



2010 AMERICORPS STATE COMPETITIVE

Professional Corps ▪ Education Award Program ▪ Fixed-Amount Pilot

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 2010 Program Grants Technical Assistance Video Session for potential applicants is available online at <http://accordent.powerstream.net/008/00198/09/ONCS/1204/>
(TA can also be accessed through www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov)

2. Due Date:

All applications must be received at the New York State Commission on National and Community Service by **December 21, 2009, 5:00 pm Eastern standard Time (EST)**. **The application due date of January 26, 2010 on the Corporation for National and Community Service Website and in the Corporation Application Instructions DOES NOT apply to those applying for the New York State 2010 AMERICORPS STATE COMPETITIVE including Professional Corps ▪ Education Award Program ▪ Fixed-Amount Pilot.**

3. Documents:

The Corporation for National & Community Service released a Corporation for National and Community Service AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2010 Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Overview (NOFO) INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT AMENDED December 1, 2009. The NOFO can be found on the OCFS On-Line Bidders list as RFP Attachment 5.1 or at http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/09_0918_nofa_ac.pdf

4. Update on 2010 AmeriCorps NOFO:

On December 1, the Corporation amended the initial 2010 AmeriCorps Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The amended NOFO includes new information on the National Performance Measures Pilot, the Fixed-Amount Grant Pilot information released in November, and other minor changes. The following provides detailed background information, Frequently Asked Questions, and a summary of changes in the amended NOFO.

- [Detailed Background Information on 2010 National Performance Measures](#) (PDF)
- [FAQs on 2010 National Performance Measures](#) (PDF)
- [Summary of Changes in Amended Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity](#) (PDF)

Resources

Specific information about The AmeriCorps statute, the National Community Service Act, the AmeriCorps regulations, and the AmeriCorps State and National Grant Provisions, and AmeriCorps State and National Frequently Asked Questions are available online at: http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/ASN_Megasearch_Site.htm

Reminder:

Please respond to ALL the Application Instruction questions in your proposal. THEY WILL BE NOTICED. If a response is required, make sure that you provide the response - *or a reason why an aspect, (such as the actual diverse demographics of member corps or volunteers or how the community is involved in planning a program) is not included.*

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. Select the following Prime Application(s) depending upon the type of application you are submitting:

COMPETITIVE (New & Continuation)

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2010

Grant Application ID #: 10AC109443

Grant ID #: 09ACHNY001

Due Date: 01/26/2010

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

STATE FIXED AMOUNT (New & Continuation)

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State Fixed Amount Grants FY 2010

Grant Application ID #: 10ES109444

Grant ID #: 09ESHNY001

Due Date: 01/26/2010

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

FORMULA (Continuation Grants)

NOFA: Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2010

Grant Application ID #: 10AC109445

Grant ID #: 06AFHNY001

Due Date: 01/26/2010

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

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 2010 AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity. Additional information can also be found in the 2010 AmeriCorps Application instructions.

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 \$15,000 per Member Service Year (MSY); however, the average statewide cost

per member will be \$13,000 for program year 2010-2011. **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.
- 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.

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 2010 applicants will indicate whether they plan to focus on one of the five priority areas identified in the Serve America Act: Education; Healthy futures, Clean Energy/Environment, Veterans, and Opportunity. Priority consideration will be provided to applications from programs that address the priority areas. Priority consideration will also be provided to applications for programs that intend to use the national performance measures. **The Serve America Act also specifies that not less than 10% of AmeriCorps funding will be to “encore service programs” with a significant number of individuals age 55 and older.**

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); 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.

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 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 **December 21, 2009**. **The application due date of January 26, 2009 on the Corporation for National and Community Service Website DOES NOT apply to those applying for the New York State 2010 AmeriCorps*State/ AmeriCorps*State Education Award Grant.**

If you are not submitting in eGrants, you may submit a paper application postmarked by December 21, 2009 to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. See Section 2.3 Proposal Submission 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 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 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.

Performance Measures

Although the Corporation does not require performance measures as part of an application until the program has been selected for consideration for a grant, the NYS Commission on National and Community Service requires that all applicants complete well-defined, performance

measures (see Section 5.2 AmeriCorps State Operating grants including Professional Corps, Education Award Only Grants, New York State Fixed-Amount Pilot Program and Planning Grants, p.20, p.46), including any applicable national standardized performance measures as part of their application. The Corporation published information regarding standardized performance measures on December 1, 2009 which are posted on the New Yorkers Volunteer website: www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov

Also See the 2010 National Performance Measures FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/09_0918_nofa_ac_faq_perf.pdf

- 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 and one intermediate 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.nationalserviceresources.org/star/acprogram-toolkit>. In eGrants, you will align the measures by entering different Result Types and Result Statements for one Performance Measurement Title. The Result Types are Output and Intermediate Outcome.

The New York State Commission requires New or Re-competing 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 into the continuation request from the information you entered after you received your grant.

- Q. How do I indicate that I am opting into using the National Performance Measures?
- A. You will indicate whether you will be working in a Priority Area and whether you will be using one or more national measures for each priority area in the eGrants performance measure screens at the time of application. In addition, reference the Priority Area, national measure, and proposed target in your narrative discussion of outputs and outcomes. You will select specific national measures in the performance measure screens in eGrants during the post review pre-award clarification process.
- 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.

**Corporation for National and Community Service AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2010
Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Overview (NOFO)...
Announcement Type: Initial announcement amended 12.1.09**

Section X. of this Notice, “National Performance Measures Instructions” provides detailed information on which performance measures to select for your program, which measures must be selected together, and the types of data that will be required to demonstrate success.

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.

New and Recompeting 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.

For New York State AmeriCorps programs that took part in the New York State-Wide Evaluation, see RFP Section 5.5 Evaluation Summary for language to submit with your application.

Q. Do I have to budget for evaluation?

A. Yes. Please follow the budget instructions for the Evaluation line in the Application Instructions.

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. See additional information in Section the RFP 5.3 Corporation for National and Community Service 2010 AmeriCorps State and National, Indian Tribes Planning Grants (NOFO), and Section 5.4 Corporation for National and Community Service 2010 AmeriCorps State and National, Indian Tribes Planning Grants regarding outcomes

Q. How long is the grant period?

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

Q. If my project does not receive a Competitive planning grant will our proposal be considered for Formula funding?

A. The NYS Commission has set aside \$200,000 in Formula funds for Planning Grants for programs that project to operate in geographic regions that do not currently have AmeriCorps programs.

Q. Is there a cost match requirement on planning grants?

A. Yes. The match requirements can be found in the 2010 AmeriCorps Planning Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity (RFP, Section 5.3).

How concrete a set of long-term outcomes do we need to include in a planning grant -- i.e., would we need essentially to design the initiative in order to write the proposal? Or can we sketch out our goals more broadly and detail how a planning grant will help us structure the initiative to achieve the goals?

- 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.