2008-2009 AmeriCorps*State Request for Proposals

Updated Through May 28, 2008

Questions are posted in the order posed

Technical Assistance: Questions Posed & Their Response

QUESTIONS 1 – 10, UPDATED MAY 14, 2008

1. How much funding is available?

A total of approximately $200,000 is available through this Request for Applications. This amount would support approximately 15 full-time AmeriCorps at the maximum federal funding level of $12,600 per full-time AmeriCorps member. If strong applications utilize half-time, reduced half-time, minimum time, or education-award-only positions the number of AmeriCorps positions supported would be greater than 15.

2. How many AmeriCorps members should our organization apply for?

This is an individual decision for each applicant based upon the needs to be addressed and the program model to meet these needs. As stated in the Request for Applications, ServeNebraska requests that the minimum number of AmeriCorps members requested be 3 FTE. These members can be in service at one organization or multiple partner organizations. The maximum number of AmeriCorps members to be awarded to each funded applicant depends upon available funds and the degree of competition for the funds available.

3. What are the funding priorities?

As stated in the Request for Applications, programs addressing unmet human, educational, public safety, homeland security and environmental needs will be considered. ServeNebraska consciously does not define more specific funding priorities, preferring to allow community-based applicants to identify the needs that the AmeriCorps programs will then address. For this reason, clearly and succinctly defining the need to be addressed in the grant application narrative is imperative.

4. Can a United Way apply for an AmeriCorps grant?

Yes.

5. Is it permissible to form a partnership with other organizations meeting a similar need in different communities within Nebraska?

Yes. Collaborations are encouraged.

6. Is it permissible to form a partnership with other organizations meeting differing needs within the same community or geographic region in Nebraska?

Yes. Collaborations are encouraged. It is important to structure the application so that it addresses the varied roles members would perform.

7. What administrative support via grant funds is available for education-award-only programs?

As stated in the Request for Applications, $600 per full-time education-award-only AmeriCorps member is available to support operating costs associated with education-award-only programming. It is possible to utilize education-award-only and stipended AmeriCorps members in the same program. Please contact Greg Donovan at 402-471-6249 or greg.donovan@dhhs.ne.gov to discuss possibilities if this of interest.

8. Can I request funding primarily for secretarial support?

No. AmeriCorps funds are to be used to engage dedicated individuals in direct service to meet needs in their communities, not for office or clerical functions.

9. Can I apply to have AmeriCorps members conduct research related to a legislative interim study?

No. AmeriCorps members should be focused on providing direct service to meet identified needs in their community. Additionally, AmeriCorps members may not engage in lobbying or direct political activity while accruing service hours.

10. Our organization is principally focused on meeting human needs and disaster preparedness but we promoted a specific bill during the last legislative session, are we eligible to apply?

Yes. For specific questions related to the potential eligibility of an applicant organization as it relates to the prohibition on political activity by AmeriCorps grantees, please contact Greg Donovan at 402-471-6249 or greg.donovan@dhhs.ne.gov

QUESTIONS 11 – 21, UPDATED MAY 21, 2008

11. Is the required match ratio 24% or 33%? We have seen both numbers in the Request for Applications.

The applicable match ratio for new AmeriCorps operating grants is 24%. References to 33% were in error, refer to match thresholds for components of prior year AmeriCorps budgets, and have been removed from the Request for Applications instructions on May 21, 2008.

12. Should the application be submitted electronically or printed out and mailed/faxed?

The application should be submitted electronically via the Corporation for National & Community Service eGrants system as specified in the Request for Applications.

13. Can grant funds be used to pay for AmeriCorps member health insurance?

Yes – for full-time stipended AmeriCorps members only.

14. What are the specific requirements for health insurance for AmeriCorps members?

The scope of health insurance required is defined in the AmeriCorps Provisions as follows:

IV. I. LIVING ALLOWANCES, OTHER IN-SERVICE BENEFITS, AND TAXES

5. Health Care Coverage. The grantee must provide a health care policy to those full-time members not otherwise covered by a health care policy at the time of enrollment into the AmeriCorps program, or to those members who lose coverage during their term of service as a result of participating in the Program or through no deliberate act of their own. The Corporation will not cover health care costs for family members or for less than full-time members.

