



Is An AmeriCorps Grant Right For Your Organization?

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is often referred to as the domestic Peace Corps, in that it provides citizens the opportunity to engage in full or part-time service to their community. The largest of AmeriCorps programs, AmeriCorps State and National provides funds to local and national organizations and agencies committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. Each of these organizations and agencies, in turn, uses their AmeriCorps funding to recruit, place, and supervise AmeriCorps members. After successful completion of their term of service, AmeriCorps members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that can be used to pay for college or graduate school at Title IV schools, or to repay qualified student loans. Fulltime AmeriCorps members also receive a modest living allowance, health care benefits, and child care assistance.

Who is an AmeriCorps member?

An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in intensive service to address pressing community problems. AmeriCorps members serve through nonprofits, public agencies, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribes, and faith-based organizations to tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters, among other activities. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of their term of service. Some AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance to support them during their term of service

When was AmeriCorps created?

President Clinton and a bipartisan majority in Congress created AmeriCorps in September 1993. It continues to receive strong bipartisan support today. Since AmeriCorps follows the model of the GI Bill - rewarding those who serve - after completing a year of service, AmeriCorps members receive an education award to help pay for college or training. The Corporation for National Service makes education awards available to members who complete their terms of service.

What do AmeriCorps members do?

AmeriCorps members help solve problems and make communities stronger. Working with organizations such as the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Boys and Girls Clubs, as well as many other national, state, and local nonprofit organizations, AmeriCorps members recruit and train volunteers, tutor and mentor at-risk youth, make schools and neighborhoods safer, build and rehabilitate homes, clean rivers and restore parks, help seniors live independently, provide health care in underserved rural and Native American communities, and provide emergency and long-term assistance to victims of natural disasters, among other things. AmeriCorps members serve in communities across America, in both urban and rural areas.

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

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.

What is the Corporation for National & Community Service?

The Corporation for National and Community Service (“CNCS” or “The Corporation”) was established by Congress in 1993. The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For more than fifteen years, CNCS—through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

What is the role of the State Commission on National & Community Service & AmeriCorps?

The State Commission was established by the Governor through Executive Order in 1994 and is supported administratively by the State Office of National and Community Service. With direction from the Office of the Governor, the Commission functions to build and reinforce a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility, and to institute accountability and efficiency in the administration of national service and community volunteer programs operating in the state. The New York State Commission works collaboratively with the Corporation for National & Community Service and New York State Education Department to administer 240 national service programs that engage more than 80,000 volunteers annually in the State of New York. The resources provided by the State Commission and its partners address the needs identified in the State’s service and civic engagement agenda in the core areas of education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, disaster services, veterans and military families, and economic opportunity. In addition, the State Commission leads the efforts of a statewide network of ten regional volunteer centers that partner with community-based organizations to deliver training and resources that build volunteer management capacity in order to more effectively meet state and local needs.

Who is eligible to apply for an AmeriCorps grant?

The following organizations are eligible to apply to the Commission for funding through this RFP: Private not-for-profit corporations, public agencies, local governments, educational institutions, labor organizations, not-for-profit and community-based organizations including but not limited to secular and faith-based, operating solely in New York State; partnerships or consortia consisting of the foregoing. Applicants that have never received funding through the New York State Commission or Corporation are encouraged to apply for funding in this RFP. Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in the State AmeriCorps RFP.

The Corporation sets aside one percent of grant funds to support programs operated by Indian Tribes and selected by CNCS on a competitive basis. An Indian Tribe is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, Regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and services provided under federal law to Indians because of their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

What are the priority Focus Areas for the AmeriCorps program?

Disaster Services: Grants will help individuals and communities prepare, respond, recover, and mitigate disasters and increase community resiliency. Grant activities will: increase the preparedness of individuals; increase individuals’ readiness to respond; help individuals recover from disasters; and help individuals mitigate disasters.



Economic Opportunity: Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people. Grant activities will help economically disadvantaged people to: have improved access to services and benefits aimed at contributing to their enhanced financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education: Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children. CNCS is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service-learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes. Grant activities will improve: school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and the preparation for and prospects of success in post-secondary education institutions for economically disadvantaged students.

