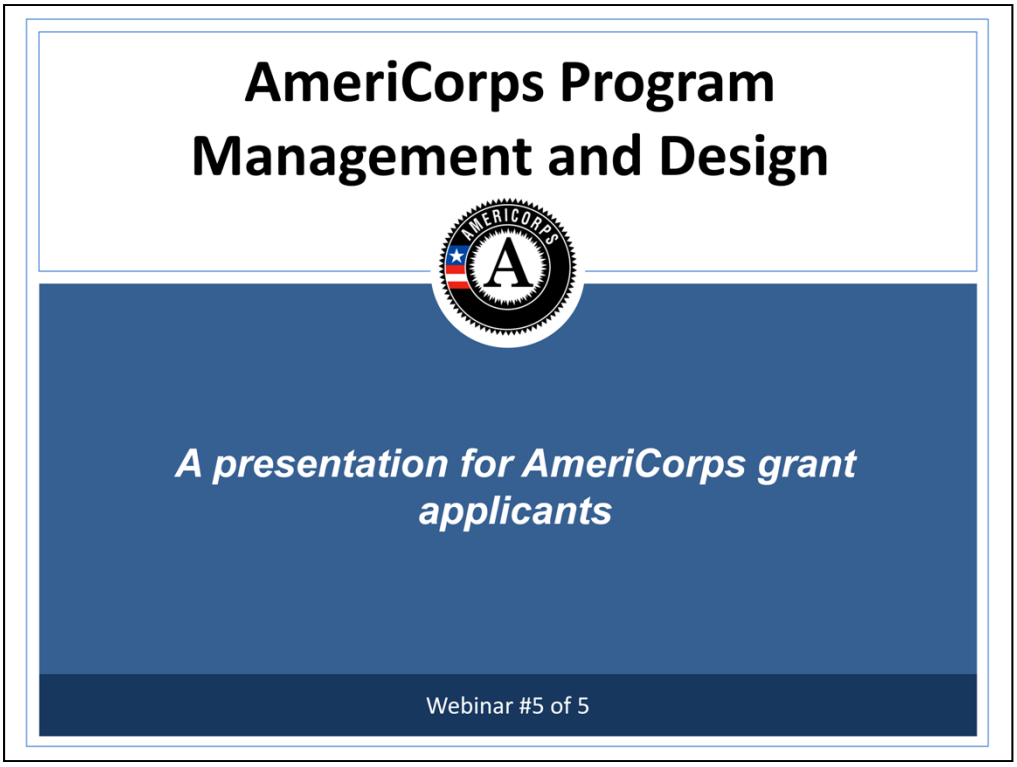

Welcome to the webinar on AmeriCorps program management and design for grant applicants. This the final webinar in a series designed to help organizations that are considering applying for AmeriCorps funding.

AmeriCorps Grants provide funding to high-quality programs that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems by engaging individuals in service as AmeriCorps members.

Grants are awarded to nonprofits, Indian tribes, colleges and universities, and state and local public agencies to address unmet needs in education, economic opportunity, veterans services, disaster services, health, the environment, and more.

A grantee might use AmeriCorps resources to make an existing program more effective, to reach previously underserved communities, or to expand their activities beyond what they were able to do without AmeriCorps.

However, it is important to understand that AmeriCorps funds do not duplicate, displace or supplant resources that currently exist in a community. AmeriCorps members cannot be used to take the place of staff, current volunteers, or existing funding.

AmeriCorps State & National Grants

- ★ Include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and funds that are directly tied to a specific number of members
- ★ Are solely for program expenses and are not for general organizational expenses
- ★ Provide *partial* funding to support AmeriCorps projects/programs.
- ★ Grant recipients must contribute cash or in-kind match funding to support the project

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AmeriCorps State and National grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants.

AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and associated funding. The funds awarded by CNCS are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded.

AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses.

All AmeriCorps Grants provide *partial* funding to support AmeriCorps projects and programs. Grant recipients must contribute additional resources to support the project.

Are you ready for AmeriCorps?

- ★ Experience managing federal funds
- ★ Organizational capability
- ★ Staff skilled in training, supervision and oversight
- ★ Community partners

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As your organization considers applying for an AmeriCorps grant and begins designing your program, there are many important factors to consider.

Being successful is more than just having a good idea for a program; if you become an AmeriCorps grantee, your organization will have many responsibilities. You will need to have the capability and experience to manage federal funds, to manage and oversee the grant and all of its components, and to ensure all the AmeriCorps members are well trained and supervised.

Most programs actively engage other organizations as community partners to function as host sites for AmeriCorps members. It is important for AmeriCorps programs to have or to develop strong partners in the community and in your focus area.

