



**2009 AmeriCorps State
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS
for
State Commissions**

**State Formula
State and Territory Competitive
State Education Award Program
v. 7.24.08**

**OMB Control #: 3045-0117
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IMPORTANT NOTICE

These application instructions conform to the Corporation for National and Community Service's (the Corporation's) online grant application system, [eGrants](#). The eGrants system is designed to serve the Corporation's applicants and grantees. All Corporation funding announcements are posted on our web site www.cns.gov and at www.grants.gov.

Public Burden Statement: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 requires the Corporation to inform all potential persons who are to respond to this collection of information that such persons are not required to respond unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. (See 5 CFR 1320.5(b)(2)(i)).

Time Burden: The time required to complete this collection of information is estimated to average 10 hours per applicant.

Use of Information: The information collected constitutes an application to the Corporation for grant funding. The Corporation evaluates the application and makes funding decisions through the Corporation's grant review and selection process.

Effects of Non-Disclosure: Providing this information is voluntary; however, failure to provide the information would not allow the Corporation to assess the applicant's request for funding. In this case, it would not be possible to consider granting funds to the applicant.

Privacy Act: Information provided for this collection may be shared with federal, state, and local agencies for law enforcement purposes.

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Application Instructions: State Commissions

I. Overview

Each state commission is responsible for developing an application processes that include the review and selection of AmeriCorps programs for submission to the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) for funding. In this document, we provide instructions to assist in the development of this application selection process and the submission of AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive, State Education Award Program (State EAP), and State Formula application packages through eGrants.

In addition to the information in this document, you must also review the following important sources of additional information about the AmeriCorps program and the application process.

- The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520 - 2550, contain program-specific information and requirements that you need to understand and incorporate into your application instructions. The full regulations are available online at www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr.
- The *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)* for AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive and State EAP funding contains specific information about how much funding will be available for AmeriCorps grants, eligible applicants, how to apply, and special considerations and priorities for funding that are not included in these application instructions. You will be able to access the *Notice* at the website, www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp. The *Notice* will be removed once the application deadline has passed.
- The Application Instructions for the State and Territory Competitive and State Education Award Programs are posted at www.americorps.gov/pdf/05_0802_ameriCorps_nofa_instructions.pdf.

A. eGrants

You will submit your AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive, State EAP, and State Formula application packages using eGrants according to the instructions provided here and in the *Notice*. The Corporation will notify you via e-mail when the eGrants system is ready to receive applications. The eGrants application provides prompts and directions that will guide you and your applicants through the application process.

In order to submit your application packages to the Corporation in eGrants, you must set up a separate Prime Application for Competitive, State EAP and Formula applications. Once you receive, review, select and recommend applications, you will complete the Prime Application and submit it to the Corporation.

B. Application Deadlines

1. State and Territory Competitive and Education Award Program Deadlines

The deadline for State and Territory Competitive and State EAP is **January 13, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.**

2. State Formula Deadline

The Corporation will announce the annual formula funds allocation for each state following the annual appropriation. You may request funds anytime after the Formula allocations are announced. Once you have selected Formula grantees, you report these selections by submitting applications to the Corporation through eGrants.

You must submit your Formula applications at least 30 days before the earliest start date of your programs but no later than June 15. Under the Strengthen AmeriCorps Act (P.L. 108-45 (July 3, 2003), codified at 42 U.S.C. 12605), your grantees may not enroll members before the Corporation issues your grant award.

C. Requirements for Submission

You must submit the following information with your State and Territory Competitive and State EAP application packages:

- Applicant information from the State Commission (Prime Application).
- Assurances and Certifications signed by the appropriate official.
- The AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive or State EAP program applications you are recommending for funding.
- Commission ranking of applications as outlined in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2522.465.
- Recommendation summaries (see Section III. E. (3) below for instructions).

