AmeriCorps State
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS
for
State Commissions

State Formula
State and Territory Competitive
State Education Award Program
v. 10.26.08

IMPORTANT NOTICE

These application instructions conform to the Corporation for National and Community Service's (the Corporation's) online grant application system, eGrants. The eGrants system is designed to serve the Corporation's applicants and grantees. All Corporation funding announcements are posted on our web site www.cns.gov and at www.grants.gov.

Public Burden Statement: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 requires the Corporation to inform all potential persons who are to respond to this collection of information that such persons are not required to respond unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. (See 5 CFR 1320.5(b)(2)(i)).

Time Burden: The time required to complete this collection of information is estimated to average 40 hours per applicant.

Use of Information: The information collected constitutes an application to the Corporation for grant funding. The Corporation evaluates the application and makes funding decisions through the Corporation's grant review and selection process.

Effects of Non-Disclosure: Providing this information is voluntary; however, failure to provide the information would not allow the Corporation to assess the applicant's request for funding. In this case, it would not be possible to consider granting funds to the applicant.

Privacy Act: Information provided for this collection may be shared with federal, state, and local agencies for law enforcement purposes.

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Application Instructions: State Commissions

I. Overview

Each state commission is responsible for developing an application process that includes the review and selection of AmeriCorps programs for submission to the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) for funding. In this document, we provide instructions to assist in the development of this application selection process and the submission of AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive, State Education Award Program (State EAP), and State Formula application packages through eGrants.

In addition to the information in this document, you must also review the following important sources of information about the AmeriCorps program and the application process.

- The AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR Sections 2520 – 2550, contain program-specific information and requirements that you need to understand and incorporate into your application instructions.

- The *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)* for AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive and State EAP funding contains specific information about how much funding will be available for AmeriCorps grants, who is eligible to apply, how to apply, and special considerations and priorities for funding. You will be able to access the *Notice* at the website, **www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp.** The *Notice* will be removed once the application deadline has passed.

- The Application Instructions Template for the State and Territory Competitive and State EAPs contain program-specific instructions and are posted at **www.americorps.gov/pdf/05_0802_americorps_nofa_instructions.pdf.**

A. eGrants

You will submit your AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive, State EAP, and State Formula application packages using eGrants according to the instructions provided here and in the *Notice.* The Corporation will notify you via e-mail when the eGrants system is ready to receive applications. The eGrants application provides prompts and directions that will guide you and your applicants through the application process.

In order to submit your application packages to the Corporation in eGrants, you must set up separate Prime Applications for Competitive, State EAP and Formula applications. Applicants can then apply to under the relevant Prime Application. Once you receive, review, select and recommend applications, you will complete the Prime Applications and submit them to the Corporation.

In the event of difficulties submitting an application in eGrants, please see the *Notice* for instructions and contact your Corporation Program Officer.

B. Application Deadlines

1. **State and Territory Competitive and Education Award Program Deadlines**
   State and Territory Competitive and State EAP deadlines are published in the *Notice*.

2. **State Formula Deadline**
   The Corporation will announce the annual formula funds allocation for each state following the annual appropriation. You may request funds anytime after the Formula allocations are announced. Once you have selected Formula grantees, you report these selections by submitting applications to the Corporation through eGrants.

   You must submit your Formula applications at least 30 days before the earliest start date of your programs but no later than June 15.

C. **Requirements for Submission**

   You must submit the following information with your State and Territory Competitive and State EAP application packages:
   - Applicant information from the State Commission (Prime Application).
   - Assurances and Certifications signed by the appropriate official.
   - The AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive or State EAP program applications you are recommending for funding.
   - Commission ranking of applications as outlined in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2522.465.
   - Recommendation summaries (see Section III. E. (3) below for instructions).

