



**2008 AmeriCorps State  
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS  
for  
State Commissions**

**State Formula  
State Competitive  
Territories Competitive  
State Education Award Program**

**OMB Control #: 3045-0117**

**Expiration Date: 2/28/2009**

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

These application instructions conform to the Corporation for National and Community Service's (hereinafter the Corporation) 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](http://www.cns.gov) and at [www.grants.gov](http://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, including the time to review instructions; search existing data resources; gather the data needed; and complete and review the information collection.

**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. Therefore 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.

**Public Comments:** Comments on the burden or content of this instrument may be sent to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Attn: Ms. Amy Borgstrom, 1201 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20525.

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# Application Instructions: State Commissions

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## I. Overview

Each state is responsible for developing an application process that includes the review and selection of AmeriCorps program applications to submit to the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) for funding. In this document, we provide you with instructions to assist you with the development of your application selection process and the submission of your AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive, State Education Award Program (EAP), and State Formula application packages through eGrants.

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 through the application process.

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 submissions. The full regulations are available online at [www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr); regulations added or revised in 2005 through rulemaking, including the selection criteria can also be found at <http://www.americorps.org/about/ac/rulemaking.asp>.

- The *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)* for AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive and 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](http://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\\_ameri\\_corps\\_nofa\\_instructions.pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/05_0802_ameri_corps_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 in the *Notice*. In order to submit your application packages to the Corporation in eGrants, you must set up a separate Prime Application for competitive, EAP and formula applications. Once you receive, review, select and recommend applications, you will then complete the Prime Application and submit it to the Corporation. By completing each of these steps, you will automatically meet compliance requirements. 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 through the application process.

## **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 8, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard/Daylight Saving Time (ES/DST).

### **2. State Formula Deadline**

We will announce the annual formula funds allocation and available Member Service Years (MSYs) for each state after we receive our appropriation. You may request funds anytime after we have announced the formula allocations. Once you have selected all of your formula grantees, you must report these selections by submitting an application including a funding chart to the Corporation through eGrants.

**You must submit your funding chart by the first Monday in July of each year, subject to change based on the Corporation's appropriations.** You must submit your application at least 30 days before the earliest start date of your programs. Under the Strengthen AmeriCorps Act (P.L. 108-45 (July 3, 2003), codified at 42 U.S.C. 12605), you 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 EAP application packages:

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

In addition, you are responsible for ensuring that each recommended application complies with all the submission requirements set forth in the *Notice* and the Application Instructions 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. We will not review or return them.**

## **D. Available Resources**

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

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 to you, as they have been in the past.

## **E. Statewide Evaluations**

You may use formula funds to conduct a statewide evaluation of your formula programs. You may use Admin and PDAT funds to evaluate your formula or your competitive programs. To ensure that formula program dollars are not used to evaluate competitive programs you should use formula dollars 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 personnel 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:

- Provide you with a list including contact information for the programs in your state, 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 your state commission on their mailing list and invite you 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 for 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 consider and 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 Section of the their program application. More information on Planning Grants is included in the AmeriCorps Application Instructions for Programs. You have the authority to establish planning grant guidance within the parameters described in these Application Instructions. Planning grants must be included when you calculate your average cost per MSY.

## **C. Statewide Initiatives**

You may submit proposals for statewide initiatives (programs that operate throughout the state that may or may not have a single issue focus) through the AmeriCorps State and Territory Competitive program, or you may fund them in your formula portfolio. Regardless, you must select an eligible entity to operate the program. A state commission may not directly operate a statewide initiative or any other program funded with AmeriCorps competitive or formula funds, as articulated in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2550.80. Be sure that each proposal clearly indicates if it is a statewide initiative. When you fill out the Standard Form 424A in eGrants (Section A in the Additional Information), enter “Statewide Initiative” in item 11.b.

## **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 concurrence (as required under 45 CFR 100 (c)) on behalf of your programs, depending on amount of funds and history with the Corporation. Send hard copy to:

Corporation for National and Community Service  
Box [Name of Grant for Which You Are Competing]  
1201 New York Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20525

Please use a courier service to send hard copy as U.S. Postal Service 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 electronically to [acapplications@cns.gov](mailto:acapplications@cns.gov).

This information must be received at the Corporation by 5 p.m. ES/DST on the January 8, 2008.

After you have submitted the documents, change their 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 EAP funding for new and re-competing programs. You 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 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; and
- Other information that you or your state may require.

#### **B. State Responsibilities for Review and Recommendation**

You are responsible for:

- Reviewing and selecting new/re-competing competitive and EAP applications to submit to the Corporation for funding;
- Preparing ranking and recommendations for new/re-competing 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 programs' progress toward the matching requirements stipulated in the AmeriCorps rule §§ 45 CFR S 2522.35-2522.91; and
- 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 you 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. Peer Review Requirements**

##### **1. State Formula Applications**

- You are required to conduct a competitive process to assess your new and re-competing formula 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. State Competitive and EAP Applications**

You may choose not to conduct peer review panels to assess your competitive applications because the Corporation must peer review them at the national level in order to comply with the NCSA. However, you may be required under state law to peer review state competitive proposals.

**3. Rigorous Review**

While we do not require you to peer review state competitive or EAP applications, we expect you to conduct a rigorous review and to send forward only those applications that you consider to be high quality and that meet all requirements outlined in the Application Instructions. Commissioners must vote to approve the applications you are submitting, and you are required to maintain a record of that vote.

