



State of Alaska

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

Division of Community and Regional Affairs

Serve Alaska, State Service Commission

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

STATE AND NATIONAL AMERICORPS PROGRAMS

FY 2020 AMERICORPS FORMULA PLANNING GRANTS

CFDA 94.006

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Overview

This Serve Alaska RFP is an overview of the process for submitting AmeriCorps applications. The federal agency that oversees and funds AmeriCorps programs is the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

CNCS is a federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For nearly two decades, CNCS —through its AmeriCorps/Senior Corps Programs, Volunteer Generation Grants and the Social Innovation Fund—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action. CNCS has a webpage that discusses “Our Impact” where one can get information about current programs: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation>.

AmeriCorps planning grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to support the development of AmeriCorps programs that will engage multiple AmeriCorps members in evidence-based interventions to solve community problems in future years. Successful new programs usually begin with between 8-25 members. Planning grant recipients are expected to be better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle (2021-22). Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.

During the planning grant period, the grantee will devote personnel to training and completing tasks that:

- define the critical issue affecting their target community;
- research and identify an evidence-based service response to the issue that can be implemented by AmeriCorps members and community volunteers they recruit;
- develop an operation model to deliver the services effectively;
- establish effective partnerships to reach the community beneficiaries and acquire needed human, financial, and other resources;
- develop the human resource systems and management procedures required to recruit, select, onboard, supervise, evaluate, train, and document accomplishments of both AmeriCorps members and community volunteers;
- develop data collection systems that will be used for reporting, learning, and continuous improvement;
- prepare to integrate AmeriCorps financial management requirements into agency policies and procedures; and
- educate financial, human resource, senior leadership, and relevant organizational staff about AmeriCorps grant provisions, regulations, and resources available for new grantees.

The planning grant prepares the applicant to submit an AmeriCorps Formula grant program proposal that addresses the following elements in a strong, competitive manner:

- Community Need and Intervention
- Theory of Change and Logic Model
- Evidence-base

- Member Experience (training, reflection, connection to AmeriCorps movement)
- Program Staffing, Compliance, and Accountability
- Member Supervision
- Performance Measurement
- Data collection and evaluation

Unlike AmeriCorps Program Grants, Planning Grants do not support AmeriCorps member positions. Instead, Planning Grants provide funding that allows organizations to hire/designate a staff person who is responsible for working with Serve Alaska staff and outside consultants to develop a high-quality AmeriCorps program that is designed to meet a community need.

Eligible Applicants

The following Non-Federal entities (as defined in [2 CFR §200.69](#)) who have DUNS numbers and are registered in System for Award Management (SAM) are eligible to apply:

- Indian Tribes ([2 CFR §200.54](#))
- Institutions of higher education (2 CFR §200.55) See also [20 U.S.C. 1001](#).
- Local governments ([2 CFR §200.64](#))
- Nonprofit organizations ([2 CFR §200.70](#))
- States ([2 CFR §200.90](#))

Applications that propose to engage in [activities that are prohibited](#) under CNCS's statutes, regulations, or the terms and conditions of its awards are not eligible to receive CNCS funding. Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance under this funding. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

Federal Funding Priorities

During the course of the planning grant term, applicants will work toward identifying the appropriate funding priority for an AmeriCorps program. CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in the following areas:

- Economic Opportunity – evidence-based interventions on the CNCS Evidence Exchange. In order to qualify for this priority, the applicant must be assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence by the reviewers.
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/CNCS_Economic_Opportunity_Evidence_Brief_2019_508.pdf
OR
Increasing economic opportunities for communities by preparing people for the workforce.
- Education - evidence-based interventions on the CNCS Evidence Exchange. In order to qualify for this priority, the applicant must be assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence by the reviewers.
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/CNCS_Education_Evidence_Brief_112318_508.pdf

- Healthy Futures - evidence-based interventions on the CNCS Evidence Exchange. In order to qualify for this priority, the applicant must be assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence by the reviewers.

https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/HF_Evidence_Brief_FINAL_v2_508.pdf

OR

Reducing and/or preventing prescription drug and opioid abuse.

- Veterans and Military Families - positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength.
- Rural intermediaries - organizations that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve rural communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.
- Faith-based organizations.