   In addition, state commissions are responsible for ensuring that each recommended program application complies with all the submission requirements set forth in the *Notice* and the Application Instructions Template for Programs. **Do not submit any other supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, letters of support, or any other item not requested in these application instructions. The Corporation will not review or return them.**

D. **Available Resources**

   In general, the amount of resources available each year for State and Territory Competitive, State EAP, and Formula grants depends on a number of factors, including: the amount of the Corporation's annual appropriation and the funding requested to support continuation programs.

   For Formula funding, the amount of your grant award will be the total amount you request for the programs on your funding chart, up to your annual allocation. Since the Corporation has moved to one-year funding, unrequested funds from the prior program year are no longer available.

E. **Statewide Evaluations**

   Commissions may use Formula funds to conduct a statewide evaluation of Formula programs. Commissions may use Administrative (Admin) and Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds to evaluate Formula or Competitive programs. To ensure that Formula funds are not used to evaluate Competitive programs, only use Formula funds in proportion to their representation in the portfolio being evaluated.

F. **Coordination with National Programs**

The Corporation expects all national service programs to collaborate at the local level. You are expected to communicate and coordinate with AmeriCorps National parent organizations and their sites in your state, as described below. These include recipients of National Direct, National EAP, Professional Corps, and Indian Tribes grants.

Likewise, AmeriCorps National program parent organizations are expected to communicate and coordinate with commissions in the states where they operate, and to share resources as appropriate.

As a state commission, you are expected to:
- Consider the schedules and needs of AmeriCorps National programs when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
- Include National programs in your annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of your state service plan.
- Add AmeriCorps National program personnel that operate in your state to your mailing list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

National programs in your state are expected to communicate regularly with you, and to keep you informed of their progress. Specifically, they will:
- Inform you when they are submitting applications with sites in your state prior to application.
- Provide you with a list including contact information for their programs in your state once grants are awarded, and update this list on an annual basis.
- Participate in your annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of your state service plan, as well as appropriate training and other events.
- Include the state commission on their mailing list and invite commission staff to appropriate training and other events.

II. **New and Recompeting Submissions**

A. **New Applicants and Recompeting Programs**

Any program that is applying for AmeriCorps funds for the first time must complete the application described in the Application Instructions Template for State Programs or as instructed by the state commission. Any program which has received three years of funding must submit a new application and recompete to be considered for further funding.

For an AmeriCorps program that is recompeting, in addition to the new application, the Corporation will review and consider previous grant compliance and performance information from our management information systems. This includes enrollment and retention rates, accomplishments, and match history. Plan your review process accordingly, and make sure that all recompeting programs you recommend for funding are high-quality programs that have successfully met their performance measures. Recompeting programs must have successfully secured the matching resources required in their earlier grant awards.

B. Planning Grants

You may fund planning grants in your Formula portfolio only. If you choose to fund planning grants, please include the title "Planning Grant" in the Project Name in the Applicant Info Section of the program application. You have the authority to establish planning grant guidance within the parameters described in the National Application Instruction for National Planning Grants. Planning grants must be included when you calculate your average cost per MSY.

C. Additional Information Submitted in Hard Copy

In addition to the applications you submit in eGrants, you may need to submit program evaluations (as required under 45 CFR 2522.730) and, if applicable, labor union concurrence (as required under 45 CFR 2522.100 (c)) on behalf of your programs. Send hard copy to:

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Corporation for National and Community Service

ATT: AmeriCorps State

1201 New York Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20525

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Please use an alternative service to the U.S. Postal Service to send hard copy. U.S. Postal Service deliveries to government agencies often are delayed and sometimes damaged due to security measures. Attach a hard copy of the program's SF424 facesheet to each document so that we know which application corresponds to each document.

If you prefer, you may submit evaluations and labor union concurrence electronically to **acapplications@cns.gov**.

This information must be received at the Corporation by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline.