Environmental Stewardship: Grants will provide direct services that contribute to increased energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, or improving at-risk ecosystems, and support increased citizen behavioral change leading to increased efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and economically disadvantaged communities. Grant activities will: decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improve at-risk ecosystems; and increase green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improve at-risk ecosystems.

Healthy Futures: Grants will meet health needs within communities including access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity. Grant activities will: increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity, and improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by CNCS-supported programs (access to health care).

Veterans and Military Families: Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength. Grant activities will increase: the number of veterans and military service members and their families served by CNCS-supported programs, and the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service provision through CNCS-supported programs.

What is "Capacity Building"?

In addition to the six Focus Areas described above, grants also will provide support for capacity building activities provided by national service participants. As a general rule, CNCS considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CNCS-supported organizations to provide more, better and sustained *direct services*. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Examples of capacity building activities include: Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers; Implementing effective volunteer management practices; Completing community assessments that identify goals and recommendations; Developing new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

How many AmeriCorps members are serving in New York State?

Throughout an average year, more than 7,800 individuals spend part of a year or a full year serving in local communities with an AmeriCorps State & National or AmeriCorps VISTA program.



Where do AmeriCorps members serve?

Members can serve with nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes. The specific eligibility of applicants can be found in the New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals.

Who can be an AmeriCorps member?

An individual must be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S. to be an AmeriCorps member. An individual must be at least 17 years old, although some service opportunities require an individual to be at least 18. For most programs there are no upper age limits. Some programs have specific skill requests in certain areas, and others look for a bachelor's degree or a few years of related volunteer/job experience. For others, an individual's motivation and commitment may be the primary requirement.

Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff at my organization?

No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff at your organization. By law, members may not under any circumstances perform services, duties, or activities that had been assigned to a current employee or to an employee who has recently resigned or has been discharged. Program Regulations can be found in 45 CFR §§ 2520 – 2550 (http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/ASN_Megasearch_Site.htm)

Could you give a profile of the members typically entering the program?

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.

What are the eligibility requirements to be a member?

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.

How do programs recruit AmeriCorps members?

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.

Can AmeriCorps members serving with one agency be assigned to different sites (agencies)?

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.

Are there a minimum/maximum number of members acceptable for a proposal?

All proposals to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service must request no fewer than 10 MSYs. One MSY is equivalent to 1700 service hours or a full-time member. 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. The Corporation advises against any New applicant applying for more than 50 MSY.



Who can apply for AmeriCorps funds?

AmeriCorps funds can be awarded to nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes in New York State. To receive the New York State AmeriCorps grant application directly, please register at <https://apps.ocfs.ny.gov/obl/>.

Who makes the funding decisions?

A portion of AmeriCorps funding is awarded Competitively by the Corporation for National and Community Service ("Corporation") at the federal level while the remaining Formula funding, is allocated based on population to State Commissions to award. The New York State Commission on National & Community Service ("Commission") selects, monitors and provides training and technical assistance to AmeriCorps programs operating in New York. The Commission is a body of Governor-appointed representatives as determined by State Executive Order charged with implementing the service plan of the Governor, the National Service Trust Act (1993), and the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (2009).

What does an AmeriCorps grant pay for?

There are four kinds of AmeriCorps grants that may be open for application through the New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals: Cost-Reimbursement Grants, Fixed-Cost Grants, and Education Awards Program Grants.

Cost-Reimbursement Grants pay for member living allowances and benefits, member training, staff costs, operating costs, evaluation and administration. The Corporation will pay for a certain portion of these costs, while the local agency hosting the program is responsible the remaining portion.

Fixed-Cost Grants are awarded to eligible organizations with a fiscal model that uses a fixed dollar amount up to \$13,000 per full-time member. (Fixed-Cost Grant applications can only be submitted by eligible applicants who are (1) classified as New or Re-competing, and (2) propose a program design that will enroll full-time members only.)

Education Award Program (EAP) Grants are awarded to eligible organizations with a program model that includes most or all of the AmeriCorps*State program costs supported by sources other than the Corporation and whose members do not receive living stipends. These programs support education awards for members and help lower the state per full-time equivalent member cost. Applicants for EAP grants can apply for up to \$800 per member. The amount per full-time member requested will be a competitive factor in the Corporation's selection process.

