

# Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National



*A presentation for AmeriCorps grant  
applicants*

Webinar # 1 of 5

**Welcome to the Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National. This is the first in a series of webinars that will orient you to AmeriCorps grant funding and the basic concepts and frameworks to help you determine how your organization might seek a partnership with AmeriCorps.**

## Session Objectives

- ★ Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- ★ AmeriCorps
- ★ AmeriCorps State & National Grants
- ★ What AmeriCorps Programs Do
- ★ How an Organization Becomes an AmeriCorps Program
- ★ AmeriCorps Application and Review Process
- ★ Resources



### **During this presentation we will discuss the following topics:**

The Corporation for National and Community Service

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps State & National Grants

What AmeriCorps Programs Do

How an organization can become an AmeriCorps program

AmeriCorps Application and Review Process

And Resources

The module will conclude with a brief evaluation.

## Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)

- ★ Created in 1993 through the signing of the National and Community Service Trust Act
- ★ Nation's largest grant maker supporting service and volunteering
- ★ Engages millions of Americans in service each year
- ★ Sponsors and promotes a variety of special initiatives and days of service



The Corporation for National and Community Service is an independent, federal grant-making government agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For almost 20 years, CNCS—through its programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, George H.W. Bush Volunteer Generation Fund, and Social Innovation Fund—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

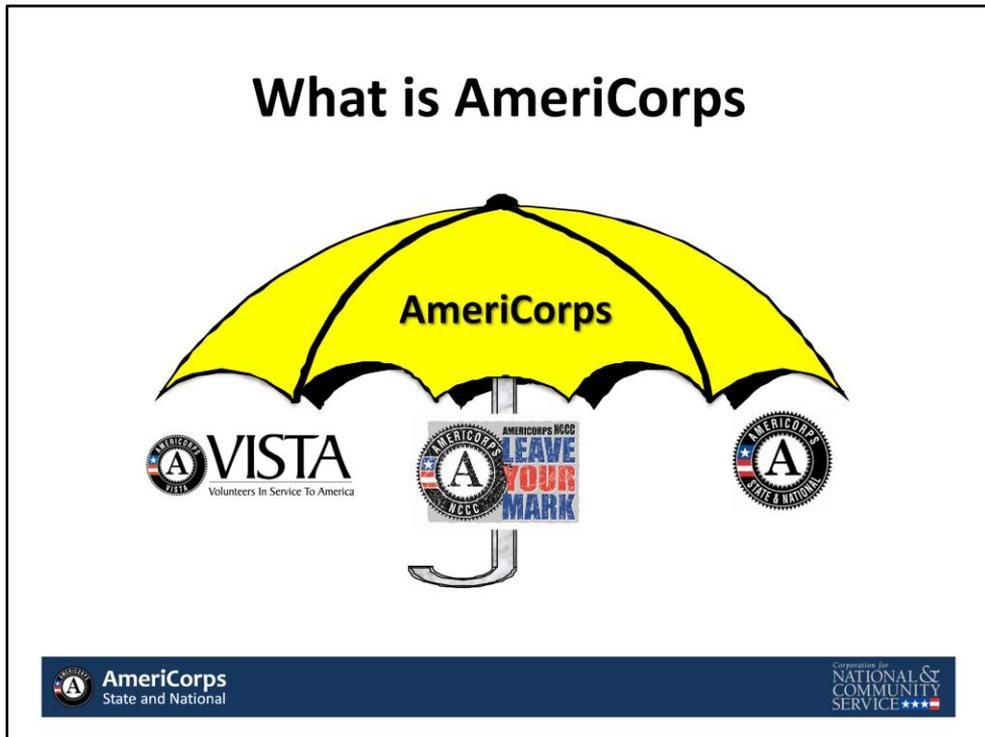
CNCS was created in 1993 through the signing of the National and Community Service Trust Act which expanded opportunities for Americans to serve their communities through national service.