In addition, state commissions are responsible for ensuring that each recommended application complies with all the submission requirements set forth in the *Notice* and the Application Instructions Template for Programs. **Do not submit any other supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, letters of support, or any other item not requested in these application instructions. The Corporation will not review or return them.**

D. Available Resources

In general, the amount of resources available each year for State and Territory Competitive, State EAP, and Formula grants depends on a number of factors, including: the amount of the Corporation's annual appropriation and the funding requested to support continuation programs.

For Formula funding, the amount of your grant award will be the total amount you request for the programs on your funding chart, up to your annual allocation. Since the Corporation has moved to one-year funding, unrequested funds from the prior fiscal year are no longer available.

E. Statewide Evaluations

Commissions may use Formula funds to conduct a statewide evaluation of Formula programs. Commissions may use Administrative (Admin) and Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds to evaluate Formula or Competitive programs. To ensure that Formula

funds are not used to evaluate Competitive programs, only use Formula funds in proportion to their representation in the portfolio being evaluated.

F. Coordination with National Programs

The Corporation expects all national service programs to collaborate at the local level. You are expected to communicate and coordinate with AmeriCorps National parent organizations and their sites in your state, as described below. These include recipients of National Direct, National EAP, Professional Corps, and Indian Tribes grants.

Likewise, AmeriCorps National program parent organizations are expected to communicate and coordinate with commissions in the states where they operate, and to share resources as appropriate.

As a state commission, you are expected to:

- Consider the schedules and needs of AmeriCorps National programs when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
- Include National programs in your annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of your state service plan.
- Add AmeriCorps National program personnel that operate in your state to your mailing list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

National programs in your state are expected to communicate regularly with you, and to keep you informed of their progress. Specifically, they will:

- Inform you when they are submitting applications with sites in your state prior to application.
- Provide you with a list including contact information for their programs in your state once grants are awarded, and update this list on an annual basis.
- Participate in your annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of your state service plan, as well as appropriate training and other events.
- Include the state commission on their mailing list and invite commission staff to appropriate training and other events.

II. New and Recompeting Submissions

A. New Applicants and Recompeting Programs

Any program that is applying for AmeriCorps funds for the first time must complete the application described in the Application Instructions Template for State Programs or as instructed by the state commission. Any program in its third year of a three-year grant cycle must submit a new application to be considered for further funding.

For an AmeriCorps program that is recompeting, in addition to the new application, the Corporation will review and consider previous grant compliance and performance information from our management information systems. This includes enrollment and retention rates, accomplishments, and match history. Plan your review process accordingly, and make sure that all recompeting programs you recommend for funding are high-quality programs that have successfully met their performance measures. Recompeting programs must have successfully secured the matching resources required in their earlier grant awards.

B. Planning Grants

You may fund planning grants in your Formula portfolio. If you choose to fund planning grants in your Formula portfolio, please include the title “Planning Grant” in the Project Name in the Applicant Info Section of the program application. You have the authority to establish planning grant guidance within the parameters described in the National Application Instruction for National Planning Grants. Planning grants must be included when you calculate your average cost per MSY.

D. Additional Information Submitted in Hard Copy

In addition to the applications you submit in eGrants, you may need to submit program evaluations (as required under 45 CFR 2522.730) and, if applicable, labor union concurrence (as required under 45 CFR 2522.100 (c)) on behalf of your programs. Send hard copy to:

Corporation for National and Community Service
ATT: AmeriCorps State
1201 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20525

Please use an alternative service to the U.S. Postal Service to send hard copy. U.S. Postal Service deliveries to government agencies often are delayed and sometimes damaged due to security measures. Attach a hard copy of the program’s SF424 facesheet to each document so that we know which application corresponds to each document.

If you prefer, you may submit evaluations and labor union concurrence electronically to acapplications@cns.gov.

