

August 31, 2005

Dear CNCS Program

To enable Corporation-sponsored programs (AmeriCorps * State and National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps, and Learn & Serve, as well as Special Volunteer Programs, Professional Corps and other “non-traditional” CNCS programs) to participate in disaster response deployments with FEMA or another agency and be eligible to be reimbursed through CNCS for expenses related to the disaster deployment, programs must have a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place. This Agreement is the legal instrument by which programs can be reimbursed by the Corporation for expenses incurred by the response.

This letter and the two attachments describe eligibility criteria, the nature of disaster deployments, the Corporation’s expectations for performance upon selection, and the application process. Please review this information carefully and follow the application instructions if your program is both qualified for and interested in entering into the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement.

Eligibility criteria

Only Corporation-sponsored programs (AmeriCorps * State and National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps, and Learn & Serve, as well as Special Volunteer Programs, Professional Corps and other “non-traditional” CNCS programs) may apply. To be approved for the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement, your program must meet the following criteria:

- The program possesses the capacity, evidenced by program experience and participant training and background, to respond to disasters.
- The program understands the difficult conditions of deployment [described below] and informs and prepares its members/participants for these conditions.
- Participants are in good physical condition.
- The program is able to cover the expenses incurred by deployment, pending reimbursement by the Corporation upon completion of the deployment.
- The program can deploy participants within 24 to 48 hours of confirmation of deployment status.
- The program has agreements in place with project sponsors allowing participants to leave regular duties in order to deploy.
- Liability coverage covers in-state and out-of-state disaster deployments, if the program intends to be available for out-of-state deployments. .
- The program takes reasonable steps to manage the risks inherent in disaster response.

Conditions of deployment

It is important that programs and their participants understand that disaster deployments are considered ***hardship assignments***. Your program should not apply for this

Cooperative Agreement unless you understand that your participants may face unfavorable conditions, which may include:

- Extreme weather conditions such as high heat and humidity; sustained exposure to sub-freezing temperatures or unmitigated heat from direct sunlight; rain, snow, or other forms of precipitation; lightning; and dangerous flooding situations.
- Possible exposure to infections and diseases. For example, dengue fever carried by mosquitoes was a threat to disaster responders in St. Croix after Hurricane Marilyn in 1995. Disaster responders should have a current tetanus vaccination.
- Potentially dangerous working situations such as handling broken glass and twisted metal, climbing on roofs, and wading through flood waters.
- Unfavorable living conditions. Responders often sleep on gymnasium floors, at camp grounds, in church halls, and in college dorms. There is also the possibility of there being no heat, air conditioning, or hot water in living spaces.
- Limited food choices. Often, responders are fed by the mobile operations of other responding voluntary organizations such as the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross, or by churches in the community. The selection of food at these sites is extremely limited, so there is no guarantee that special dietary requirements can be reasonably accommodated. While vegetarian meals are becoming more accessible, many times, responders have had nothing else to eat except Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) that were provided by FEMA.
- Long work hours. In the days and weeks immediately following a disaster, much work must get done as quickly as possible. Responders may be required to work from sunrise to sunset to meet immediate needs. Workers in shelters may have to work 24 hours a day. While FEMA usually tries to ensure one day off a week, there are no guarantees.
- Chaotic work environment. Individuals deployed to disasters must understand that most deployments do not work out exactly as anticipated. A “hurry up and wait” scenario is possible – participants rush to deploy, only to spend several days on site with very little to do as the operation is organized. Also, responders may end up doing something totally different than what they had deployed to do. Additionally, there may prove to be no need for the responders once they arrive, and they may be sent home immediately (expenses incurred will be reimbursed). *Flexibility* is the most important requirement for responding programs.