What are the requirements regarding member living allowance (member stipend)?

An approved AmeriCorps budget must include a living allowance for full-time members between \$12,100 (minimum) and \$24,200 (maximum) per member except as noted below. For Operating (i.e.: Cost-Reimbursement grants, this amount must be included in the proposed budget. The living allowance is not required for members serving in less than full-time terms of service. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the maximum limits in the chart below.

Members serving in a full-time capacity may be eligible for health care coverage and child care reimbursements. After members successfully complete their term of service, full-time members receive an education award of \$5,550. This rate of an AmeriCorps Education Award remains equal to a Federal Pell Grant. Other members receive a pro-rated award. The award can be used to pay for the costs of attending an institution of high education or to pay back qualified student loans.

Members who already have student loans may qualify for postponement, or forbearance, of the repayment of your loans during their service, and the education award will help them pay off qualified student loans when they are finished.



While full-time Fixed-Cost Grant applicants don't submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance to members that comply with the minimum and maximum requirements. Full-time fixed-amount grant applicants are not required to identify that amount in the application.

Member Service Term	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full-time	1700	\$12,100	\$24,200
One-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$12,800
Two-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$12,800
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,600
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,400
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,300

How much does it cost to run an AmeriCorps program?

The cost is in part determined by the amount of funding that you are able to request and receive from the Corporation. The size of an AmeriCorps operating grant is determined by the number of members requested. The maximum grant will be what the Corporation calls the "cost per Member Service Year (MSY)" multiplied by the number of full-time members you request. The cost per MSY is determined by the Corporation and included in their annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Applicants may not ask for more than the maximum cost per MSY determined by the Corporation in a given year. For example, if the Corporation determines the maximum allowable cost per MSY is \$13,300 and you determine you want to request the full amount, you would calculate your proposal in the following way for 10 full-time members: $\$13,300 \times 10 = \$133,000$

What is the required match level and where do Agency Matching Funds come from?

An AmeriCorps program is required to match the AmeriCorps grant at 24% the first three years of operation. For example, a program receiving an annual \$250,000 grant will need to provide \$60,000 in matching funds, cash and/or in-kind each year. Matching funds come from many sources. Multi-site programs often require that each host site (the agency that hosts an AmeriCorps member) contribute a certain amount of the matching funds. See the chart below for specific increases to required program match.

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1,2,3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

What if I only want to involve one or a few AmeriCorps members?

You have two options. You can find an agency to apply for and manage the funds (as a fiscal agent) that would then place the members at host service sites throughout a community, county, region or statewide. And/or you can contact the Corporation for National Service State Office, which manages AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Senior Service Corps programs (i.e.: Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents). For more information, contact the Corporation's New York Field Office at 518-649-8042



What if I only want the help of a group of members for a short-term project?

You can contact the AmeriCorps program closest to your location to see if all or some of their members would be available for a short-term service project. And/or you can contact the Atlantic Region Campus of the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). NCCC projects must be team-based with adequate work to support a group of 10-15 members for a period of 6 weeks (approximately 40 hours of work per week per member). Project sponsors need to provide members with food and safe housing for member during the project. You can find more information about AmeriCorps*NCCC programs by visiting www.cns.gov.

When does the AmeriCorps program/contract year begin?

An AmeriCorps program contract year typically lasts for one year and begins in/around September. Programs may request an early start date and must work directly with the State Commission for permission.

How long can an agency receive AmeriCorps funds?

The New York State Commission is committed to funding AmeriCorps programs for one grant cycle – which is three years, assuming annual demonstration of sufficient progress towards meeting program objectives and funding availability. After the first and second years of funding, the program must submit a “Continuation Proposal”. After the third year of funding, the program must “recompete” by submitting a full application, the same application that is completed by programs that have never received AmeriCorps funds from the State Commission.

Which agencies in New York State currently manage AmeriCorps programs?

Please click on the following link on the *New Yorkers Volunteer* website for more information: <http://www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov/NationalService/Map.aspx?programType=ACSP>

