**For Immediate Release**

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**California Volunteers Announces AmeriCorps Racial Justice Planning Grant Awardees**

SACRAMENTO – California Volunteers, Office of the Governor today announced it will award over $109,000 in Racial Justice Planning Grant funds to support organizations in developing AmeriCorps programming that targets issues disproportionately affecting communities of color. AmeriCorps is a national service program that unites and empowers members to commit to a term of service tackling critical community challenges through direct service.

“Our office has worked to focus resources on communities of color to help address racial disparities seen across our state,” said Chief Service Officer Josh Fryday. “With this funding, communities will be able to build more inclusive environments by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together through service.”

The recent protests against racism and systemic injustice and the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the racial inequalities that persist throughout California and our nation. California Volunteers opened the planning grant funding opportunity to organizations seeking to improve the socio-economic well-being and security of communities of color, and particularly youth of color. The grant funds will support more equitable practices in current AmeriCorps programs as well as organizations developing new AmeriCorps program models focused on creating more just and equitable communities.

Twenty-eight applications were received — totaling $1,427,452 in requested grant funding — illustrating the deep commitment of Californians to take action against inequity through AmeriCorps service programs. This opportunity leverages FY 2019 AmeriCorps State federal funds allocated to the State of California through the Corporation for National and Community Service. The following grantees were awarded funding:

* [Beyond Differences](https://www.beyonddifferences.org/), which will develop a new AmeriCorps program advancing youth leadership for students of color, promoting inclusion and social-emotional learning.
* [Alder Graduate School of Education](https://aldergse.edu/), which will develop a new AmeriCorps program supporting traditionally underserved K-12 public school students and their communities with a combined focus on developing AmeriCorps members from communities of color as future educators.
* [Local Government Commission](https://www.lgc.org/), which will enhance the AmeriCorps CivicSpark Program helping to increase diversity in recruitment and increase racial equity training.

The grantees celebrated today’s announcement:

"We applaud California Volunteers’ support for service programs tackling community problems that disproportionately affect communities of color. This grant will enable us to strengthen our work through CivicSpark — equipping current and emerging local leaders to create equitable, resilient, and vibrant communities that proactively address racial inequities and serve the needs of all community members." **– Local Government Commission Executive Director Kate Meiss**

"This is a critical grant for our organization as it will allow us to bring our student leadership programs to many more populations of students of color in California. Our leadership programs, with AmeriCorps volunteers as our partners, will give young people in 6th - 8th grades the inspiration and skills needed to promote inclusion and social-emotional learning for all their classmates. Beyond Differences is honored to have been selected for a Racial Justice Planning Grant through California Volunteers.” **– Beyond Differences Executive Director Laura Talmus**
“We are honored to have this opportunity through California Volunteers and are eager to develop a program that improves educational outcomes for students of color in K12 schools and that purposefully recruits, coaches and empowers people of color from those communities to participate in the program and become teachers and leaders in their communities.” **- Alder Graduate School of Education President & CEO Heather Kirkpatrick**

Grant funds will be awarded in the fall of 2020. Once the planning grant funding expires, organizations are encouraged to apply for an operational grant to support the administration of AmeriCorps programs.

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