2021 AmeriCorps State Grant Funding Opportunity Overview

September 23, 2020

Technical Assistance Webinar Series

- **Funding Overview**
  - Wednesday, September 23, 1-2 pm
- Application Forms & Selection Criteria
  - Wednesday, September 30, 1-2 pm
- Performance Measures
  - Wednesday, October 7, 1-2 pm
- Demonstrating Evidence
  - Thursday, October 8, 1-2 pm
- Budget Development
  - Wednesday, October 14, 1-2 pm

This is our first webinar in our series of TA webinars over the next few weeks. You can find this schedule on our website.

Session Objectives

Understanding of:

- AmeriCorps State Grants
- California Volunteers' Role
- Grantee Responsibilities
- Application Process & Parameters

What is AmeriCorps?

- VISTA
    - Full-time member, capacity building focused on ending poverty
- National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)
    - Team of members for short-term service projects
- **State** and National
    - Funds programs of members to provide direct service to meet community needs

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

AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24 who engage in short-term service projects across the country. 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.

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 community needs

through service.

This opportunity is for AmeriCorps State, for programs proposing to operate solely in California.

The Corporation for National and Community Service manages the AmeriCorps VISTA, NCCC, and National programs. If you are interested in applying for a VISTA member, a NCCC project, or for a multi-state AmeriCorps grant, you will need to contact CNCS directly. You can find more information at nationalservice.gov.

AmeriCorps State Grants

- Provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps programs
- Solely for program expenses, not general organizational expenses
- Includes allotment of AmeriCorps member positions (minimum 20 full-time)
- Funds directly tied to the number of members

AmeriCorps State Grants provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps programs.

AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses. You will need to have systems in place for tracking all activities and expenditures.

Grant recipients must contribute match funding to support program costs beyond the federal share.

AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and the funds are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded. This is referred to as the cost per Member Service Year, which we will get into later.

AmeriCorps State Grants

- Evidence-based member service activities
- Enables an organization to build capacity or deepen impact to individuals or communities
- Broadens the scope to reach previously underserved communities
- Cannot duplicate or supplant pre-existing activities, staff or volunteers

AmeriCorps grantees design activities for AmeriCorps members that demonstrate an evidence-based approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems.

With an AmeriCorps State grant you can more effectively address community needs by using AmeriCorps resources to support existing programs. Or, you can reach previously underserved communities and expand activities beyond what was possible without AmeriCorps.

It is important to remember that AmeriCorps funds cannot be used to duplicate, displace, or supplant resources that exist in a community. AmeriCorps members or grant funds can help meet unmet needs or can expand your ability to better address community needs, but they cannot take the place of community resources that already exist.

California Volunteers (CV)

- State Service Commission
- Administers AmeriCorps State Grants in CA
- Competitive process to award AmeriCorps grants
- Funded through federal dollars
- Programs are a subgrant of California Volunteers
- Deeply invested in program success

California Volunteers is the State Service Commission in California, responsible for administering AmeriCorps state programming here in California.
This responsibility includes running a competitive process to award AmeriCorps grants. While this is a state-run process, these grants are federally funded.
Grants awarded through this process are technically a sub-grant of California Volunteers. We are responsible for monitoring and supporting our programs to ensure grants are administered responsibly and that programs are having the intended impact on their communities. As such, we are deeply invested in your success.

CV AmeriCorps Program Values

- Targeted at solving a critical challenge facing California.
- Use National Service as an appropriate strategy.
- Apply an evidence-based approach.
- Based on a well-aligned logic model and focused on measurable outcomes.
- Dedicated to quality.

As a commission, California Volunteers values AmeriCorps programs that are targeted at solving a critical challenge facing California and that use National Service as an appropriate strategy to meet that challenge. We value programs that apply an evidence-based approach to member activities, based on a well-aligned logic model and focused on measurable outcomes. And of course, we value programs that are dedicated to quality. These are the values we hope to see reflected in your applications and as you implement your programs.

Grantee Responsibilities

- Secure Match Funding
- Member Enrollment Requirements
  - Grantee responsible for recruitment, selection, and placement of members in communities
- Retention Requirements
  - Grantee responsible for member training and ongoing support and supervision
- Compliance with all OMB and AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and requirements

As an applicant, you are responsible for identifying sources of match for your AmeriCorps program. As a grantee, you will be responsible for securing that funding and tracking and reporting it like any other expenditure.

Grantees are responsible for recruiting, selecting, and finding placement sites for AmeriCorps members to serve in their program.
While members are serving, grantees are responsible for providing member training and ongoing support and supervision.