If you have submitted an evaluation, change the status in eGrants from the default "Not Sent" to the applicable status ("Sent," "Not Applicable," or "Already on File at CNCS"). If you have submitted labor union concurrence, please enter new document, and then change the status in eGrants from the default "Not Sent" to the applicable status ("Sent," "Not Applicable," or "Already on File at CNCS").

III. State Selection Process

A. State Commission Application and Selection Process

The information in Section III is provided to assist you in developing your application materials and selection processes for Competitive, Formula, and State EAP funding for new and recompeting programs. State commissions must also follow state law requirements regarding requests for proposals and the selection of programs by a state commission. You are advised to provide information on the following topics to program applicants:
- Funding availability.
- Competitive, Formula, and State EAP funding guidance and applications.
- State maximum cost per MSY and budget guidelines.
- State application deadlines and submission requirements.

- State priorities.
- Corporation focus areas.
- Selection criteria.
- Other information that you or your state may require.

B. State Responsibilities for Review and Recommendation

State commissions are responsible for:
- Reviewing and selecting new/recompeting Competitive and State EAP applications to submit to the Corporation for funding.
- Preparing ranking and recommendations for new/recompeting Competitive programs to fund.
- Reviewing and selecting programs for Formula funding, either separately or as part of the same competition you use for the Corporation's competitive grants process.
- Thoroughly reviewing applications to ensure they are complete, accurate, and in compliance with all program and budget requirements before submitting them to the Corporation in eGrants.
- Reviewing subgrantee Financial Reports to report on your recompeting programs' progress toward the matching requirements stipulated in the AmeriCorps rule 45 CFR §§ 2522.35-2522.91.
- Reading, understanding, and signing all assurances, certifications, and restrictions, including the certification of programs' progress toward the matching requirements.

Be sure to set a due date for applications that allows adequate time before the Corporation's due date to review program applications, analyze budgets, and work with programs on revisions to budgets, proposed activities, and performance measures, as necessary.

C. Review Procedures

1. Competitive Process
- You are required to conduct a competitive process to assess your new and recompeting State Formula and State Competitive applications.
- You must certify in eGrants that your selection process complied with the National Community and Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), AmeriCorps regulations, and all state laws and conflict of interest rules.

2. Peer Review
The Corporation does not require state commissions to conduct peer review for State Formula and State Competitive applications. You may be required under state law to conduct peer review for Formula and/or Competitive proposals.

3. Rigorous Review
Commissions are expected to conduct a rigorous review of applications and to send forward only those applications that are considered to be high quality and that meet all requirements. Commissioners must vote to approve the applications for submission to the Corporation, and commissions are required to maintain a record of the vote.

D. Selection Criteria

    1. Regulatory Requirements for State Formula Submissions

        The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 and § 2522.475, describe the extent to which commissions must use the Corporation's selection criteria and priorities when selecting Formula programs. The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 describes to what extent commissions may consider priorities other than those stated in the regulations or the *Notice.*

    2. Publication of State Selection Criteria

        Incorporate the criteria you will use to evaluate and select applications, including the criteria required above, in your application materials.

E. State Commission Rankings and Recommendation Summaries

    1. Regulatory Requirements for State Competitive Submissions

        The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.465, include the following requirements regarding ranking applicants for State Competitive funding:

(a) If you are a state commission applying for State Competitive funding, you must prioritize the proposals you submit in rank order based on their relative quality and according to the following table:

If You Submit this Number of State Competitive Proposals to the Corporation:	Then You Must Rank this Number of Proposals:
1 to 12	At least top 5
13 to 24	At least top 10
25 or more	At least top 15

(b) While the rankings you provide will not be determinative in the grant selection process, and the Corporation will not be bound by them, we will consider them in our selection process.

    2. Submitting Your Rankings in eGrants

        Use the "Manage Subs" screen to enter information on each of your new sub-applications. Once you have entered information on all of your subs, click Save and Close. You will be back on the main Manage Subs page, which will now include all your subs listed under "For Competitive Submission" with a "Rank: Select a Rank" drop down menu next to each. There will be no ranking drop down menu for continuations.