In FY 2021 CNCS has introduced the following new federal funding priorities:

- **NEW** Efforts to help local communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Applicants may propose programming in any CNCS focus area to aid communities as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic
- **NEW** Programs that actively engage in removing structural racial inequities, advancing racial equality, and increasing opportunity in order to achieve sustainable change in communities
- **NEW** Programs that reduce child poverty.
- **NEW** Environmental Stewardship
- **NEW** Economic Mobility Corps – a joint initiative with the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund to place national service members at Certified Community Development Financial Institutions to enhance their capacity to provide financial literacy, financial planning, budgeting, saving, and other financial counseling activities in distressed and underserved areas.

Serve Alaska Funding Priorities

The purpose of the Commission is to engage Alaskans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service and volunteerism as a means of community and state problem solving and promoting participation in the National AmeriCorps Program.

The Commission's primary function is to oversee grants provided to local non-profit and community agencies to run national service programs. The largest single vehicle for channeling federal resources for national and community service in Alaska is through this Governor's commission.

Available Funding

Serve Alaska will review applications and determine the appropriate award amount, if any. Award amounts will likely be in the amount of \$25,000-\$50,000 per grantee out of a total \$175,000 award. Serve Alaska is not obligated to fund grant proposals in their entirety and reserves the right to request applicants to revise any portion of their organization's proposal.

The project year for this planning grant cycle will begin January 1, 2021 and will end on May 31, 2021. AmeriCorps projects can be designed to take place within the next program year at the earliest which will begin on or around August 2021 with the 2021-22 AmeriCorps Formula Grants RFP opening in January 2021.

Serve Alaska AmeriCorps Planning Grants will be awarded on a cost reimbursement basis. Reimbursement grants fund a portion of the project's operating costs and include a formal matching requirement. Grantees will be reimbursed in monthly increments for costs incurred for expenses outlined in the project's approved grant budget. Serve Alaska will not award any up-front funding; therefore, applicants must be certain that their organization has resources available to cover the project.

Grantees are required to meet an overall minimum matching rate of the total cost of operating the planning process. Grantees have the flexibility to meet the overall match requirements in any of the budget areas, as long as the minimum match of 24% is maintained. Many organizations choose to contribute matching resources that exceed the required minimum of 24%. It is important to note that organizations are required to meet, and provide documentation for, the match percentage that appears in their application's Budget Narrative, even if it exceeds the minimum percentage.

Please Note: for the FFY2020-21 match is not required per CNCS authority to issue a blanket waiver under 42 U.S.C. § 12571(e)(4) and consistent with 45 CFR 2521.70.

RFP Requirements:

Notice of Intent to Apply (NOIA):

Due September 25, 2020 by 4pm. Each program that will be applying through Serve Alaska for an AmeriCorps Planning grant **must** complete a "Notice of Intent to Apply." Submit the NOIA utilizing the form attached to this RFP to: Serve.Alaska@alaska.gov.

The NOIA asks the applicant to provide a Project Summary that outlines how a planning grant will explore the use of AmeriCorps members to address underserved community needs. The NOIA does not commit an organization to apply but ensures that agencies interested in applying receive all documents and information.

Eligible entities may also apply for CNCS Formula and Competitive grants during the published RFP yearly cycles regardless of whether a planning grant is awarded. The RFPs are published on the State of Alaska Public Notice page.

Application Process

Mandatory Pre-Application Teleconference

A mandatory Pre-Application Teleconference for new planning grant applications will be held on **September 29, 2020**. A call-in number will be sent out to those organizations having

submitted the Notice of Intent to Apply. If you have any questions, contact Serve Alaska at serve.alaska@alaska.gov.

Links to resources and documents including a 2020 Planning Grant Application and Budget Narrative workbook will be provided prior to the meeting.