This information must be received at the Corporation by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on **January 13, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.**

After you have submitted the documents, change the status in eGrants from the default “Not Sent” to the applicable status (“Sent,” “Not Applicable,” or “Already on File at CNCS”). In the event of difficulties submitting an application in eGrants, please see the *Notice* for instructions and contact your Corporation Program Officer.

III. State Selection Process

A. State Commission Application and Selection Process

The information in Section III is provided to assist you in developing your application materials and selection processes for Competitive, Formula, and State EAP funding for new and recompeting programs. State commissions must also follow state law requirements regarding requests for proposals and the selection of programs by a state commission. You are advised to provide information on the following topics to program applicants:

- Funding availability.
- Competitive, Formula, and State EAP funding guidance and applications.
- State maximum cost per MSY and budget guidelines.
- State application deadlines and submission requirements.
- State priorities.

- Corporation focus areas.
- Selection criteria.
- Other information that you or your state may require.

B. State Responsibilities for Review and Recommendation

State commissions are responsible for:

- Reviewing and selecting new/recompeting Competitive and State EAP applications to submit to the Corporation for funding.
- Preparing ranking and recommendations for new/recompeting Competitive programs to fund.
- Selecting programs for Formula funding, either separately or as part of the same competition you use for the Corporation's competitive grants process.
- Thoroughly reviewing the recommended applications to ensure they are complete, accurate, and in compliance with all program and budget requirements before submitting them to the Corporation in eGrants.
- Reviewing Financial Status Reports to monitor and report on your recompeting programs' progress toward the matching requirements stipulated in the AmeriCorps rule 45 CFR §§ 2522.35-2522.91.
- Reading, understanding, and signing all assurances, certifications, and restrictions, including the certification of programs' progress toward the matching requirements.

Be sure to set a due date for applications that allows adequate time before the Corporation's due date to review program applications, analyze budgets, and work with programs on revisions to budgets, proposed activities, and performance measures, as necessary.

C. Review Requirements

1. Competitive Process

- You are required to conduct a competitive process to assess your new and recompeting State Formula and State Competitive applications.
- You must certify in eGrants that your selection process complied with the National Community and Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), AmeriCorps regulations, and all state laws and conflict of interest rules.

2. Peer Review

The Corporation does not require state commissions to conduct peer review for State Formula and State Competitive applications. You may be required under state law to conduct peer review for Formula and/or Competitive proposals.

3. Rigorous Review

Commissions are expected to conduct a rigorous review of applications and to send forward only those applications that are considered to be high quality and that meet all requirements. Commissioners must vote to approve the applications for submission to the Corporation, and commissions are required to maintain a record of the vote.

D. Selection Criteria

1. Regulatory Requirements for State Formula Submissions

The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 and § 2522.475, describe the extent to which commissions must use the Corporation’s selection criteria and priorities when selecting Formula programs. The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 describes to what extent commissions may consider priorities other than those stated in the regulations or the *Notice*.

2. Publication of State Selection Criteria

Incorporate the criteria you will use to evaluate and select applications, including the criteria required above, in your application materials.

E. State Commission Rankings and Recommendation Summaries

1. Regulatory Requirements for State Competitive Submissions

The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.465, include requirements regarding ranking applicants for State Competitive funding:

(a) If you are a state commission applying for State Competitive funding, you must prioritize the proposals you submit in rank order based on their relative quality and according to the following table:

If You Submit this Number of State Competitive Proposals to the Corporation:	Then You Must Rank this Number of Proposals:
1 to 12	At least top 5
13 to 24	At least top 10
25 or more	At least top 15

(b) While the rankings you provide will not be determinative in the grant selection process, and the Corporation will not be bound by them, we will consider them in our selection process.

2. Submitting Your Rankings in eGrants

Use the “Manage Subs” screen to enter information on each of your new sub-applications. Once you have entered information on all of your subs, click Save and Close. You will be back on the main Manage Subs page, which will now include all your subs listed under “For Competitive Submission” with a “Rank: Select a Rank” drop down menu next to each. There will be no ranking drop down menu for continuations.

