2019 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity: Overview

October 3, 2018
Technical Assistance Webinar Series

• **Funding Overview**  
  – Wednesday, October 3, 1-2pm

• **Selection Criteria**  
  – Wednesday, October 10, 1-2pm

• **Program Management and Design**  
  – Wednesday, October 17, 1-2pm

• **Performance Measures**  
  – Wednesday, October 24, 1-2pm

• **Budget Development**  
  – Wednesday, October 31, 1-2pm
Session Objectives

Understanding of:

- AmeriCorps State Grants
- California Volunteers’ Role
- Grantee Responsibilities
- Application Process & Parameters
AmeriCorps is an umbrella that consists of 3 distinct programs: AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps or NCCC, and AmeriCorps State and National.

AmeriCorps VISTA provides full-time AmeriCorps members to non-profits, faith-based and other community organizations, as well as public agencies, to create and expand programs that bring low income individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24 who engage in short-term service projects across the country. NCCC operates on a regional basis, with five campuses in different parts of the country. NCCC AmeriCorps members serve on teams and complete projects in the geographic region served by their NCCC campus.

AmeriCorps State and National is the largest of the 3 AmeriCorps programs. Involving hundreds of organizations and reaching all states and US territories, State and National provides grants to eligible organizations to meet community needs through service.

This opportunity is for AmeriCorps State, for programs proposing to operate solely in California.

The Corporation for National and Community Service manages the AmeriCorps VISTA, NCCC, and National programs. If you are interested in applying for a VISTA member, a NCCC
project, or for a multi-state AmeriCorps grant, you will need to contact CNCS directly. You can find more information at nationalservice.gov.
AmeriCorps State Grants provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps programs. Grant recipients must contribute match funding to support program costs beyond the federal share.

AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses. You will need to have systems in place for tracking all activities and expenditures.

AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and the funds are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded. This is referred to as the cost per Member Service Year, which we will get into later.
AmeriCorps grantees design activities for AmeriCorps members that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems.

With an AmeriCorps State grant you can more effectively address community needs by using AmeriCorps resources to support existing programs. Or, you can reach previously underserved communities and expand activities beyond what was possible without AmeriCorps.

It is important to remember that AmeriCorps funds cannot be used to duplicate, displace, or supplant resources that exist in a community. AmeriCorps members or grant funds can help meet unmet needs or can expand your ability to better address community needs, but they cannot take the place of community resources that already exist.
CaliforniaVolunteers is the State Service Commission in California, responsible for increasing service and volunteerism in the state. One of the ways we do this is through AmeriCorps grants which we administer at the state level, including running a competitive process to award AmeriCorps grants. These grants are federally funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Grants awarded through this process are technically a sub-grant of CaliforniaVolunteers. We are responsible for monitoring and supporting our programs to ensure grants are administered responsibly and that programs are having the intended impact on their communities. As such, we are deeply invested in your success.
As a commission, CaliforniaVolunteers values AmeriCorps programs that are targeted at solving a critical challenge facing California and that use National Service as an appropriate strategy to meet that challenge. We value programs that apply an evidence-based approach, based on a well-aligned logic model and focused on measureable outcomes. And of course, we value programs that are dedicated to quality. These are the values we hope to see reflected in your applications and as you implement your programs.
As an applicant, you are responsible for identifying sources of match for your AmeriCorps program. As a grantee, you will be responsible for securing that funding and tracking and reporting it like any other expenditure.

Grantees are responsible for recruiting, selecting, and finding placement sites for AmeriCorps members to serve in their program. While members are serving, grantees are responsible for providing member training and ongoing support and supervision.

All grantees are responsible for ensuring compliance with all OMB and AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and requirements. These are described or referenced in the Request for Applications. These are a lot to digest, but part of CaliforniaVolunteers’ commitment to our programs’ success is to support you in navigating these requirements. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions.
Now let’s go into the application process, starting with how organizations apply, or specifically who organizations apply to.

If you are proposing a program that will operate solely in California, then you will respond to this funding opportunity and submit your application to CaliforniaVolunteers. If you are a multi-state or tribal program, you will apply directly to CNCS following the instructions in their Notice of Funding Opportunity which you can find at nationalservice.gov. AmeriCorps National applicants are required to consult with CaliforniaVolunteers, which can be done on our website. Email funding@cv.ca.gov if you have any questions on that.
Here is an overview of the Application Review and Selection Process, starting with CV’s process.

