

2011 State & National Combined Grant Competition Additional Guidance for State Service Commissions

Each State Commission is responsible for developing an application process that includes the review and selection of AmeriCorps programs for submissions to the Corporation for National and Community Service for funding.

Resources

The AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 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 the AmeriCorps State and National and the *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)* for AmeriCorps State and National and Indian Tribe Planning Grant funding contains specific information about how much funding will be available for AmeriCorps grants, applicant eligibility, how to apply, and special considerations and priorities for funding that are not included in the applications instructions.

The Application Instructions for the State and National competitions are linked from the *Notice* web pages.

Requirements for Competitive Submission

Your State Commission Prime Application Package(s) for Competitive, Fixed-Amount, Professional Corps, Education Award Only and Planning grant funding must include:

- Applicant information from the state commission (prime application).
- Assurances and Certifications signed by the appropriate authorizing official.
- The AmeriCorps State and National program applications you are recommending for funding.
- Commission rankings of applications as outlined in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2522.465.
- Recommendation summaries for each application submitted.

In addition, state commissions are responsible for ensuring that each recommended application complies with all the submission requirements set forth in the *Notice* and Application Instructions. This means that in addition to the prime and sub-applications, the commission will ensure that required Evaluations, Labor Union Concurrences, Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreements will also have been submitted to the Corporation by the submission due date.

Do not submit supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, letters of support, or any other item not requested in this guidance or the application instructions. The Corporation will not review or return them.

Statewide Evaluations

Commissions may use Formula funds to conduct a statewide evaluation of Formula programs. Commissions may use Administrative Grant and/or Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) Grant funds to evaluate either Formula or Competitive programs. Commissions must ensure that Formula funds are not used to evaluate Competitive programs.

State Competitive New or Re-Competing Selection Process

This is to assist you in developing your commission specific application material and developing your selection processes for Competitive, Fixed-Amount, Professional Corps, Education Award Only and Planning grant funding. State commissions must follow state law requirements regarding requests for proposals and the selection of programs with their state. Commission outreach and review process should be consistent with board approved policies and may be run concurrent with formula or other competitions.

Commissions should provide information on the following topics to program applicants:

- Funding availability.
- Competitive, Fixed-Amount, Professional Corps, Education Award Only and Planning grant funding and applications guidance.
- State maximum cost per MSY and budget guidelines.
- State priorities.
- Corporation priority areas.
- Selection criteria.
- Other information the commission or state may require.

The state commission is responsible for:

- Competitive, Fixed-Amount, Professional Corps, Education Award Only and Planning applications to submit to the Corporation for funding consideration.
- Thoroughly reviewing the recommended applications to ensure they are complete, accurate, and in compliance with all program and budget requirements before submitting them to the Corporation in eGrants.
- Preparing ranking and recommendations for new/re-competing programs to fund.
- Preparing recommendations for continuing programs to fund.
- Reviewing Federal Financial Reports to monitor and report on continuing and re-competing programs' progress toward the matching requirements stipulated in the AmeriCorps rule 45 §§ 2521.35-2521.91.
- Reading, understanding, and signing all assurances, certifications, and restrictions, including the certifications of each program's progress toward the matching requirements.
- Assessing a program's request for an Alternative Match Schedule and submitting the commission's assessment and recommendation to the Corporation for any program they are including on their prime application.
- Assessing any other requests for allowable waivers, developing the commission's recommendation for the waiver and submitting the materials to the Corporation for consideration.

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 the programs on revisions to budgets, proposed activities, and performance measures, as necessary.

Commission Review Requirements

Commissions are required to conduct a competitive review to assess new and re-competing state Formula, Competitive, Fixed-Amount, Education Award Only, Professional Corps and Planning grant applications. Commissions must certify in eGrants the selection process complied with the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), AmeriCorps regulations, and all state laws and conflict of interest rules.

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 programs and to what extent commissions may consider priorities other than those stated in the regulations or in the *Notice*. Include the criteria the commission will use to evaluate and select applications in your application materials.

State Commission Rankings and Recommendation Summaries

The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.456, include requirements regarding ranking applicants for State Competitive funding including for competitive planning grants. Submit the rankings in eGrants using the "Manage Subs" screen in the prime application to enter information on each of the new or re-competing sub-applications. Once the information for each sub-application has been entered, save and close. From the main Manage Subs page, which will now include all subs listed under "For Competitive Submissions" with a "Rank: Select a Rank" drop down menu next to each. There will be no ranking drop down menu for continuation programs.

Provide 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 used by the commission to arrive at the submitted rankings in the Commission Rank Justification field of the commission Competitive Prime Application. There is a character limit of 1,000 characters

For each continuation, new and re-competing competitive application (including Competitive, Fixed-Amount, EAP, Professional Corps and Planning) that is being submitted to the Corporation, provide a "Recommendation Summary" including the information listed below:

- Provide a summary of the program's service activities.
- Describe the program's strengths and how it will complement the commission's existing portfolio and address needs identified in the State Service Plan.

- Discuss potential challenges to success and the commission's strategy for meeting the challenges through training and technical assistance.
- For continuing and re-competing programs, review the most recent financial report, list the overall percentage of match, and provide the commission assessment of the program's ability to meet its match.
- For continuing and re-competing programs, discuss any programmatic compliance issues, including enrollment, retention, performance and progress toward impact. If programmatic issues are identified, describe how the program will address them and what steps the commission will take to ensure success.
- For continuing and re-competing programs, discuss each program's record for submitting forms and reports in a timely manner (including 30-day enrollment, 30-day exits, fiscal reporting deadlines, progress reporting deadlines).
- For re-competing programs, provide either an assessment of each program's evaluation efforts to date or a completed evaluation, as applicable.

Continuation Applications

The funding decision for continuation applications will be based on the subapplicant continuation application, the commission's recommendation summary, including whether to increase, maintain level, or decrease funding, the availability of funds, and information consistent with 45 CFR § 2522.470. All continuing subgrantees will complete the continuation application in eGrants and submit it to the commission. The commission will complete a review and recommendation to the Corporation

Matching Requirements

The state commission is responsible for meeting an aggregate overall match requirement based on the subgrantees' individual match requirements. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.50-2521.90 and additional guidance from the Corporation for the matching requirements that apply to a given commission and its sub-grants. Section 121(e) of the National Community Service Act (NCSA) requires that grantees that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to the Corporation. If a grantee uses federal funds as match, they will be required to report the sources and amounts on the FFR.

State Commission One Percent Fixed Administrative Cost Option

While the Corporation encourages State Commissions to provide the full five percent to subgrantees for administrative costs, commissions may require subgrantees to allocate up to one-fifth of the five percent (i.e., one percent of the federal dollars awarded) to be retained by the commission to cover commission-level administrative costs. Any administrative funds retained by the commission must be used solely in support of the AmeriCorps programs from which they have been retained. The commission accounting system must track and allocate these administrative funds separately.