



2011 AMERICORPS STATE*COMPETITIVE
*State Operating ▪ Professional Corps ▪ Education Award Program ▪ Fixed-Cost Pilot ▪
State Planning*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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.

NOTE:

1. Technical Assistance Session:

The 2011 New York State AmeriCorps Grant Technical Assistance Session on Video for potential applicants is available online at <http://accordent.powerstream.net/008/00198/10/oncs/1015/>
(TA can also be accessed through www.NewYorkersVolunteer.ny.gov)

2. Due Date:

All applications in response to the 2011 New York State AmeriCorps*State and National Competitive RFP are due no later than November 24, 2010, 5:00 pm Eastern standard Time (EST) to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. This includes all "Single-State" applicants who are requesting funding for an AmeriCorps Operating, Education Award Program, Fixed-Cost Pilot, or State Planning Grant. "Single-State" applicants are proposing to operate any of the aforementioned grant programs in New York State ONLY.

The application due date of January 25, 2011 on the Corporation for National and Community Service *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*, Corporation's Website, and in the Corporation's Application Instructions DOES NOT apply to "Single-State". This deadline is for State Commissions and Multi-State applicants. "Multi-State" applicants are proposing to operate any of the aforementioned grant programs in two or more States.

3. Application Narrative - Executive Summary

The revised Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) indicated that all applicants are required to submit a one-paragraph summary of their proposed program. This paragraph must be 500 characters maximum, including spaces and punctuation. Executive Summaries must be entered into the appropriate field in eGrants. The Corporation will post these summaries on www.nationalservice.gov in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

4. Update on 2011 AmeriCorps NOFO:

On October 18, 2010, the Corporation for National & Community Service released amended notices for the 2011 AmeriCorps grant competitions, initially issued August 31, 2010 which includes greater emphasis on evidence-based programs, information on priorities, definitions of Focus Areas, information on the review and selection

process, and 2011 national performance measurement pilot information. References to "Priority Area" were changed to "Focus Area;" and "Clean Energy" to "Environmental Stewardship" throughout. The NOFO can be found at <http://www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov/NationalService/AmeriCorps.aspx> or at http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/10_0831_ac_nofa.pdf.

CNCS Frequently Asked Questions:

http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/10_0924_acorps_faq_grantees.pdf

Background information on 2011 National Performance Measures:

http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/11_1018_americorps_nofa_background_document.pdf

5. Continuation Applicants

Currently funded AmeriCorps*State programs completing 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 Re-Competing" Applicants.

6. Applying through eGrants

The eGrants system can be accessed by clicking on the following link: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/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 Re-competing applicants for operating grants must select New York as the State to which they are applying. Select the following Prime Application(s) depending upon the type of application you are submitting. (**Planning Grant applicants should select the 'Formula Prime'**):

COMPETITIVE

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2011

Grant Application ID #: 11AC122797

Grant ID #: 09ACHNY001 Summary: These grant funds support community service programs under AmeriCorps and operate through State Service Commissions.

FIXED-COST GRANT (STATE)

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State Fixed Amount Grants FY 2011

Grant Application ID #: 11ES122798

Summary: The purpose of this NOFA is to allow Education Award Programs, Professional Corps Programs, and Full-Cost Programs operating in a single state to apply for Fixed Amount AmeriCorps grants through their State Commission. This NOFA is applicable to both New and Continuation applicants.

EDUCATION AWARD PROGRAM

NOFA: Commission Competitive Education Awards Program FY 2011

Grant Application ID #: 11ES122793

Grant ID #: 09ESHNY001

Summary: The purpose of this NOFA is to allow organizations operating in a single state to apply for AmeriCorps competitive funding for Education Awards Programs through state commissions. This NOFA is applicable to both New and Continuation applicants.

FORMULA

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2011

Grant Application ID #: 11AC122796

Grant ID #: 06AFHNY001

Due Date: 01/25/2011

Summary: These grant funds support community service programs under AmeriCorps and operate through state service commissions.

7. Planning Grant Applicants

The purpose of an AmeriCorps Planning Grant is to support the development of AmeriCorps programs so applicants are better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps Operating grant in the following grant cycle. Up to \$200,000 in Formula Funding is available for AmeriCorps Planning Grants. Applicants can apply for a grant of up to \$50,000. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grant applicants must not have previously received an AmeriCorps*State or National grant.

All Planning Grant applications must be submitted no later than November 24, 2010, 5:00 pm Eastern standard Time (EST) to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. This due date applies to all "Single-State" Planning Grant applicants who are requesting funding for a 2011 AmeriCorps Planning Grant. "Single-State" applicants are those organizations that will utilize their Planning Grant to prepare to submit an Operating Grant that if funded, will place AmeriCorps members in New York State ONLY.