**D. Selection Criteria**

**1. Regulatory Requirements**

The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 and § 2522.475, describe the extent to which you must use the Corporation’s selection criteria and priorities when selecting formula programs or operating sites. The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2522.460 describes to what extent you 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**

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:

<b>If You Submit this Number of State Competitive Proposals to the Corporation:</b>	<b>Then You Must Rank this Number of Proposals:</b>
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**

Summarize the process and criteria you used to arrive at your rankings in the Executive Summary field of your commission's Competitive Prime Application. Provide your rankings in the Subapplications section of the Competitive Prime Application in eGrants. Use the "Manage Subs" screen to enter information on each of your new subapplications. Once you have managed 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. Rank each of your new competitive subgrantees here. There will be no ranking dropdown menu for continuations.

### **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 EAP applications.

Please also keep in mind that your summaries will be used to make announcements to Congress and others if the program is approved for funding. 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 training and technical assistance.
- Provide a rationale for the ranking you gave the program (optional).
- 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 their match.
- For recompeting programs, you are advised to consider each program's record for submitting forms and reports in a timely manner as a factor when reviewing programs for inclusion in your competitive or formula application package.
- For recompeting programs, provide either an assessment of the program's evaluation efforts to date or a completed evaluation, as applicable.
- If applicable, provide your rationale for approving a waiver to the requirement that programs recruit or support volunteers.

## **IV. Continuation Requests**

### **Procedure for Requesting Continuations**

As stated in the Notice of *Federal Funding Opportunity* "We will consider both grantee compliance with grant requirements and program performance in assessing continuation requests and recompeting applications. In order to leverage our limited grant funds, programs should strive to improve their rates of enrollment and retention. We expect grantees to enroll the full number of members included in their grant award. Enrollment rates will have a direct bearing on

the number of slots and the size of awards we approve in the continuation and recompetete processes.”

Please enter your recommendations for continuations in the recommendations summary page in eGrants. We expect you to base your recommendations for continuations on the following criteria:

**Current Grantees Only: Enrollment**

If you are recommending a program for level or expanded funding which has enrolled less than 100% of slots received during your last full year of program operation, provide an explanation, and describe your 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.

**Current Grantees Only: Retention**

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. If you were not able to retain all of your members during your last full year of program operation, provide an explanation, and describe your plan for improvement.

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
- Demonstrated ability to reach match

As in the past, your subgrantees need to complete the continuation application in eGrants and submit it to you.

Starting with 2007 program year applications, the Chief Executive Officer 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.

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. If you are recommending an expansion, in any case, you also need to justify your recommendation. All

requests for expansion will be considered in totality by the Corporation in relation to available funds.

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, and negotiation.

## **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. Restriction on Funding Same Project Twice**

We may reject an application that requests funding for a project already included in another application pending before the Corporation. For example, if a national non-profit organization includes a state formula grantee in its AmeriCorps National application, the state formula grantee may not seek additional funds for the same project through your state application process.

## **VI. Grant Requirements**

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

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

### **B. Matching Requirements**

You are responsible for meeting an aggregate overall match requirement based on your subgrantees' individual match requirements. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.50 – 2521.90 for the matching requirements that apply to you and your programs.

### **C. Subgrant Administrative Cost Allocation**

Since we provide direct administrative funding and program development assistance and training funds to support your 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 this purpose.

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 for Programs and the Additional Information for guidance in calculating your administrative costs.

## **E. Commission Grant and Subgrant Project Periods**

The Corporation generally awards AmeriCorps grants to state commissions for three-year project periods. For example, competitive grants made in 2007 will have end dates in 2010. The start date of the your project period is determined by the earliest of the approved programs' start dates.

You may add new subgrant programs in the second or third year of a commission's three-year grant. The Corporation assigns subgrant numbers to those subgrant programs; the subgrant numbers are associated with the commission's grant number active at that time. When those same subgrant programs are later included in your next application for the a new three-year grant, those subgrants, added in year two or three, are considered continuations under the new grant. While you will receive a new grant number, the subgrant continuations retain their existing subgrant number for use under the new grant.

Subgrant programs added to your portfolio during the second or third years of your grant, even though they are continued under a subsequent three-year grant, must be administratively closed out when your first three-year grant expires. This means that those specific subgrants must submit financial reports that "close the books" as of the expiration date of your grant, so you can accurately report the sum of expenditures for all subgrants as of the date your grant expired.

In some cases, the three-year project period for your grant will not coincide with the end dates of your various subgrants. If you encounter this situation, contact your grants officer to request a no-cost extension. A project period end date extended in this manner needs to envelop the service period of the latest starting member in the latest starting subgrant program under the grant. To avoid excessively long no-cost extensions, you may not allow subgrant programs to enroll new members during the last three months of the final year of the three-year project period.

**You must request a no-cost extension from the Corporation before the expiration date of the project period defined in your Notice of Grant Award.** The no-cost extension may not extend more than 12 months beyond the original end date.

## **F. Approval of Pre-Award Costs**

You, and your 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 three business days.

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

- personnel expense and benefits,
- travel for staff and prospective members,
- equipment,
- supplies,
- contractual and consultant services,
- training for staff and prospective members,
- evaluation, and
- 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 only begin service after a grant award has been issued and may not count any hours served prior to the award being issued as part of their term of service.

#### **G. 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](http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars).