Sections.

- Q. Should an applicant submit a proposal with one strategic initiative or should they combine initiatives?
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Evaluation

- Q: What are the evaluation requirements for **New and Recompeting Applications**?
- A: New and Recompeting applicants follow the instructions in the AmeriCorps State Application Instructions.
- Q. Do I have to budget for evaluation?
- A. Yes. Please follow the budget instructions for the Evaluation line in the Application Instructions.
- Q. What do New York State Programs do regarding the evaluation if they are re-competing for the 2nd time since July 2005?
- A. Programs re-competing for the 1st time since July 2005 should make a plan for their evaluation during this 3-year cycle.

eGrants SYSTEM

- Q. The eGrants system is functioning slowly today as we prepare our applications. What should I do?
- A. eGrants may operate more slowly during times of high volume. A contributing factor may be that individuals are not waiting for a report to populate before clicking on the run report button several times. Users should only click on any button (run report, save, next, etc.) once and wait for the system to populate the report or move to the next screen. There is a slight delay in screen refresh in eGrants even under optimal conditions and reports can take time to populate. To click multiple times sends a new request to the server each time and this can cause delays. Please be patient and let the system operate as designed.

eGrant System Changes

- Although Budget Sections I, II, and III will still appear in eGrants, you will no longer be required to comply with the 15% and 33% match requirements for member support costs and program operating costs. You will be held to the single match level appropriate for your program according to our regulations and the 2008 appropriations language.
- The MSY factors/percentages have been revised to align with those used by the National Service Trust, as described in the Application Instructions (reduced half-time .381, quarter-time .2646 and minimum time .2117).
- You will see new narrative fields for Clarification Summary, Amendment and Continuation Changes. Enter N/A in the Clarification Information and Amendment fields. The Clarification Information field will only be used by those applicants selected to participate in the post-review pre-award clarification period.
- Enter "No Changes" in the Continuation Changes field unless you are submitting a continuation request and wish to report changes.
- You will see new fields to **Enter Source of Matching Funds** in all three sections of the budget. You may disregard the Enter Source of Matching Funds option in Sections I and II. Please enter all of your Sources of Matching Funds for your total budget in Budget Section III:
 - Click on Enter Source of Matching Funds in Section III.
 - Enter a brief description of the match (maximum 250 characters). For example, "Ford Foundation Grant" or "Site Contribution" or "Donated Supplies."
 - Enter the amount of the match.
 - Select the appropriate Match Classification: In-kind, Cash, or Not Available.
 - Select the appropriate Match Source: State/Local, Other, Federal, Not Available, And Private.
 - Click on Save and Close.