CNCS strives to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and our nation, and is the nation's largest grant maker supporting service and volunteering.

Each year millions of individuals of all ages and backgrounds will serve with national and community non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies to meet needs in education, health, the environment, economic opportunity, veterans, disaster services, and other critical areas.

CNCS sponsors many initiatives as well as special days of service including the September 11 National Service Day of Service and Remembrance and Martin Luther King, Jr Day of Service.

# What is AmeriCorps



AmeriCorps is an umbrella that consists of 3 distinct programs: AmeriCorps VISTA, the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps program 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.

The AmeriCorps NCCC program is a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24 who engage in short-term service projects across the country. The 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. The NCCC program also leads the CNCS disaster services initiative, FEMA Corps.

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 needs in education, health, the environment, economic opportunity, veterans services and disaster services. The remainder of this presentation will focus on AmeriCorps State & National.

## AmeriCorps State and National

- ★ Awards grants to non-profits, faith & community-based organizations, public agencies, Indian tribes, and institutions of higher education.
- ★ Provides opportunities for individuals – AmeriCorps members – to serve communities across the country.
- ★ Since 1994, more than **820,000** men and women have provided service as AmeriCorps members.



AmeriCorps State and National provides grants to non-profits, faith & secular community-based organizations, public agencies, Indian tribes, and institutions of higher education.

These programs provide Americans, young and old, with opportunities to serve as AmeriCorps members in communities across the country.

Since 1994, more than **820,000** men and women have provided service as AmeriCorps members.

## AmeriCorps State and National Grants

- ★ Provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects/programs. Grant recipients must contribute cash or in-kind match funds
- ★ Solely for program expenses and not for general organizational expenses
- ★ Include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and funds that are directly tied to the number of members



AmeriCorps Grants provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects and programs. Grant recipients must contribute match funding to support the project.

AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses.

AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and the funds awarded by CNCS are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded.

## AmeriCorps State and National Grants

Activities are designed for AmeriCorps members that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems.

- ★ Allows an organization to better address community needs by utilizing AmeriCorps resources to build capacity or deepen the impact of the service to individuals or communities
- ★ Broadens the scope of the service activities to reach previously underserved communities

**NOTE:** Funds cannot supplant resources that organically exist in a community.



Recipient organizations, known as grantees, design activities for AmeriCorps Members that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems.

AmeriCorps State and National grants allow organizations to more effectively address community needs by using AmeriCorps resources to support existing programs. Also, AmeriCorps allows organizations to reach previously underserved communities and expand their activities beyond what they were able to do without AmeriCorps

Please note that AmeriCorps State and National funds cannot be used to duplicate, displace or supplant resources that organically exist in a community. AmeriCorps members or grant funds can help meet unmet needs or can expand an organizations' ability to better address community needs, but they don't take the place of community resources that already exist.

# What do AmeriCorps State and National Programs Do?

AmeriCorps impact includes:

- Training citizens in disaster preparedness
- Responding to disaster events
- Providing recovery and/or mitigation
- Improving the housing situation for economically disadvantaged people.
- Improving the school readiness of pre-k children
- Improving the academic performance or academic engagement of K-12 students
- Improving the environmental condition of distressed public lands and waterways
- Enhancing the quality of life for homebound OR older adults and individuals with disabilities
- Increasing access to food resources for economically disadvantaged individuals
- Engaging veterans and military families in service or providing service to these individuals.



Now that you know what AmeriCorps State and National is, let's talk a little bit about what these programs do.

AmeriCorps programs use service and volunteerism to address a community's compelling needs through a wide range of activities, such as building affordable housing and responding to natural disasters.

AmeriCorps programs engage AmeriCorps members and other volunteers to meet the identified needs, but members cannot take the place of existing staff or local volunteers. So as we mentioned earlier, AmeriCorps does not displace, supplant or duplicate any assets that already exist in a community.