The application due date of November 4, 2010 on the Corporation for National and Community Service *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*, Corporation's Website, and in the Corporation's Planning Grant Application Instructions DOES NOT apply to "Single-State" applicants in New York State. Single-State applicants in New York State should submit their proposal in eGrants and apply to the Formula Prime (Grant Application ID #: 11AC122796/Grant ID #: 06AFHNY001).

8. Resources

Specific information about the AmeriCorps statute, the National Community Service Act, the AmeriCorps regulations, the AmeriCorps State and National Grant Provisions, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 can be found using the following search tools and resource pages:
http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/ASN_Megasearch_Site.htm
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp>

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.

Q. What is the difference between the terms FTE and MSY?

A. MSY and FTE (full-time equivalent) are synonymous. However, beginning in 2005, the Corporation for National & Community Service has replaced the term FTE with MSY (Member Service Year).

Q. What is the difference between an AmeriCorps member and a volunteer?

A. An AmeriCorps member is an individual serving in an approved national service position with an AmeriCorps program. An AmeriCorps member serves for a pre-determined term of service and is eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of service. AmeriCorps members are supervised by program staff and often receive a living allowance. Volunteers are not eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award, usually do not receive compensation and might not be required to provide consistent, sustained service. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members might serve side by side.

- Q. What are the living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members?
- A. The living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members vary by grant type. Detailed information on the living allowance requirements can be found in the 2011 AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity. Additional information can also be found in the 2011 AmeriCorps*State and National Request for Proposals.

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 \$16,000 per Member Service Year (MSY); however, the average statewide cost per MSY cannot be more than \$13,000 in 2011-12 when the State Commission aggregates all proposed cost per MSY by individual applicants. **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.ny.gov> to see a list of AmeriCorps programs in New York State along with program descriptions.
- 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.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/ASN_Megasearch_Site.htm)
- 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.

PRIORITY AREAS

- Q. Should an applicant submit a proposal with one priority area or should they combine priorities?
- A. An applicant can combine priorities in its program design, however, as with any proposal; the request should clearly describe the program design and activities. For 2011 the Corporation expects to invest a significant amount of available funding to programs working in the six Focus Areas identified in the Serve America Act: **Disaster Services, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Opportunity, and Veterans and Military Families.**

In particular, as noted above, the Corporation seeks to target its grant making in the Education Focus Area for greater impact and increase its investment in the Focus Area of Veterans and Military Families accordingly, to meet these goals, the Corporation will give priority consideration to the following, in descending order of preference:

- Education programs that are focused on improving academic outcomes for children, youth, and young adults, particularly those in low-performing schools.
- Programs that serve veterans and military families, or that include performance measures focused on engaging veterans in service.
- Programs that opt into the national performance measure pilot.
- All other programs in the Focus Areas with self-nominated measures.
- Additional preference will be given to programs that lead to member outcomes.

Applicants proposing programs in the priority areas are not guaranteed funding. The Corporation will pursue a balanced portfolio across the Focus Areas, and other considerations.

Q: What percentage of new grants do you expect to make to each of the five strategic initiatives? Will it be 20% each?

A: While the New York State Commission on National and Community Service makes every effort to maintain a balanced portfolio both geographically and programmatically, there is no designation of funding amount to individual strategic initiatives. Applications are reviewed and funded consistent with the competitive process outlined in the 2011 New York State AmeriCorps*State RFP.

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. AmeriCorps members must be at least 17 years old.

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 and have a high school diploma, or agree 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, and working with local colleges. While the Corporation has an online recruitment system that AmeriCorps programs are strongly encouraged to use, each program is responsible for recruiting its own AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps programs are entirely responsible for providing training to AmeriCorps members. In your proposal you must describe how you will recruit, orient and train the AmeriCorps members you are requesting.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

- Q. Elaborate on the concept of agency collaboration/partnership.
- 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 through collaborating to develop a program design, supervising AmeriCorps members within their agency, or helping to meet matching requirements. Support can also be less formal through sitting on an advisory committee, providing training for members and staff, or providing other in-kind support such as space or supplies.