First, applicants review the application guidance documents, attend the TA webinars, draft and finalize their applications before submitting them to CV.

Once applications are received, they go through a compliance check, where we verify the applications have been submitted following the packaging instructions and that no required documents are missing. Any compliance issues can result in point reduction or disqualification.

Next, we hold an internal staff review, where we read and score the applications based on the criteria in the RFA.

Applicants then receive clarification and feedback from CV. The purpose of this part of the process is to answer any questions that arise from the review and to strengthen the application to inform operation, if funded.

Following the clarification process, staff will recommend programs that meet a minimum score threshold to the AmeriCorps Program Committee for approval.

The AmeriCorps Program Committee approves final selection of competitive grant applications to be submitted to the national grant competition. Applications submitted to
the national grant competition to compete for AmeriCorps funding with applications submitted from other state commissions and multi-state organizations.

CNCS’ process includes a compliance check, application review, and clarification. During this time, if CNCS has any questions about an application, they will contact CV. We will then forward their questions to the applicant, who will have a very quick turnaround to answer questions. CNCS has not yet announced the timeframe to expect communications from them in this process. We will inform successful applicants once we are aware.

Once the CNCS CEO has approved funding decisions at the national level, they will inform CV, who will then inform the applicants. Applications that are not selected for competitive funding at the national grant competition return to California’s rank order list to be funded with formula dollars, subject to funds available.
Let’s go into a bit more detail about the difference between competitive and formula.

First, it is important to understand that both are held to the same standards and grant requirements. The main difference is in who reviews the application and makes funding decisions. All applications are reviewed by CV, but competitive grants are also reviewed and approved by CNCS. Competitive applications not selected by CNCS and those not submitted to the national competition are considered for formula funding, as available. Formula dollars are a set amount that all states receive based on population. Competitive dollars are the only way we can expand the federal investment in California. So there are many considerations involved in determining what applications are submitted to the national competition. All this to say, if you are not selected for the national competition, that is not necessarily a reflection on the quality of your application.

As for the differences in the process for competitive and formula, competitive applications will be submitted to CNCS after a round of clarification by CV in December/January. Applications identified for formula consideration are clarified in a separate round in February. Competitive applications may receive another round of clarifications from CNCS sometime between January and May, with the final date to be determined.

Final funding decisions for both competitive and formula applications will be announced in May.
These are the guidance documents necessary to complete the application. The Request for Applications is the governing document that lays out the parameters of the grant and application process. The Mandatory Supplemental Guidance is essentially the glossary, defining terms and providing more information on items from the RFA. The Application Instructions provides guidance on completing the application. Some of the items will need to use forms provided by CV. These forms can be found on our website, with these other documents. The National Performance Measure Instructions are applicable only if you are proposing to use national performance measures as program outputs or outcomes.
National Service Focus Areas

Accepting applications in all focus areas
- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families
- Capacity Building

These are the seven National Service focus areas. We are accepting applications in all focus areas: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, veterans and military families, or capacity building to increase impact in any of these areas.
These are the issue areas that are funding priorities in this competition.

Economic Opportunity includes engaging opportunity youth to prepare them for the workforce.

Education is limited to specific evidence-based interventions in the areas of School Readiness, K-12 Success, and Post-Secondary Support. This priority is the most prescriptive; more information is in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

Healthy Futures includes reducing and/or preventing prescription drug and opioid abuse.

Veterans & Military Families include positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength.

Rural Intermediaries are organizations that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve rural communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.

Safe Communities includes programs that focus on public safety and/or partnerships between law enforcement and the community.

And finally, faith-based organizations are encouraged to apply.

It is important to remember that CaliforniaVolunteers is accepting applications that address issues outside of these areas. Do not assume that your application will not be considered competitive if you do not address one of these priorities; we are more interested in funding well-designed programs regardless of focus area.
Likewise with the geographic areas. These are places that have been identified as high need or do not have an AmeriCorps presence, but we are accepting applications for programs serving anywhere in California where there is need. The only requirement is that you are only operating in California, as was mentioned before. To be considered for these priorities, you must demonstrate that at least two members are serving in a geographic priority area.
Organizations eligible to apply for an AmeriCorps State grant include nonprofits, institutions of higher education, local government or public agencies, state government agencies, or Indian Tribes within the state.