All grantees are responsible for ensuring compliance with all OMB and AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and requirements. These are described or referenced in the Request for Applications. These are a lot to digest, but part of California Volunteers' commitment to our programs' success is to support you in navigating these requirements. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions.
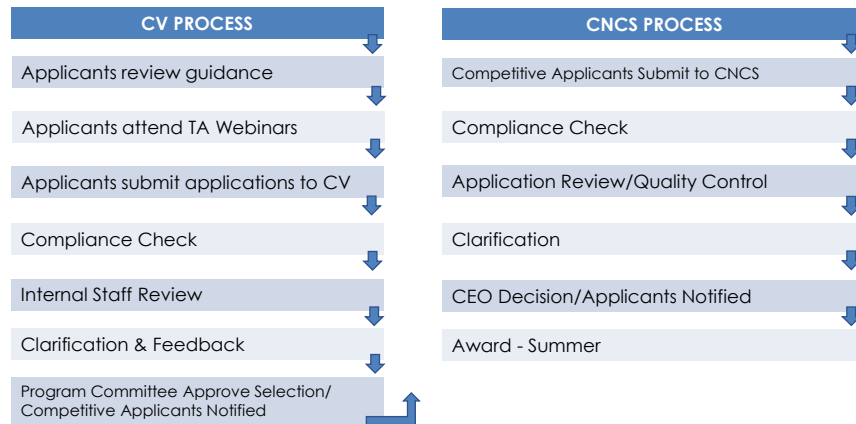
How Organizations Apply

- Programs operating solely in California apply to California Volunteers
- Multi-State and Tribal programs apply directly to CNCS

Now let's go into the application process, starting with how organizations apply, or specifically to whom organizations apply.

If you are proposing a program that will operate solely in California, then you will respond to this funding opportunity and submit your application to California Volunteers.
If you are a multi-state or tribal program, you will apply directly to CNCS following the instructions in their Notice of Funding Opportunity which you can find at nationalservice.gov.

Application Review & Selection

CV PROCESS
Applicants review guidance
Applicants attend TA Webinars
Applicants submit applications to CV
Compliance Check
Internal Staff Review
Clarification & Feedback
Program Committee Approve Selection/ Competitive Applicants Notified

CNCS PROCESS
Competitive Applicants Submit to CNCS
Compliance Check
Application Review/Quality Control
Clarification
CEO Decision/Applicants Notified
Award - Summer

Here is an overview of the Application Review and Selection Process

First, applicants review the application guidance documents, attend the TA webinars, draft and finalize their applications before submitting them to CV.

Once applications are received, they go through a **compliance check,** where we verify the applications meet all threshold issues and that no required documents are missing. Any compliance issues that are not resolved within 24 hours may result in disqualification.

Next, we hold an **internal staff review**, where we read and score the applications based on the criteria in the RFA.

Applicants then receive **clarification and feedback** from CV. The purpose of this part of the process is to answer any questions that arise from the review and to strengthen the application to inform operation, if funded.

Following the clarification process, staff will recommend programs that meet a minimum score threshold to the AmeriCorps Program Committee for approval.

The **AmeriCorps Program Committee approves final selection of competitive grant**

applications to be submitted to the national grant competition. Applications submitted to the national grant competition compete for AmeriCorps funding with applications submitted from other state commissions and multi-state organizations.

CNCS' process includes a compliance check, application review, and clarification. During this time, if CNCS has any questions about an application, they will contact CV. We will then forward their questions to the applicant, who will have a very quick turnaround to answer questions. This part of the process usually takes place in March.

Once the CNCS CEO has approved funding decisions at the national level, they will inform CV, who will then inform the applicants. Applications that are not selected for competitive funding at the national grant competition return to California's rank order list to be funded with formula dollars, subject to funds available.

Competitive vs. Formula Funding

- Held to same standards and grant requirements
- Difference in who reviews/makes funding decisions
    - Competitive: CNCS
    - Formula: CV
- CV submits applications for competitive consideration after CV clarification round (December/January)
- Formula applications identified and clarified in a separate round (February)
- Competitive Applications will be clarified by CNCS
- Final funding decisions (both competitive and formula) announced no later than May

Let's go into a bit more detail about the difference between competitive and formula funding.

First, it is important to understand that both are held to the same standards and grant requirements. The main difference is in who reviews the application and makes funding decisions. All applications are reviewed by CV, but competitive grants are also reviewed and approved by CNCS. Competitive applications not selected by CNCS and those not submitted to the national competition are considered for formula funding, as available. Formula dollars are a set amount that all states receive based on population. Competitive dollars are the only way we can expand the federal investment in California. So there are many considerations involved in determining what applications are submitted to the national competition. All this to say, if you are not selected for the national competition, that is not necessarily a reflection on the quality of your application.