## How does an Organization Become an AmeriCorps State and National Program?

There are 2 ways an organization can become an AmeriCorps program

**Apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service**

OR

**Submit an application to a State Service Commission**



There are two ways that an organization can become an AmeriCorps grantee and operate an AmeriCorps program. Your organization can apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service OR you can submit an application to a State Service Commission.

The next few slides will explain how you decide where to submit your application.

## Single-State AmeriCorps Programs

If your program wishes to address community needs in only one state, your organization must apply to your state's State Service Commission for AmeriCorps funding.

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions/all>



Single-state AmeriCorps programs are implemented by organizations receiving an AmeriCorps grant to address needs in only one state. These applications are submitted by the program to their state service commission, and then the commission submits the grant application to CNCS.

The link on this slide shows the contact information for each state commission. Because each commission has its own funding priorities and their own deadlines, you'll need to connect with your state commission early in the application process.

The next slide will give you a little more background on State Service Commissions.

## State Service Commissions

- ★ Comprised of governor appointed boards who oversee the implementation of service and volunteer initiatives in their state.
- ★ Employ staff that manage, monitor and evaluate the programs.
- ★ Provide Corporation funding to single-state programs through grant competitions.
- ★ Provide feedback to the Corporation on the multi-state programs operating in their state.



State Service Commissions are boards of 15-25 individuals nominated and appointed by a state's governor. This appointed board oversees the implementation of national and community service and volunteer initiatives in their particular state or US territory.

Most commissions employ a small professional staff to manage granting, monitoring and evaluating single state AmeriCorps programs. In addition, state commission staff also often administer special, state specific volunteer initiatives.

Again, commissions provide funding to single state AmeriCorps programs through annual grant competitions. State Commissions also provide feedback to the Corporation on the multi-state programs operating in their state.

## Multi-State AmeriCorps Programs

- ★ Address community needs in at least two states
- ★ Have relationships with entities in different states that will operate the local programs
- ★ Consult with State Commissions in each of the states where they operate programming
- ★ Submit grant applications directly to the Corporation



Multi-State AmeriCorps programs are implemented by organizations that are awarded an AmeriCorps grant to address community needs in at least two states.

Multi-State AmeriCorps programs have relationships with entities in different states that operate the local programs.

Multi-state programs must consult with State Commissions in each of the states where they operate to discuss their plans for future or current programming.

Multi-state applicants submit an AmeriCorps grant application directly to the Corporation

# Indian Tribes

- ★ Federally recognized Indian Tribes may apply for funding via one of several mechanisms:
  - ★ Apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service
    - ★ Via the Indian Tribes Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
    - ★ Via the main AmeriCorps NOFO
  - ★ Submit an application to a State Service Commission



AmeriCorps State and National sets aside 1% of our funding to support programs that are developed and administered through federally recognized tribes. These include any 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, 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. The definition also includes tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of these entities.

A nonprofit that desires to apply for a grant as a “tribal organization” on behalf of a federally-recognized tribe, or multiple specific federally-recognized tribes, must submit a sanctioning resolution adopted by the Tribal Council (or comparable tribal governing body) of each tribe. The resolution must identify the nonprofit by name as a “tribal organization” and it must authorize the nonprofit organization to act on behalf of and include the tribe in a CNCS grant application for the purpose of conducting the activities and providing the services described in the application.

AmeriCorps releases a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, specifically for Indian Tribes. Programs eligible to apply for AmeriCorps Indian Tribes funding may choose to apply to the AmeriCorps Indian Tribes NOFO. Alternatively, Indian Tribes can apply directly to the Corporation via the main AmeriCorps NOFO, or to a State Service Commission

# AmeriCorps Grants Applications

- ★ NOFO and application instructions are provided by CNCS.
- ★ Organizations submit grant applications to CNCS via online eGrants system or to their State Service Commission's competition.  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/>
- ★ Applications consist of a narrative, budget, and performance measures, plus a few supplementary items such as letters of commitment.
- ★ Budgets include costs such as: member living allowance and benefits, member and staff training, personnel costs, supplies, and evaluation.