Any organization that has been convicted of a federal crime or has unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or lapsed, or that is not being paid in a timely manner is ineligible to apply. In addition, any 501(c)(4) organization that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.
All applicants must engage a partnership with at least three independent entities that include one public and one private partner.

All applicants must have a DUNS number and have active registration on SAM.gov by the due date, November 20th. Active SAM.gov registration must be maintained throughout the grant. This is very important since it will result in an applicant’s disqualification if registration is not active. The process to get registered on SAM.gov can be long, so please start that process as soon as possible if you are planning on applying for this or any federal grant.
Grants are awarded in the summer, so the earliest a program can start is August. It is our expectation that programs will start between August and October. You can request an exception in the Program Summary Form by entering your proposed start date outside of this range.

Members have up to 12 months to complete their service, so plan your program year not to exceed 365 days. Program years cannot overlap, so members that start late will not be able to serve into the next program year except in special circumstances.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded on a three-year cycle, but they are evaluated annually for continuation funding. You will have opportunities to make minor changes year-to-year in continuation, but you will generally not be able to make major program changes until after those three years when you compete for another cycle.
The grant award amount is based on the number of member slots and dollars requested up to a maximum cost per MSY (full-time equivalent member slot). The grant includes a match portion that the grantee is responsible for securing. The maximum cost per MSY and match requirement depends on the type of grant requested.
There are multiple grant types that are being considered under this competition: Traditional cost-reimbursement, full-time fixed amount, Education Award Program, Professional Corps, and no-cost slots. New applicants may apply for traditional cost reimbursement grants, Education Award Program grants, Professional Corps, or No-Cost Slots. Experienced applicants may apply for full-time fixed amount grants. The differences between grant type is mostly limited to cost per MSY and match requirements. We expect most applications will be for traditional cost reimbursement or full-time fixed amount grants. If you are interested in apply for another type, please email funding@cv.ca.gov.
The maximum cost per MSY depends on the grant type. Traditional cost-reimbursement grants and Full-time Fixed Amount grants have a maximum cost per MSY of $15,192. Cost-reimbursement grants operating in rural communities or recruiting opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to $15,360.

Professional Corps Fixed Amount grants have a cost per MSY maximum of $1,000; Education Award Program grants have a maximum of $800, and applicants may request no-cost slots for an allocation of member slots with no funding.
The costs associated with running an AmeriCorps program are greater than the maximum cost per MSY that can be requested. Applicants are responsible for identifying and securing match funds beyond the federal share requested. Only traditional cost-reimbursement grants are required to report match. The minimum grantee share is 24% of total program costs for the first three years, with each subsequent year increasing to 50% by the tenth year and every year thereafter.

While there is not match requirement for fixed amount grants, the program is still required to secure funding to cover all program costs beyond the cost per MSY.
Living Allowance

• Required for full-time members
• Set and provided by program
  – Can be covered by federal share, grantee share, or both
  – Consider where members are serving and the cost of living
• Highly recommended for less than full-time members

Programs are required to provide a living allowance to all full-time members and are encouraged to provide a living allowance to less than full-time members. The living allowance amount is determined by the program, within the limits set forth in the RFA and budget instructions. When setting the living allowance, consider where members are serving and the cost of living. The living allowance should be enough for members to live on while they serve. Living allowance costs are covered by the program and must be included in the budget on the federal share, grantee share, or both.
The education award is provided by the National Service Trust to all members that successfully complete their term of service. It is not included on the program budget. A full-time education award for 2019 is $6,095, and each other slot type is a fraction of that based on MSY.
Finally, some other grant parameters to be aware of. The minimum program size is 20 full-time equivalent positions. This requirement can be waived in the application by submitting a one-page justification.

The maximum grant size only applies if your application is selected for formula funding. In order to maximize California’s formula dollars, our policy is to limit formula programs to $850,000. This requirement can be waived at CV’s discretion.

Lastly, we require a minimum of two members per service site. This requirement can also be waived with compelling justification in a one-page narrative. The Application Instructions includes more information the waiver process for these requirements.
Application Deadlines

• Optional Notice of Intent due November 5

• Complete Application due November 20
  – Paper application including one original (items 1-19) & 5 copies (1-9)
  – Electronic submission by email to funding@cv.ca.gov of items 2, 7-10 & 15-18
Questions?
Thank you!

Send questions to funding@cv.ca.gov