As for the differences in the process for competitive and formula, competitive applications will be submitted to CNCS after a round of clarification by CV in December, and may receive another round of clarification from CNCS between February and April. Applications identified for formula consideration will be notified in December but will not receive final funding decisions until after CNCS has announced their decisions.

Final funding decisions for both competitive and formula applications will be announced no later than May.

Application Guidance Documents

- Request for Applications
- Mandatory Supplemental Guidance
- Application Instructions
- Application Forms
- National Performance Measure Instructions

These are the guidance documents necessary to complete the application.

The Request for Applications is the governing document that lays out the parameters of the grant and application process.

The Mandatory Supplemental Guidance is essentially the glossary, defining terms and providing more information on items from the RFA.

The Application Instructions provides guidance on completing the application. Some of the items will need to use forms provided by CV. These forms can be found on our website, along with these other documents.

The National Performance Measure Instructions are applicable only if you are proposing to use national performance measures as program outputs or outcomes.

National Service Focus Areas

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families
- Capacity Building

These are the seven National Service focus areas. We are accepting applications in all focus areas: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, veterans and military families, or capacity building to increase impact in any of these areas.

Funding Priorities: Issue Areas

- Efforts to help local communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including meeting food insecurity needs.
- Programs that engage Californians in taking actions to address climate change and environmental stewardship.
- Programs that actively engage in removing structural racial inequities, advancing racial equality, and increasing opportunity in order to achieve sustainable change in communities.
- Economic Opportunity

These are the issue areas that are funding priorities in this competition.

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Programs that actively engage in removing structural racial inequities, advancing racial equality, and increasing opportunity in order to achieve sustainable change in communities.
Programs in the Economic Opportunity focus area

Funding Priorities: Issue Areas

- Evidence-based interventions on the [CNCS Evidence Exchange](#) that are assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence.

- Healthy Futures

- Veterans and Military Families

- Rural intermediaries

- Programs that reduce child poverty.

These are the issue areas that are funding priorities in this competition.

Evidence-based interventions found on the CNCS Evidence Exchange. Applicants can only qualify for this funding priority if they area assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence.
Programs in the Healthy Futures focus area
Programs in the Veterans & Military Families focus area
Rural intermediaries
and Programs that reduce child poverty.

It is important to remember that California Volunteers is accepting applications that address issues outside of these areas. Do not assume that your application will not be considered competitive if you do not address one of these priorities; we are more interested in funding well-designed programs regardless of focus area.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Nonprofit organizations
- Institutions of higher education
- Local government/public agencies
- State government agencies
- Indian Tribes within the State of California

Organizations eligible to apply for an AmeriCorps State grant include nonprofits, institutions of higher education, local government or public agencies, state government agencies, or Indian Tribes within the state.

Any organization that has been convicted of a federal crime or has unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or lapsed, or that is not being paid in a timely manner is ineligible to apply. In addition, any 501(c)(4) organization that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

Eligibility

- Community Partnership Requirements
    - Must demonstrate partnership with at least three independent entities that include one public and one private partner
- DUNS Number and SAM Registration
    - Applicants must include a DUNS number and have active registration on SAM.gov by due date
    - Active SAM.gov registration must be maintained throughout grant

All applicants must engage a partnership with at least three independent entities that include one public and one private partner.

All applicants must have a DUNS number and have active registration on SAM.gov by the due date, November 20th. Active SAM.gov registration must be maintained throughout the grant. This is very important since it will result in an applicant's disqualification if registration is not active. The process to get registered on SAM.gov can be long, so please start that process as soon as possible if you are planning on applying for this or any federal grant.

Project/Award Period

- Begin August – October 2021 (exceptions can be requested as part of your application)
- Allow up to 12 months for members to complete term of service
- Grants awarded on three-year cycle, evaluated annually for continuation funding

Grants are awarded in the summer, so the earliest a program can start is August. It is our expectation that programs will start between August and October. You can request an exception in your application by entering your proposed start date outside of this range. Members have up to 12 months to complete their service, so plan your program year not to exceed 365 days. Program years cannot overlap, so members that start late will not be able to serve into the next program year except in special circumstances.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded on a three-year cycle, but they are evaluated annually for continuation funding. You will have opportunities to make minor changes year-to-year in continuation, but you will generally not be able to make major program changes until after those three years when you compete for another cycle.

Award Amount

- Based on number of member slots requested
- Request up to a maximum cost per MSY (full-time equivalent member slot)
- Includes cost sharing or matching requirement

The grant award amount is based on the number of member slots and dollars requested up to a maximum cost per MSY (full-time equivalent member slot). The grant includes a match portion that the grantee is responsible for securing. The maximum cost per MSY and match requirement depends on the type of grant requested.