        Provide your rankings in order of funding priority in the sub-applications section of the Competitive Prime Application in eGrants. Each ranked program must have a different rank, i.e., no "ties."

        Summarize the criteria and process you used to arrive at your rankings in the Commission Rank Justification field of your commission's Competitive Prime Application.

    3. Recommendation Summaries

For each competitive application that you are submitting to the Corporation, provide the information listed below. In eGrants, enter the information in the text box in the Subapplicant section of your Prime Application. There is a 4,000 character limit for each recommendation summary for State and Territory Competitive and State EAP applications. Check these summaries carefully for spelling, grammar, and accuracy.

- Provide a summary of the program's service activities.
- Describe the program's strengths and how it will complement your existing portfolio.
- Discuss its potential challenges and your strategy for addressing these challenges through training and technical assistance.
- For recompeting programs, review the most recent Federal Financial Report, list the overall percentage of match, and provide your assessment of the program's ability to meet its match.
- For recompeting programs, address each program's record for submitting forms and reports in a timely manner.
- For recompeting programs, provide either an assessment of each program's evaluation efforts to date or a completed evaluation, as applicable.

IV. Continuation Requests

Procedure for Requesting Continuations
Subgrantees will complete the continuation application in eGrants and submit it to the state commission. Please enter your recommendations for continuations in the recommendations summary page in eGrants.

The Corporation will – unless the CEO determines otherwise based on availability of funds, material information not contained in the state commission summary recommendation, or other good cause – make final decisions on continuation funding for competitive grants based principally on summary recommendations (including whether to increase, hold level, or decrease funding) submitted by each state commission. To effectuate this policy, each state commission will consider in its summary recommendation enrollment and retention rates as well as selection criteria published by the Corporation and commission.

Enrollment
If you are recommending a program for level or expanded funding that enrolled less than 100% of slots received during its last full year of program operation, provide an explanation and a plan for improvement.If enrollment for the current program year is incomplete or not yet started (e.g. for a summer service program), state this in your recommendation narrative.

Retention
If sub-applicants were not able to retain members during the last full year of program operation, provide an explanation, and describe their plans for improvement. We recognize retention rates may vary among equally effective programs depending on the program model. We expect grantees to pursue the highest retention rate possible.

Other Criteria
In your recommendations, also discuss:
- Compliance with 30-day enrollment policy.
- Compliance with 30-day exit policy.
- Compliance with fiscal reporting deadlines.
- Compliance with program reporting deadlines.
- Progress towards performance objectives.

In addition, if a subgrantee falls below full enrollment, has less than 100% retention and no plan for improvement, or is not compliant, making progress, or reaching budgeted match, yet you still recommend level or increased funding, you must fully justify your recommendation.

Following your submission, your Program Officer will consider your recommendation. If he or she concurs with your recommendations, your recommendations will move forward in the decision making process. If she or he does not concur, you will be contacted for further information, justification, or negotiation.

Continuation Expansions
Based on the anticipated appropriation, and the expected volume of new and recompeting applications, the Corporation does not expect to approve any requests for expansion (additional members or funding) within continuation requests. If any expansions are considered, preference will be given to expansions that address the Corporation's strategic initiatives, include low cost MSYs, and expansions of programs demonstrating outcomes that have exceeded their goals.

Continuation Budget Increase: Continuation requests may not include an increase for cost of living.

V. Corporation Selection Processes

A. Timeline for Decisions
The dates for announcement of final new and recompeting grant awards are published in the *Notice.* Official notification of the grant award is contingent upon successful completion of grant negotiations and resolution of any budget and compliance issues. Programs may not enroll members before the Corporation issues the final grant award. Commissions must ensure that subgrantees understand and comply with this requirement.