If you want to participate

We encourage programs that meet the above criteria, understand the conditions they may face in responding to disasters, possess the capacity to respond and the financial stability to cover the cost of responding [pending reimbursement] to apply. Only programs with an executed CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place will be eligible for deployment and reimbursement of expenses. Please review the two attachments:

- Overview of Disaster Response Process
- Application Instructions

Review/Approval

Submitted proposals will be reviewed by CNCS program and grants' officers and the Corporation's Emergency Management Coordinator. Proposal review will be based on the criteria identified above, and may include follow-up contact to clarify proposal information.

Upon approval, the Cooperative Agreement will be awarded for three years. There will be no funds awarded, other than the amounts of approved reimbursements related to participation in future disaster response projects. Thus, it is possible that you might have a Cooperative Agreement in place for three years, but not be deployed and hence not be awarded any funds. In addition, if your CNCS grant [or sponsorship agreement] expires before the end of the three-year term and is not extended or otherwise continued, it is likely that the Cooperative Agreement will be terminated as well.

The Cooperative Agreement will spell out roles and responsibilities and specify requirements and deadlines for participating CNCS programs/sponsors and for the Corporation.

Must I have a Cooperative Agreement in place to respond to disasters ?

If you are a CNCS program and you do not have a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place, you are free to participate in disaster response directly with a host organization, through Red Cross or through another intermediary. This process will not limit your opportunity or capacity to participate in disaster response – but without a Cooperative Agreement in place, reimbursement for expenses through the Corporation is not possible.

If you have any questions, please contact your primary CNCS program contact or CeeCee Molineaux, CNCS Emergency Management Coordinator, at 202-606-6907, or cmolineaux@cns.gov.

Attachment I: CNCS Disaster Response Process

Attachment II: CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement Application Process and Guidance

I. CNCS Disaster Response Process

This describes the current deployment process utilized by FEMA and CNCS to access CNCS resources. Note that this is the same process that will be used for deployment with any agency or organization under the National Response Plan. The process documented here is based upon our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FEMA, which in turn is based upon provisions outlined in the Robert T. Stafford Act. These same provisions will also serve as the basis for deployment with any agency or organization with which we do not have an MOU.

Upon establishing the parameters of a specific disaster response request, FEMA will notify the Corporation's Emergency Management Coordinator, who will assign appropriate CNCS-sponsored programs to respond. According to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with FEMA, only current CNCS programs are eligible to respond through this deployment process. Below is information about this process:

How programs are chosen for deployment

The Corporation wants to provide opportunities for disaster response for as many program participants as possible. While we work closely with FEMA to identify needs related to individual disaster situations, selection of responding programs is the Corporation's responsibility. Because the opportunities for response are limited, we have established criteria by which programs are chosen for deployment. Qualified programs (CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place) will be requested for deployment based on the following:

- Proximity to the disaster area. It is usually optimal to deploy resources closest to the location of the disaster, assuming those programs are not affected by the disaster themselves. We try to utilize in-state resources as much as possible.
- Specific skills requirements. For example, a program that has crews trained in chain saw operation may be contacted first for a debris removal assignment that requires those skills.
- Availability for deployment. Programs must be able to ensure that their teams will be ready to deploy within 24 to 48 hours.
- Specific requests from the Requesting Agency. The requesting agency may sometimes request a specific program to address a situation based upon prior experience with that program.
- Specific experience relevant to the type of disaster.

Information Needed From Programs

Following are the kinds of information that will help us determine suitability for deployment. Upon execution of the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement, programs will be asked to provide us with information to respond to these categories:

- **Training.** While no specialized training is required for most deployments, we want to know if participants have some disaster-related training, such as First Aid/CPR, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, fire suppression and/or search and rescue training (beyond that provided in CERT), any American Red Cross disaster response training, or any FEMA disaster training.
- **Certifications.** We want to know if participants are certified in any skills which could be useful in disaster response such as chain saw handling, fire suppression, or heavy equipment operation (including fork lifts, etc.).
- **Language skills.** Communication with affected populations is always a challenge in disaster deployment. We'll want to know if any participants have the ability to communicate in any language other than English, including American Sign Language.
- **Limitations.** If any participant has medical, physical, or psychological limitations (for example, fear of flying), we'll want to know. These limitations do not necessarily preclude deployment of the individual. In many instances, we can find ways to accommodate the individual's participation in the deployment.
- **Accessibility needs.** We will need to know if a participant has sight, hearing, or mobility issues. While every attempt is made to provide accessible workspace for those individuals, there may be instances when we will not be able to deploy them for certain assignments because of the nature of the work. In these cases, if other members of a participant's team are deployed, we will try to find a way to utilize that individual in some meaningful capacity.
- **Program time restrictions.** We will need to know the start and end date of the program term in order to determine if the dates of deployment fall within that time period. Please also include any training or special events during which teams will be unavailable to deploy.

Reimbursement Process

Only those expenses directly associated with deployment may be reimbursed to the program. According to the *Robert T. Stafford Act*, upon which our Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] with FEMA is based, the following are considered reimbursable expenses. While some deployments have allowed other expenses to be reimbursed as well, we are using the FEMA MOU as our guidelines.

- **Travel.** The cost of getting participants to and from the disaster site, including any transportation to and from the airport and mileage for program-owned vehicles used to travel to the disaster site.

- Lodging. Accommodations are usually pre-arranged for deploying programs, although programs are responsible for paying for those accommodations (if payment is required). The cost for lodging is not to exceed government per diem rates unless specifically approved by FEMA.
- Food. Reimbursement for meals is provided on actual cost basis, rather than on per diem amounts. Receipts must be kept for all food purchases.
- Other expenses may include supplies and equipment, incidentals such as laundry, and fuel and maintenance for vehicles used during deployment, whether owned by the program or provided by the requesting agency.

Upon completion of a deployment, the program is responsible to submit a voucher with required documentation to CNCS. Upon review and approval of the documentation, the funds will be awarded through the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement within 30 days, and immediately available to the program.

Program Reporting Requirements

- Programs deployed to a disaster under a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement will be required to submit concise periodic activity reports during deployment. The specific format and procedure will be provided in a timely manner, depending on the conditions of the response operation.
- Within 30 days of the completion of a deployment, the program must submit an End-of-Activity report that includes the number of participants, the specific activities and accomplishments and provides comments that might be helpful to future responders and our oversight of the process.
As stated above, a final financial report accompanied by all supporting receipts and documentation must be submitted to the Corporation within 30 days of completion of deployment. Reimbursement cannot occur without this submission.

II. CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement Application Process and Guidance

Purpose: To create disaster response cooperative agreements with existing CNCS grantees/sponsors to enable reimbursement of expenses incurred by program participation in national disaster response efforts organized by other federal agencies.

Deadline: Applications may be submitted at any time, and will be reviewed within CNCS in a timely manner.

Additional Information: Please contact Cee Cee Molineaux, CNCS Emergency Management Coordinator, at 202-606-6907, or cmolineaux@cns.gov, if you need additional information.

Application Guidance: To facilitate submission and approval of a Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement, the application must be prepared using the application instructions previously used for the Next Generation Grant competition and submitted on paper. All necessary application documents are attached to this e-mail. A complete application will contain the following:

1. Section 1 [SF 424 Facesheet], page 15 of the Next Generation Grants Application Instructions (Facesheet Instructions are found on pages 12-14).
2. Section 2 [Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications], page 21 of the Next Generation Grants Application Instructions (Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications Instructions are found on pages 16-20, and
3. Program Narrative:
 - Subsection A. Executive Summary: A summary of how your program can address the eight specific eligibility requirements found on page 1 of this Notice. Please respond to each point.
 - Subsection B. Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes: A summary of your program's past accomplishments in the type of activity described in the Notice.

Application Submission Information: Completed applications should be submitted via overnight carrier (non-US Postal Service because of security-related delays in receiving mail from USPS) or by hand delivery to: Corporation for National and Community Service, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Box: Disaster Response, Washington, DC 20525.