Provide your rankings in order of funding priority in the sub-applications section of the Competitive Prime Application in eGrants. Each ranked program must have a different rank, i.e., no “ties.”

Summarize the criteria and process you used to arrive at your rankings in the Commission Rank Justification field of your commission’s Competitive Prime Application.

3. Recommendation Summaries

For each competitive application that you are submitting to the Corporation, provide the information listed below. In eGrants, enter the information in the text box in the Subapplicant section of your Prime Application. There is a 4,000 character limit for each recommendation summary for State and Territory Competitive and State EAP applications. Check these summaries carefully for spelling, grammar, and accuracy.

a) New or Recompeting Programs

- Provide a summary of the program’s service activities.
- Describe the program’s strengths and how it will complement your existing portfolio.
- Discuss its potential challenges and your strategy for addressing these challenges through training and technical assistance.
- For recompeting programs, review the most recent FSR, list the overall percentage of match, and provide your assessment of the program’s ability to meet its match.
- For recompeting programs, address each program’s record for submitting forms and reports in a timely manner.
- For recompeting programs, provide either an assessment of each program’s evaluation efforts to date or a completed evaluation, as applicable.

IV. Continuation Requests

Procedure for Requesting Continuations

The Corporation will – unless the CEO determines otherwise based on availability of funds, material information not contained in the state commission summary recommendation, or other good cause – make final decisions on continuation funding for competitive grants based principally on summary recommendations (including whether to increase, hold level, or decrease funding) submitted by each state commission. To effectuate this policy, each state commission will consider in its summary recommendation enrollment and retention rates as well as selection criteria published by the Corporation and commission.

Subgrantees will complete the continuation application in eGrants and submit it to the state commission. Please enter your recommendations for continuations in the recommendations summary page in eGrants.

Enrollment

If you are recommending a program for level or expanded funding that enrolled less than 100% of slots received during its last full year of program operation, provide an explanation and a plan for improvement.

If enrollment for the current program year is incomplete or not yet started (e.g. for a summer service program), state this in your recommendation narrative.

Retention

If sub-applicants were not able to retain members during the last full year of program operation, provide an explanation, and describe their plan for improvement. We recognize retention rates may vary among equally effective programs depending on the program model. We expect grantees to pursue the highest retention rate possible.

Other criteria:

In your recommendations, also discuss:

- Compliance with 30-day enrollment.

- Compliance with 30-day exiting.
- Compliance with fiscal reporting deadlines.
- Compliance with program reporting deadlines.
- Progress towards performance objectives.

In addition, if a subgrantee falls below full enrollment, has less than 100% retention and no plan for improvement, or is not compliant, making progress, or reaching match, yet you still recommend level or increased funding, you must fully justify your recommendation.

Following your submission, your Program Officer will consider your recommendation. If he or she concurs with your recommendations, your recommendations will move forward in the decision making process. If she or he does not concur, you will be contacted for further information, justification, or negotiation.

Continuation Expansions

Based on our anticipated appropriation, and the expected volume of new and re-competing applications in 2009, the Corporation does not expect to approve any requests for expansion (additional members or funding) within continuation requests in fiscal year 2009. If any expansions are considered, preference will be given to expansions that address the Corporation's strategic initiatives, include low cost MSYs, and expansions of programs demonstrating outcomes that have exceeded their goals.

Continuation Budget Increase: In 2009, your continuation request may not include an increase for cost of living.

V. Corporation Selection Processes

A. Timeline for Decisions

The dates for announcement of final new and re-competing grant awards will be published in the *Notice*. Official notification of the grant award is contingent upon successful completion of grant negotiations and resolution of any budget and compliance issues. Programs may not enroll members before the Corporation issues the final grant award. Commissions must ensure that subgrantees understand and comply with this requirement.