a. Minimum Benefits. The health care policy must meet the following minimum benefits:

i. Physician services for illness or injury;
ii. Hospital room and board;
iii. Emergency room;
iv. X-ray and laboratory;
v. Prescription drugs;
vi. Limited mental/nervous disorders;
vii. Limited substance abuse coverage;
viii. An annual deductible of no more than $250 charges per member;
ix. No more than $1,000 total annual out-of-pocket per member;
x. A 20% co-pay or a comparable fixed fee with the exception of a 50% co-pay for mental and substance abuse care; and
xi. A maximum benefit of at least $50,000 per occurrence or cause.

b. Obtaining Health Care Coverage. You may obtain health care insurance for your members through any provider you choose, as long as the policy provides the minimum benefits and is not excessive in cost. If you use a health care policy that charges more than $150 per month to the Corporation you must send a copy of the policy along with a summary of its coverage and costs to the Corporation's Office of Grants Management.

c. Half-Time Members. Although no portion of health insurance expenses for halftime members may be paid from Corporation funds, you may choose to provide health care to half-time members from other sources.

d. Less Than Full-Time Members serving in a Full-Time Capacity. Less than full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (such as a full-time summer project) may be eligible for health care benefits supported with Corporation funds.

15. Do we need to provide our own health insurance or is there a product in existence that we pay into?

ServeNebraska and the Corporation for National & Community Service do not endorse specific providers, but to assist with budgeting and to provide an example, information for one firm that has developed an AmeriCorps member insurance policy -- SRC, which is affiliated with Aetna, can be found at: http://www.src-web.com/public/americorps.html

On page 2 of the document connected to the "overview" link in the first line of the 4th paragraph are per member costs. Specific benefits of each of the two plans offered bvy SRC are documented in "Plan 1" and "Plan 2" links in that same paragraph.

16. Do fringe benefits need to be paid for education-award-only AmeriCorps members?

No

17. Our organization has applied for CLEARCorps funding, can we also apply for AmeriCorps?

Yes

18. Our organization is partnering with an lead agency that has not previously applied for Corporation for National & Community Service funds. Our organization has applied for CNCS funds previously. Does our lead agency partner need to create an new eGrants account?

Yes.

Since the lead agency will be new to eGrants, they would have to establish a unique eGrants account. This process is fairly simple and intuitive. On the initial eGrants page -- https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp -- in the white area between the two gold areas, there is a link labeled "Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account". Clicking this link and filling in the appropriate spaces should establish the account. Peter Cales [peter.cales@dhhs.ne.gov or 402-471-6228] and Greg Donovan [greg.donovan@dhhs.ne.gov or (402) 471-6249] are available if there are any difficulties with this process. As stated in the Request for Applications, Peter Cales is available to provide an orientation and guidance on the use of eGrants.

19. The NOTE under the Measurable Outputs and Outcomes heading on page 16 of the Request for Applications makes it unclear if Performance Measures should be submitted as part of the application. Should Performance Measures be submitted?

The Performance Measures should be completed as part of the application. The language on page 16 of the Request for Applications has been revised on May 21, 2008 to reflect the intent that the Performance Measures may be revised as part of the grant negotiation process if funding is recommended.

20. If funding is awarded, once negotiations are completed, is the start date flexible or do you specify the starting date and ending date for AmeriCorps programming?

ServeNebraska aims to have programs begin on September 1, 2008, though we are open to negotiating this date with successful applicants.

21. If funding is awarded, is it appropriate to start the recruitment process for AmeriCorps members before the actual start date of the AmeriCorps program?

It is appropriate -- and wise -- to begin recruitment activities once notification of funding has been received so that the members are in place when the grant begins. Please note that no grant funds can be used for these activities before the effective date of the contract between the AmeriCorps program and ServeNebraska.

QUESTION 22, UPDATED MAY 28, 2008

22. In the Request for Applications there is a reference to trainings to be provided to AmeriCorps Members. What constitutes a training? Are we talking about 1.5-2 hour sessions or does this refer to more extensive training programs, i.e. day long trainings?

The notion of trainings as it relates to AmeriCorps members is broad. Put simply, training covers professional development activities that position an individual to successfully undertake their AmeriCorps responsibilities and provides them with skills that will prove useful after service.

In order to complement the offerings of varied AmeriCorps programs, ServeNebraska also offers a slate of trainings annually. This slate is created based upon past experience and input from AmeriCorps members and administrators. As such, the listing may change from year-to-year. The roster of offerings for 2007-2008 (the current year) may be found at: http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/pdf/training/AmeriCorps%20Training%20Calendar%20PC%203-19-08.xls