State of Alaska Contact Person:

All correspondence having to do with this RFP shall be sent to:

Jill Furbish Grant Administrator II
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
Division of Community and Regional Affairs, Serve Alaska
550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1640
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3569
Serve.Alaska@alaska.gov
Phone: (907) 269-2670

Timeline and Deadlines

Request for Proposal (RFP) Timeline

Timeline for 2020-21 Planning Grants	Date
Serve Alaska AmeriCorps RFP Released	September 11, 2020
Notices of Intent Due by 4pm	September 25, 2020
Mandatory Pre-Application Teleconference	September 29, 2020
Applications Submitted to Serve Alaska	October 26, 2020
Application Clarification Period	November 12-November 23, 2020
Applications Submitted by 4pm	November 24, 2020
Notify Applicants of Status	December 10, 2020
Appeal Due by 4pm	December 18, 2020
Funding Announcements	December 21, 2020

Deadlines

Deadlines listed in this RFP must be followed. If a deadline cannot be made, and prior to any deadline, applicants must submit an email explaining the extenuating circumstance which caused the delay. Such notice must be sent to Serve Alaska via email to serve.alaska@alaska.gov, prior to the 4pm deadline. If email is not available, use the phone number listed above in the Contact Person section. Missed deadlines are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Any exceptions/approval of extension requires written approval by Serve Alaska.

Application Review Process

Assessment Criteria

Applicants should use the 2020/21 AmeriCorps Planning Grant Application Form to guide them in the development of their application.

1. Rationale and Approach/Program Design
 - a. Problem/Need Statement
 - b. AmeriCorps Members as an Effective Tool
2. Organizational Capacity
 - a. Organization Capacity
 - b. Resource Development
3. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Goals of the review and selection process

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. Commission peer reviewers will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. The review and selection process will:

1. Identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- High alignment with criteria.
- Applicants proposing to implement an AmeriCorps program to address the unmet needs of underserved communities
- Relative risk and opportunity.

2. Consider:

- The extent/severity of the community need that the applicant is proposing to address.
- The feasibility of whether or not AmeriCorps members could be an effective tool for addressing the community need.
- Organizational Capacity - The applicant's capacity to administer the programmatic and fiscal components of the grant.
- The ability of the applicant to secure match to support a full AmeriCorps program beginning in August 2021.
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

3. Yield a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:

- Meaningful representation of
 - Geographic diversity
 - Rural communities (see definition in Mandatory Supplemental Guidance)
 - Faith- based organizations
 - Focus area representation
- CNCS Funding Priorities

Stages in the review and selection process

Compliance/Internal Review

Serve Alaska's staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to further review, an applicant must satisfy all the following requirements:

- Submit an **application** by the deadline: October 26, 2020 by 4pm
- **Supplemental Documents:** due October 26, 2020 by 4pm
 - A copy of the organization's most recent IRS Form 990 (Only applicable to organizations with 501c3 status)
 - A copy of the organization's most recent single audit report

(If no audit report is available, please submit the organization's most recent financial statement)

- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (if applicable)

If an application meets compliance standards, Serve Alaska staff will also assess each applicant's Rationale and Approach, Organizational Capability, and Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy.

Serve Alaska's Review Committee will review submitted applications and give feedback to the applicant. Some of the feedback requires edits to the application, while others are suggestions for strengthening. The timeline's Application Clarification' period encompasses both the staff review and the peer Review Committee. During clarification, the applicant will take the Review Committee comments and incorporate them into the application.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are a requirement under 2 CFR 200 regulations. Upon approval of planning grant, a self-assessment will be provided for completion. The information contained in the assessment is intended to help the Commission understand the agency/organization and to evaluate its overall operational and financial controls.

Administrative and National Service Policy Requirements:

All awards made under this Notice will be subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) in [2 CFR Parts 200](#) and [2205](#). This RFP should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550.

Documents that Govern the Grant

The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant as well as the AmeriCorps regulations and grant provisions. Serve Alaska RFP and grant agreement are also included in the governing documents.

CNCS Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this RFP will be subject to the FY 2020 CNCS General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2020 AmeriCorps Program Specific Terms and Conditions for the particular program (when applicable). These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. Current versions of the CNCS General and Program Specific Terms and Conditions for each of its programs is available at:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/terms-and-conditions-cnsc-grants>.

National Service Criminal History Check Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a specific screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. The law requires grantees to conduct and document NSCHCs on persons (including award-funded staff, national service participant, or volunteer) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend, or education award

through a program receiving CNCS funds. This includes staff that receive part of their salary through a subgrant. An individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives such CNCS funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. The cost of conducting NSCHCs is an allowable expense under the award. Grantees should utilize the two vendors CNCS has engaged to conduct the required NSCHCs. Failure to conduct an NSCHC may result in significant disallowed costs. The NSCHC webpage is found here: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check>.