B. 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.

VI. Grant Requirements

A. State Average Cost Per MSY and Maximum Program Cost Per MSY

The Corporation will publish the state average cost per MSY and the maximum program cost per MSY in the annual *Notice*.

B. Matching Requirements

The state commission is responsible for meeting an aggregate overall match requirement based on subgrantees' individual match requirements. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.50 – 2521.90 for the matching requirements that apply to you and your programs.

C. Subgrant Administrative Cost Allocation

The Corporation's regulations limit the portion of federal grant funds that can support administrative (indirect) costs to 5%.

While the Corporation encourages state commissions to provide the full 5% to sub-grantees for administrative costs, commissions may require sub-grantees to allocate up to one-fifth of the 5% (1% of the federal dollars awarded) to be retained by the commission to cover commission-level administrative costs. Any administrative funds retained by a commission must be used solely in support of the AmeriCorps programs from which they have been retained. The commission's accounting system must track and allocate these administrative funds separately.

State Commission 1.0 Percent Fixed Administrative Costs Option

The 5% maximum is calculated by multiplying the sum of the Corporation's share of Section I and Section II by the factor 0.0526. The factor 0.0526 is used to calculate the maximum amount of federal funds that may be budgeted for administrative (indirect) costs, rather than 0.0500, as a way to mathematically compensate for determining Section III costs when the total budget (Sections I + II + III) is not yet established. If 0.0500 was used, the resulting Section III costs would be less than the maximum 5% of total costs that are permitted under the Corporation's regulations.

If a commission elects to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available to programs for administrative costs, that decision is identified within each sub-grant's budget. To calculate these fractional shares, within Section III of the sub-grant budget, one-fifth (20 %) of the federal dollars budgeted for administrative costs are allocated to the commission's share and four-fifths (80 %) of the federal dollars budgeted for administrative costs are allocated to the program's share. Since programs budget the 5% administrative maximum by multiplying the Corporation's share of Section I and Section II costs by the factor 0.0526, the allocation between commission and program shares would be calculated as follows:

([Section I] + [Section II] x 0.0526) x(0.20) = Commission Share

([Section I] + [Section II] x 0.0526) x (0.80) = Sub-grantee Share

If a commission elects to retain a share that is less than 1% budgeted for administrative costs, then the calculation above would be adjusted, as appropriate.

D. Approval of Pre-Award Costs

State commissions and programs may be reimbursed for pre-award costs only if they are incurred with the written approval of the Corporation's Office of Grants Management. You incur all pre-award costs at your own risk. The Corporation is under no obligation to reimburse you or your subgrantee for these costs if you or your subgrantee does not receive advance approval, or if the approved amount is less than anticipated.

To request such approval, send a request to your Corporation grants officer, with a copy to your program officer that includes a brief justification for the costs to be incurred and indicates the desired effective date. If your request is approved, the Office of Grants Management will issue a letter authorizing the pre-award costs within five business days of receipt of your request.

The Corporation will consider approving, where appropriate, the following types of pre-award costs:
- Personnel expenses and benefits.
- Travel for staff and prospective members.
- Equipment.
- Supplies.
- Contractual and consultant services.
- Training for staff and prospective members.
- Evaluation.
- Other program operating costs.

Because the Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act (P.L. 108-45 (July 3, 2003), codified at 42 U.S.C. 12605) specifically provides that a national service position is approved when the Corporation issues a grant award, we cannot approve member living allowances or support costs, including FICA, workers' compensation, health care, and child care, as pre-award costs. Approval of pre-award costs does not authorize you or your subgrantee to enroll AmeriCorps members or have them begin serving. AmeriCorps members may not count any hours served prior to the award being issued as part of their term of service.

E. Compliance with Federal Legal Requirements

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and OMB circulars for grant management, allowable costs, and audits, including providing audits to the A-133 Clearinghouse if they expend over $500,000 in federal funds, as required in OMB Circular A-133. The OMB circulars are online at *www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars*.