B. Multiple Submissions

The same project cannot be funded by multiple AmeriCorps grants. If you have more than one application pending before the Corporation for the same project, you must state this fact in each application. You will be required to withdraw all but one if two or more are approved for funding.

VI. Grant Requirements

A. State Average Cost Per MSY and Maximum Program Cost Per MSY

The Corporation will publish the state average cost per MSY and the maximum program cost per MSY in the annual *Notice*.

B. Matching Requirements

The state commission is responsible for meeting an aggregate overall match requirement based on subgrantees' individual match requirements. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.50 – 2521.90 and additional guidance from the Corporation for the matching requirements that apply to you and your programs.

C. Subgrant Administrative Cost Allocation

Since the Corporation provides Administrative and PDAT funding to support commission operations, we strongly encourage you to provide the full 5% allowed for administrative funds to your operating programs. However, commissions may retain up to 1% for commission administrative costs.

State Commission 1% Fixed Amount Option. Regardless of the method used to calculate administrative costs, state commissions may choose to set aside a portion of the Corporation share to use in administering its subgrantees. This amount must not exceed a one-fifth share of the maximum 5% Corporation share (i.e., allocating 1% as set aside for administering subgrantees and the remaining 4% for subgrantee administrative costs). When using this option, the subgrantee's portion must not exceed the remaining 4% portion of the maximum Corporation share. Both the commission and subgrantee portions of the Corporation share of administrative costs should be requested in the subgrantee's budget.

To allocate the subgrantee share of the amount: Multiply the sum of the Corporation share of Sections I and II by 4.21% (i.e. 0.0421). This is the maximum amount that the subgrantee can request as the Corporation share of administrative costs. Enter this amount as the Corporation share for Section III. A. or Section III. B. as appropriate, in the line item subgrantee share amount.

To allocate the Commission share of this amount: Multiply the sum of the Corporation shares of Sections I and II by 1.05% (i.e. 0.0105). This amount is the maximum the commission can retain to administer the subgrant(s). Enter this amount as the Corporation share for Section III. A. or Section III. B. as appropriate in the line item commission share amount.

Any administrative funds you retain must be used solely in support of the AmeriCorps programs from which you have retained them. Your accounting system must track and allocate these administrative funds separately. Please see the detailed budget instructions and the budget worksheets in the Application Instructions Template for Programs and the Appendices for guidance in calculating administrative costs.

D. Approval of Pre-Award Costs

State commissions and programs may be reimbursed for pre-award costs only if they are incurred with the written approval of the Corporation's Office of Grants Management. You incur all pre-award costs at your own risk. The Corporation is under no obligation to reimburse you or your subgrantee for these costs if you or your subgrantee does not receive advance approval, or if the approved amount is less than anticipated.

To request such approval, send a request to your Corporation grants officer, with a copy to your program officer that includes a brief justification for the costs to be incurred and indicates the desired effective date. If your request is approved, the Office of Grants Management will issue a letter authorizing the pre-award costs within five business days.

The Corporation will consider approving, where appropriate, the following types of pre-award costs:

- Personnel expenses and benefits.
- Travel for staff and prospective members.
- Equipment.
- Supplies.
- Contractual and consultant services.
- Training for staff and prospective members.
- Evaluation.
- Other program operating costs.

Because the Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act (P.L. 108-45 (July 3, 2003), codified at 42 U.S.C. 12605) specifically provides that a national service position is approved when the Corporation issues a grant award, we cannot approve member living allowances or support costs, including FICA, workers' compensation, health care, and child care, as pre-award costs. Approval of pre-award costs does not authorize you or your subgrantee to enroll AmeriCorps members or have them begin serving. AmeriCorps members may not count any hours served prior to the award being issued as part of their term of service.

E. Compliance with Federal Legal Requirements

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and OMB circulars for grant management, allowable costs, and audits, including providing audits to the A-133 Clearinghouse if they expend over \$500,000 in federal funds, as required in OMB Circular A-133. The OMB circulars are online at www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars.