

7.1 SERVE NEBRASKA TRAINING PROGRAM

CNCS PDAT Federal Grant

ServeNebraska submits an annual grant application and receives federal PDAT (Program Development Assistance and Training) grant funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service to provide training, technical assistance and professional development for AmeriCorps and national service programs in Nebraska. State Commissions receive Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds for building capacity and infrastructure consistent with the Characteristics of a Successful Training and Technical Assistance Program guidance from the Corporation. PDAT funds are made available to Commissions to enhance and sustain high quality national service programs. Among the activities PDAT grant funds can be used for in these streams of service are capacity building and infrastructure development, conducting needs assessments, providing training and technical assistance for AmeriCorps programs and program staff, joint cross-stream training and leadership development.

Focus on AmeriCorps

A key role of ServeNebraska is providing training for AmeriCorps members and staff to reach their full potential to successfully serve the state. ServeNebraska must ensure that AmeriCorps programs meet programmatic goals, stay compliant with federal funding guidelines and provide opportunities for their members to reach their goals throughout their service terms. ServeNebraska also provides technical assistance to current and potential AmeriCorps grantees regarding AmeriCorps rules, funding opportunities, the AmeriCorps grant application process and member management.

National Service Cross-Stream Collaboration

Corporation programs are expected to use a statewide, collaborative approach to training. To the extent allowed by grant provisions and to the extent available, you may use PDAT funds to strengthen infrastructure that supports collaboration and that uses statewide events as one of the primary vehicles for training across national service programs (AmeriCorps State and National and Senior Corps). The Corporation grant guidance requires each Commission extend its training cross-stream to Senior Corps programs.

Assessment

In order to continually refine and assess the effectiveness of trainings and technical assistance provided by ServeNebraska and other training contractors, ServeNebraska uses an electronic annual assessment process to measure program leader, AmeriCorps member and beneficiary needs and experiences. Results are tallied and compiled in order to assess the effectiveness of the training and provide guidance to plan subsequent training. This process allows ServeNebraska to constantly work with trainers and presenters to refine content, approach and objectives and improve the services, methodologies and formats offered by ServeNebraska.

State Conferences

The Commission had been hosting a Governor's Conference on Volunteerism every other year, but with decreasing attendance and financial losses, a new direction was charted. To replace the concentrated variety of training available at that conference, ServeNebraska will reach out to other agencies and organizations that sponsor statewide conferences aligned with ServeNebraska's mission to collaborate and partner in sponsoring the conference thus reaching new audiences and benefiting from shared resources.

Redesign of ServeNebraska's Training Plan

After review and reflection upon past AmeriCorps surveys, program narratives and other training initiatives, the Commission's Training & Professional Development Framework was to provide programs with a wide range of training to develop and strengthen the capabilities of Nebraska's national service members (including Senior Corps) and personnel and provide a benefit to the nonprofit sector.

The redesign included the ServeNebraska online resource library on the commission website in partnership with community agencies and coalitions to provide a large array of resources throughout Nebraska that to build and strengthen the capacity of community-based and nonprofit agencies to serve their communities.

Meeting the needs of our AmeriCorps programs and members is our first priority, but when applicable, and depending on topic content, trainings will be offered in a fee-for-service format to a wider audience such as community-based and faith-based nonprofit agencies/organizations.

CNCS CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL TRAINING / TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The following characteristics describe the elements of a successful training and technical assistance program and should be the design criteria for Commission PDAT plans.

Adequately Resourced

- Has dedicated staff, contractor, or consultant time equal to .25 to 1.0 FTE depending on size of the portfolio of programs you are supporting.
- Staff members have appropriate background in adult education and training methodologies.
- Offers opportunities for professional development for dedicated training and technical assistance (TTA) staff.
- Provides office space, equipment, and access to technology.
- Utilizes in-kind contributions/partnerships for materials, facilities, trainers etc.
- Accesses national TTA resources provided by the Corporation.
- Develops and uses appropriate training materials and methodologies.

Systematic Needs Assessment Process

- Uses appropriate and various methodologies of assessing needs: formal and scheduled such as written survey, interview, focus groups, evaluations, process reports, and site visits; as well as informal and unscheduled, such as documented anecdotal information and on-going informal observation.
- Considers required competencies and characteristics of successful programs and identifies performance gaps.
- Includes a process for collecting and documenting methodology and storing the data collection for reporting purposes.

Develop Training and Technical Assistance Plan

- Content of specific activities is based on analysis of needs of programs and their staff.
- Involves pertinent parties i.e. state service partners, program/project, and site staff.
- Describes specific activities with planned follow-up.
- Identifies resources to implement the plan i.e. money, facilities, and trainers.
- Identifies potential dates and coordinates those dates around other activities.
- Continues to develop on an annual basis and builds from one year to the next.

Implement Training and Technical Assistance Plan

- TTA activities include measurable learning objectives that address specific individual and program needs, including a series of activities if necessary.
- Utilizes appropriate methodologies, curriculum, and materials that adhere to adult education principles.
- Ensures participation of those in greatest need of specific content areas.
- Identifies qualified facilitators for each content area.
- Ensures ADA and Section 504 compliance (e.g. accessibility and reasonable accommodation).
- Utilizes local, state and national resources as appropriate.
- Makes and documents appropriate adaptations to the plan in response to changed circumstances.

Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance Plan

- Establishes and follows a process to collect, analyze, and share feedback from participants, stakeholders, and partners.
- Considers evaluations in the development of subsequent training plans.
- Determines and analyzes any difference between planned and completed activities.
- Reviews the planned budget against actual expenditures.
- Identifies ways to measure effectiveness of training, linking program improvements to staff and/or member participation in specific training programs.