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 seek support from within the community submit stronger proposals and run stronger programs. Collaborations can increase the quality and reach of services you provide.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Q. When are applications due?
- A. Applications must be 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 by **November 24, 2010**. **The application due date of January 25, 2011 on the Corporation for National and Community Service Website DOES NOT apply to those applying for the 2011 AmeriCorps*State RFP including AmeriCorps Operating Grants, State Education Programs, Fixed-Cost Grants, or State Planning Grants.**

If you are not submitting in eGrants, you may submit a paper application by November 24, 2010 to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. Although paper applications will be accepted, applicants should make every effort to submit their proposal electronically utilizing the Corporation's web-based application system, eGrants, which can be found here: <http://www.cns.gov/egrants/index.asp>

Detailed instructions on how to create an eGrants account and prepare your AmeriCorps application can be found in the applicable Applications Instructions section of the 2011 New York State AmeriCorps*State RFP. See Section 2.2 Proposal Submittal Process if submitting a hard copy paper application.

- Q. Does a program have to have secured its match prior to submission of the grant application, or can the program continue to fund-raise during the year?
- A. Programs must identify their match sources. The 2011 AmeriCorps*State and National RFP AmeriCorps Operating Grants, State Education Awards, Fixed-Cost Grants, and State Planning Grants 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. 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 strongly encouraged 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." They can submit a copy of their OSC form confirming that they have filed the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online.

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.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Q: Is there a required national orientation that members must attend? If so, who pays for the expenses?
- A: There is no required national service orientation that AmeriCorps*State members must attend. The recruitment, placement and training of AmeriCorps*State members is the responsibility of the grantee organization and sub-sites (if applicable). There are several state and national trainings/conferences that AmeriCorps applicants are encouraged to include in their proposed budget a minimum of \$2,000 to allow members and/or staff to attend.
- Q: After reviewing the budget section of the 2011 AmeriCorps State and National Request for Proposals and the Application Instructions, I am uncertain how we are supposed to calculate the Annual Salary of the Volunteers our organization (local town government) would be requesting. For example, if we requested 10 people to work on a town-wide energy audit program, should we put a town salary equivalent for each person? That is, what a normal town employee would be paid if we were to hire such a person to work on the program?
- A: Please review the 2011 New York State AmeriCorps*State RFP Part 1: Section 2.1 *General Program Requirements* and Section 3.6 *Budget Instructions for New and Re-Compete Applicants*. You should pay specific attention to sub-sections Section II-A&B (A)*Member Costs-Living Allowance* which indicates the minimum and maximum living allowance a 2011-12 AmeriCorps*State member can receive and (B) *Member Support Costs* which defines member benefits and associated costs.
- Q: Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?
- A: No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

EVALUATION

- Q: What are the evaluation requirements for New and Re-Competing Applications?
- A: New and Re-competing applicants follow the instructions in the AmeriCorps State Application Instructions. New and Re-Competing applicants must submit a summary of their evaluation efforts or plan to date, or a copy of any evaluation that has been completed, as part of their application for funding.
- Q: Do I have to budget for evaluation?
- A: Yes. Please follow the budget instructions for the Evaluation line in the Application Instructions.

FIXED-COST PILOT

Q: What is the Fixed-Amount Grant Program?

A: The Fixed-Cost Grant has no matching requirements and has fewer financial reporting requirements. The grant amount requested per full-time member will be a competitive factor in the Corporation's selection. The Corporation maximum is \$13,000 per MSY. Fixed-Cost Grants will be awarded only to organizations applying for full-time AmeriCorps positions. Fixed-amount grants in the Education Priority Area must select national performance measures. There is no match requirement for fixed amount grants.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the Fixed-Amount Grant Program?

A: New and reapplying applicants are encouraged to apply for a new fixed-amount grant. Applicants in continuation must submit a new application to apply for a fixed-amount grant. If your continuation application does not meet the criteria for a new fixed-amount grant, the Corporation reserves the right to fund your application as a continuation of your current grant instead. In these cases, continuation grantees can expect continuation funding subject to meeting the Corporation's normal standards of adequate performance and availability of funds.

PLANNING GRANTS

Q. What is an AmeriCorps Planning Grant?

A. A Planning Grant supports the development or improvement of a program so that it may be better prepared to successfully compete for operating assistance in the following grant cycle.

Q. How much can we apply for?

A. Applicants can apply for a grant of up to \$50,000.

Q. We have operated an AmeriCorps program in the past and would like to apply for a Planning Grant to launch a new initiative. Can we apply for a 2011 Planning Grant?

A. AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grant applicants must not have previously received an AmeriCorps*State or National grant.

Q. How long is the Planning Grant period?

A. AmeriCorps Planning Grants are awarded for a one year period.

Q. How much total funding is available through the New York State Commission for Planning Grants?

A. The New York State Commission has set aside \$200,000 in Formula Funds for Single-State Planning Grants applicants with a maximum award to any one applicant of \$50,000.

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.