

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act AmeriCorps State and National Programs

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PURPOSE AND CHARACTERISTICS

What is the purpose of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery) funding?

The purpose of this funding is to support additional AmeriCorps members to engage in activities that will address the current economic crisis.

How is this funding different from funding available through annual appropriations for AmeriCorps State and National?

Recovery Act funds are meant to be deployed rapidly and responsibly.

Recipients may be required to submit program and financial reports on a quarterly basis within 10 days, rather than semi-annually for financial reports and annually for progress program reports within 30 days. Some reporting may take place through a central reporting website that is under development by OMB and agencies.

Will the Recovery Act funding be distributed as a separate grant?

Our expectation is that these funds will augment your current program. You will not have to submit a full-fledged new AmeriCorps application for these funds. The application process has been streamlined and will consist of a brief narrative and budget narrative. For tracking purposes, the funds will be distributed as separate grants.

Can one program operate two grants--a regular grant and a Recovery grant? In other words, in order to be considered for Recovery funds, would we have to withdraw the current application from the regular competition?

No, you will not have to withdraw from the annual competition in order to apply for Recovery funds. We expect that funded programs will operate two grants, one with Recovery members and one with non-Recovery members.

What is the maximum cost per MSY for the Recovery grants?

CNCS will allow you to add an additional \$500 per MSY over your current MSY in Recovery applications with no need for justification, given the fast turnaround necessary and additional reporting requirements. You may request an amount per MSY over the additional \$500, but must provide a justification. In considering applications, preference will be given to applicants in the following priority order:

1. \$12,600 or under
2. \$500 per MSY over current cost per MSY or under
3. Requests for more than \$500 over current cost per MSY with adequate justification

Programs that request an amount per MSY more than \$500 over their current cost per MSY without adequate justification for the request will not be funded.

What is the minimum and maximum living allowance?

The living allowance will remain at the 2009 levels of a minimum of \$11,400 and a maximum of \$22,800.

Will there be a maximum amount awarded per Recovery grant?

No. CNCS is not establishing a minimum or maximum amount awarded per grant.

Will the Recovery awards support both full- and part-time members?

Yes. We plan to allocate Recovery funds to approximately 50% full and 50% less-than-full-time members.

Can CNCS award AmeriCorps fixed amount grants with funding under the Recovery Act?

No. The funding provided to CNCS under the Recovery Act is expressly made subject to the requirements applicable to our FY 2008 appropriations, which does not allow non-EAP fixed price grants.

Will CNCS use these funds to match the education award at institutions of higher education?

No. The funds are designed to support AmeriCorps members addressing the economic crisis while serving.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING

How much funding is available for AmeriCorps State and National grants in the Recovery Act?

\$89 million.

What other support is CNCS receiving through the Recovery Act?

CNCS is receiving:

\$65 million for VISTA

\$40 million for the National Service Trust

\$6 million for salaries, expenses, technology, oversight, and monitoring
 \$1 million for the Office of the Inspector General

Of the funding for AmeriCorps State and National, how much will be available for State Formula, State Competitive, National Direct, Tribal, and States and Territories without Commissions?

State Formula	\$29,311,000
Territories	879,330
State Competitive	39,263,340
State and National Education Award Program	67,000
National Direct (capped at 20%)	17,600,000
Indian Tribes	879,330
Reserved for childcare costs	1,000,000
Total	\$89,000,000

ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible for this funding for AmeriCorps State and National?

All current AmeriCorps grantees that were operating an AmeriCorps program other than a planning grant on February 17, 2009 are eligible for funding.

May state commissions support new programs with these funds?

Recovery formula funds will be distributed directly to commissions per the usual process. However, state commissions may only distribute Recovery funds to current programs. This is to ensure that the Recovery funds are immediately available in local communities.

How will these funds be made available to South Dakota, the Marianas Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, which have no state commission?

South Dakota and Puerto Rico will be funded as they are now through the formula process.

Can state commissions and national direct grantees request slots for current planning grants?

No. Only programs with operational grants on February 17, 2009 are considered current grantees for the purposes of the Recovery funds.

Can we extend the term of a current grantee using Recovery funds even if they are not part of the 2009 portfolio?

One-time Recovery funds may be provided to current grantees. Technically these grants are not extensions since the Recovery funds must be administered separately.

If we have applied for an increase in slots in the current competition, and don't know if the increase has been approved, how should we balance our new regular request and our Recovery request?

Request the maximum number of slots you think you can administer effectively, and we will discuss during the pre-award clarification period. You will need to be very clear about the capacity of your organization and what you can handle.

Some national direct grantees have multiple state grants as well as national direct grants. Will we have to work with each of the states on this?

If you are seeking State Competitive Recovery funds, you must work through the state commission. You may request all Recovery funds as a National request. In either scenario, you must ensure that operating sites funded with both state and national direct funds account for them separately.