Grant Types

- Cost Reimbursement
- Fixed Amount
    - Full-Time Fixed Amount
    - Education Award Program (EAP)
    - Fixed Amount Professional Corps
    - No-Cost Slots

There are multiple grant types that are being considered under this competition:
Traditional cost-reimbursement, full-time fixed amount, Education Award Program,
Professional Corps, and no-cost slots.
New applicants may apply for traditional cost reimbursement grants, Education Award
Program grants, Professional Corps, or No-Cost Slots.
Experienced applicants may apply for full-time fixed amount grants.
The differences between grant type is mostly limited to cost per MSY and match
requirements. We expect most applications will be for traditional cost reimbursement or
full-time fixed amount grants. If you are interested in apply for another type, please email
funding@cv.ca.gov.

Maximum Cost Per MSY

Grant Type	Maximum
Cost reimbursement	$16,300*
Full-time Fixed Amount	$16,300
Professional Corps Fixed Amount	$1,000
EAP	$800 or $1,000**
No-Cost Slots	$0

*Cost reimbursement programs operating in rural communities and/or recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to $16,800/MSY for the AmeriCorps members who will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth.
** EAP programs can request up to $1,000/MSY if at least 50% of the persons enrolled in the program are disadvantaged youth.

The maximum cost per MSY depends on the grant type. Traditional cost-reimbursement grants and Full-time Fixed Amount grants have a maximum cost per MSY of $16,300. Cost-reimbursement grants operating in rural communities or recruiting opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to $16,800.
Professional Corps Fixed Amount grants have a cost per MSY maximum of $1,000; Education Award Program grants have a maximum of $800 or $1,000, and applicants may request no-cost slots for an allocation of member slots with no funding.

Match Requirements

Grant Type	Match Requirement
Cost Reimbursement	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by the tenth year of funding and every year thereafter.
Fixed Amount Full-Time	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost per MSY awarded.
EAP	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over $800 per MSY awarded.
Professional Corps	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost per MSY awarded.
No-Cost Slots	Grantees pay all program costs.

The costs associated with running an AmeriCorps program are greater than the maximum cost per MSY that can be requested. Applicants are responsible for identifying and securing match funds beyond the federal share requested.

Only traditional cost-reimbursement grants are required to report match. The minimum grantee share is 24% of total program costs for the first three years, with each subsequent year increasing to 50% by the tenth year and every year thereafter.

While there is not match requirement for fixed amount grants, the program is still required to secure funding to cover all program costs beyond the cost per MSY.

Living Allowance

- Required for Full-Time (1700-hour) members
- Set and provided by program
    - Can be covered by federal share, grantee share, or both
    - Consider where members are serving and the cost of living
- Highly recommended for less than Full-Time members

Programs are required to provide a living allowance to all full-time members and are encouraged to provide a living allowance to less than full-time members.

The living allowance amount is determined by the program, within the limits set forth in the RFA and budget instructions. When setting the living allowance, consider where members are serving and the cost of living. The living allowance should be enough for members to live on while they serve.

Living allowance costs are covered by the program and must be included in the budget on the federal share, grantee share, or both.

Segal Education Award

- Provided to all members that successfully complete their term of service
- Provided by the National Service Trust
- Not included in program budget

The education award is provided by the National Service Trust to all members that successfully complete their term of service. It is not included on the program budget. A Full-Time Education Award for 2020 is $6,195 and each other slot type is a fraction of that based on MSY.

Other Grant Parameters

- Minimum program size: 20 MSY (Full-time equivalent positions)
- Maximum grant size: $850,000 if selected for formula waitlist
- Minimum placement of two members per service site

Finally, some other grant parameters to be aware of. The minimum program size is 20 full-time equivalent positions. This requirement can be waived in the application by submitting a one-page justification.

The maximum grant size only applies if your application is selected for formula funding. In order to maximize California's formula dollars, our policy is to limit formula programs to $850,000. This requirement can be waived at CV's discretion.

Lastly, we require a minimum of two members per service site. This requirement can also be waived with compelling justification in a one-page narrative.

The Application Instructions includes more information the waiver process for these requirements.

Application Deadline

- All application components due by **Tuesday, October 27, 2020, 5:00 pm PST**
  - Application submitted electronically in eGrants
  - All required Additional Documents submitted by email to Funding@CV.CA.GOV

eGrants Submission – Start Early!

- Begin the eGrants application at least 2 weeks before the deadline.
- Draft the application as a Word document, then copy and paste the text into the appropriate eGrants field no later than 5 days before the deadline.
- See Application Instructions for specific instructions.

Questions?

Thank you!

Please send questions to Funding@cv.ca.gov.