In establishing a competition for AmeriCorps funds, CNCS releases a Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO and application instructions. These documents are generally released in early fall.

Organizations use the NOFO and application instructions to create their application. Applicants submit grant applications through the eGrants system. You can access eGrants using the link on this screen.

A complete application consists of a narrative, a budget and performance measures, plus a few supplementary items, such as letters of commitment from significant community partners, that are submitted via email. The narrative will ask you to address specific criteria as outlined in the NOFO that will include: describing the theory of change for your AmeriCorps program and the impact members will have in the community, demonstrating your organization's capacity to manage the program and administer a federal grant, and explaining how your program is a cost effective solution to your documented needs.

At a minimum, the program budget will include the amount of funds you are requesting and the number and type of AmeriCorps member positions you want for your program. Some budgets will also include costs such as: personnel, member living allowance, training, travel, supplies, and evaluation.

# How AmeriCorps Applications are Processed

<b>Single State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply to State Commission (deadlines vary)</li><li>• Commission conducts review of applications</li><li>• Commission submit applications to CNCS</li></ul>	<b>Multi State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Submit application directly to CNCS</li></ul>
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Once you submit your application for funding, it goes through a particular process.

First let's talk about single state programs— these applicants submit to their state commission and the commission conducts a review of all of the applications it receives. State commission deadlines, practices and policies vary from state to state. Once the state completes their initial review, they submit the most competitive grants to CNCS for a national review. Commissions submit applications to CNCS by the deadline identified in the NOFO; It's important to remember that single state applicants must submit their applications to commissions in advance of this deadline, so they should contact their state commissions early in the application process.

The multi-state programs and Indian Tribes will submit their applications directly to the Corporation by 5pm EST on the deadline.

After submission to CNCS, the rest of the process is identical. All applications undergo a compliance check, and then are moved to an external review if they are compliant. In external review, a panel of reviewers from outside of CNCS will review and provide feedback on a portion of the application based on the selection criteria. The external review process assists CNCS in determining which applications move on to staff review. In staff review, all sections of the application go through a rigorous review process.

Near the end of staff review, CNCS will enter into a period of clarification. During clarifications, applicants could be contacted to provide clarifying information about their submission. CNCS will notify all applicants of the time period for clarifications a few weeks before clarifications begin.

Once clarification is complete, CNCS will make final funding determinations and awards will be made. Generally this entire process takes about four months. We are anticipating making awards each year in the spring.

# Additional Resources

## Webinar Series:

*Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National*

Key AmeriCorps Grant Terminology and Concepts

Introduction to AmeriCorps Members

Categories of AmeriCorps Grants

AmeriCorps Program Management and Design

**Current AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and other applicant resources are available at:** <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>

**Live Topical Calls:** AmeriCorps State & National hosts Q&A calls with potential applicants. You can find the call schedule by following the link above and clicking on the current NOFO.

**Sign up for Email Updates!** Visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) and click on “Get Email Updates” in the top right-hand corner of the page.



This concludes the Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National presentation. This is the first of five webinars to assist grant applicants in understanding how to apply for AmeriCorps funding. In addition to these webinars, please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity and other materials posted on our website to help you prepare to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

In addition to the various online resources, the AmeriCorps Outreach team will host calls in the fall to assist applicants as you complete the application process. You can also sign up for periodic email updates by clicking on the “Get Email Updates” link at the top right-hand corner of the CNCS website.

# Session Evaluation

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ACwebinarEval>



Thank you for your participation, please complete the session evaluation.

# If you have questions

[AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov](mailto:AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov)

or 202.606.7508



**Getting Things Done for America**



If you have questions please contact CNCS via internet or phone at these addresses.