STATE COMMISSIONS

Does the Recovery funding include state formula grants, and will the formula be calculated on the same basis as usual?

Yes. The Recovery Act formula funds will be allocated on the same population basis as the annual formula allocation.

Can current state sub-grantees who are not eligible for 2009 funds due to a commission change in focus apply for Recovery funds?

This is a commission decision. Under the guidelines, current state sub-grantees who will not be funded in 2009 due to a commission change in focus may apply for Recovery funds as long as they were current grantees on February 17, 2009.

Is there funding available under the Recovery Act for supplemental state commission administrative grants?

No. The Recovery funding is limited to making “additional awards to existing AmeriCorps grantees” and adjustments to AmeriCorps grants in conjunction with waivers of the maximum federal share of the grant.

The Recovery Act does not include administrative funds for state commissions. Could state commissions increase the 1% from our grantees?

No, you may not increase the 1% you are allowed to retain for administrative purposes.

Can the Recovery Act aid the small states?

Yes. The Recovery Act will not increase the small state minimum, but will provide additional formula funding to all states.

Many states have their own deadlines in place for accessing Recovery funds. Will CNCS be able to issue guidance quickly enough so that we can include Recovery funds in our plans?

CNCS plans to issue guidance early in March.

LOGISTICS AND TIMELINE

Will we be required to apply for the funds through grants.gov?

No. The opportunity will be posted on grants.gov FIND, but you will submit a very simple 3-5 page application through eGrants.

When will CNCS award the Recovery grants?

Our goal is to award the Recovery grants no later than end of May, recognizing that the purpose is to get money out as soon as possible.

If we have applied for a three-year grant, and are not planning to grow, should we even consider these funds?

This is not an opportunity for long-term growth. It is a one-time opportunity to respond to specific economic needs in your community.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

What are the match requirements for these grants?

All statutory and regulatory requirements apply to these grants, so there is no change in match requirements. CNCS will consider full or partial match waiver requests for 2008, 2009, and Recovery grants. We will be issuing guidance on how to request match waivers with the guidance for applying for the Recovery funds. CNCS has authority under the Recovery Act to use some of the funds to cover non-CNCS share if you must downsize the number of members you support or change your program design significantly in order to continue to operate.

Is the timeline for the waiver on the match going to be the same as the other awards?

Any match waiver that is approved along with Recovery funds will be on the same timeline. Other requests for match waiver can happen at any time.

REPORTING

Will there be standard performance measures for this funding?

Yes. There will be standard performance measures the grantees will use if their programs fall into the priority areas that will be given preference in the selection process.

How will we report our progress towards accomplishing these measures?

National grantees will report in eGrants. State programs will report using a separate stand-alone process, since eGrants is not configured for them to provide performance measure reporting.

If regular members are doing the same thing as Recovery members, how are we going to break out the outcomes?

Data on these members will need to be reported separately. One approach would be to establish an allocation plan that assigns appropriate portions of the outcomes to Recovery and non-Recovery members.

Will grantees report on the number of members deployed?

We will be counting number of members deployed as an output of this funding.

Will number of volunteers leveraged be tracked for the Recovery funds?

Yes, grantees will report on number of volunteers leveraged by programs funded with the Recovery funds.

Can programs focusing on other areas besides the priority areas apply?

Yes, programs focusing on areas other than the Recovery priority areas may apply.

How can a state commission participate if we have no current grantees that work in the priority areas?

State commissions may put forth applications for consideration that work in areas other than the Recovery priority areas.

POST AWARD

Is the Recovery funding one-year or two-year funding?

We anticipate making one-year grants by the end of May. Federal agencies have until September 30, 2010 to expend the funds. However, those agencies whose Recovery funds are distributed as grants are expected to award the funds as soon as possible.

Will there be no-cost extensions available for these grants?

The goal of the Recovery Act is to get funds quickly into communities struggling in the economic crisis. A no-cost extension would not be a measure of success in this area.

Do the AmeriCorps State and National statute, regulations and the OMB circulars apply to these grants?

Yes, AmeriCorps State and National statute, regulations and the OMB circulars apply to these grants.

How will the grant provisions differ from the regular annual grant provisions?

All regular provisions will apply and special conditions will be added for additional requirements including quarterly reporting.

Could CNCS lift the 10% limit on fundraising for Recover -funded projects given the economic climate?

No. This would require rulemaking.

Will the technology upgrade funds in the Recovery Act make it possible for the portal to be up and running by the time Recovery members come on board?

We are committed to launching the portal successfully and will not launch until then. WBRS has been updated to reflect current MSY factors in case the portal is not ready by the time of award.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Where can I find additional information?

OMB Guidance and www.nationalservice.gov/recovery.

Is there a plan for keeping us in the loop so we can continue to provide input?

Yes. Please e-mail additional questions and comments to Recovery@cns.gov.