Responsibilities and Requirements

The grantee must:

- ★ employ strong fiscal and program management systems
- ★ monitor financial management, program performance and member activities
- ★ train and provide technical assistance to staff and members
- ★ ensure the recruitment, orientation and training of members
- ★ track and ensure the accuracy of member hours and activities
- ★ track progress toward meeting approved performance measures
- ★ act as liaison between CNCS or the State Service Commission and other components of your program

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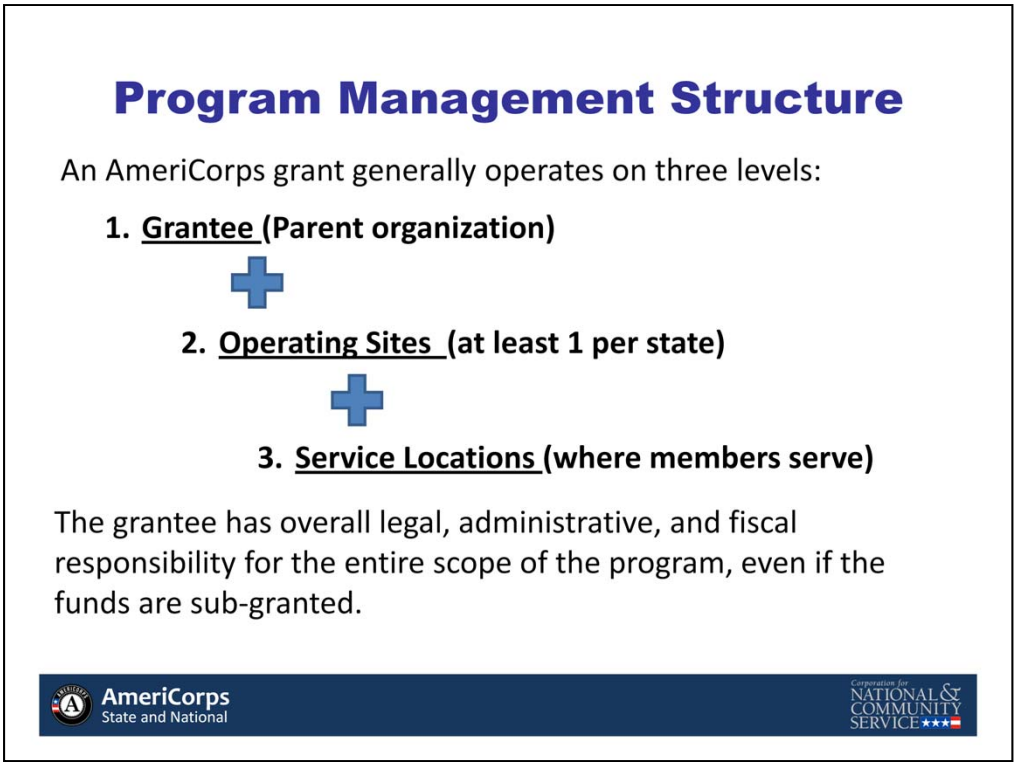
An AmeriCorps grantee must fulfill some core roles and responsibilities for the program and meet the requirements of the grant.

So while you determine the best management structure for your program, keep in mind your overall responsibilities. You must:

- employ strong fiscal and program management systems;
- monitor financial management, program performance and member activities at operating sites and service locations;
- train and provide technical assistance to staff at parent organization and at sites;
- ensure the recruitment, orientation and training of members;
- track and ensure the accuracy of member hours and activities, and track progress toward meeting approved performance measures; and
- act as liaison between CNCS or the Commission and other components of your program



The previous slide referenced the terms “operating site” and “service location.” It is important to understand the difference between the Parent Organization, Operating Sites and Service Locations and how they fit into the program management structure. The Key Terms webinar explained these already, but we will review briefly here, too.

The **Parent Organization** is the grantee, which has the ultimate legal responsibility for the grant.

An **operating site** is the organizational entity that administers the AmeriCorps program in that state. For multi-state grantees, there will be at least one operating site in each state where they are placing members. Operating Sites can be affiliates, chapters, or unaffiliated organizations.

A **service location** is the organization where a member provides most of his/her service in the community. Typical service locations are schools, food banks, health clinics, community parks, etc. Service locations can be operating sites if the member actually serves at the operating site most of the time.

Program Management Structure

Where and how AmeriCorps members are placed at service locations will vary.

A Few Things to Consider:

- ★ Where will the service activities take place?
- ★ Who are your community and service partners?
- ★ What can your partners provide?
- ★ What is their capacity?

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AmeriCorps members can be placed at service locations individually or in teams; they can be based out of one organization or be distributed across the community.

As you are thinking about your organization, your partners, and the role service can play in addressing needs in your community, keep the following questions in mind:

Where will the service activities take place? In one community, in one state or in multiple communities across many states?

Will services be based out of a partner organization or in scattered sites?

Where will your organization acquire match funds? Do you partner with other organizations who can provide the living allowance or other benefits (like housing, meals, or work study) to members during their term of service?

What is the capacity of your partner organizations to provide programmatic or financial support for the AmeriCorps program?

Your answer to these questions will help define your program design.

Program Management Structure

- ★ **Centralized**: grantee handles all administrative functions and assigns members, and doesn't sub-grant funds
- ★ **Decentralized**: grantee sub-grants the funds, and the sub-grantee is responsible for member training, payroll and other administrative functions.
- ★ **Combination:** shared responsibilities

Grantee is ultimately responsible

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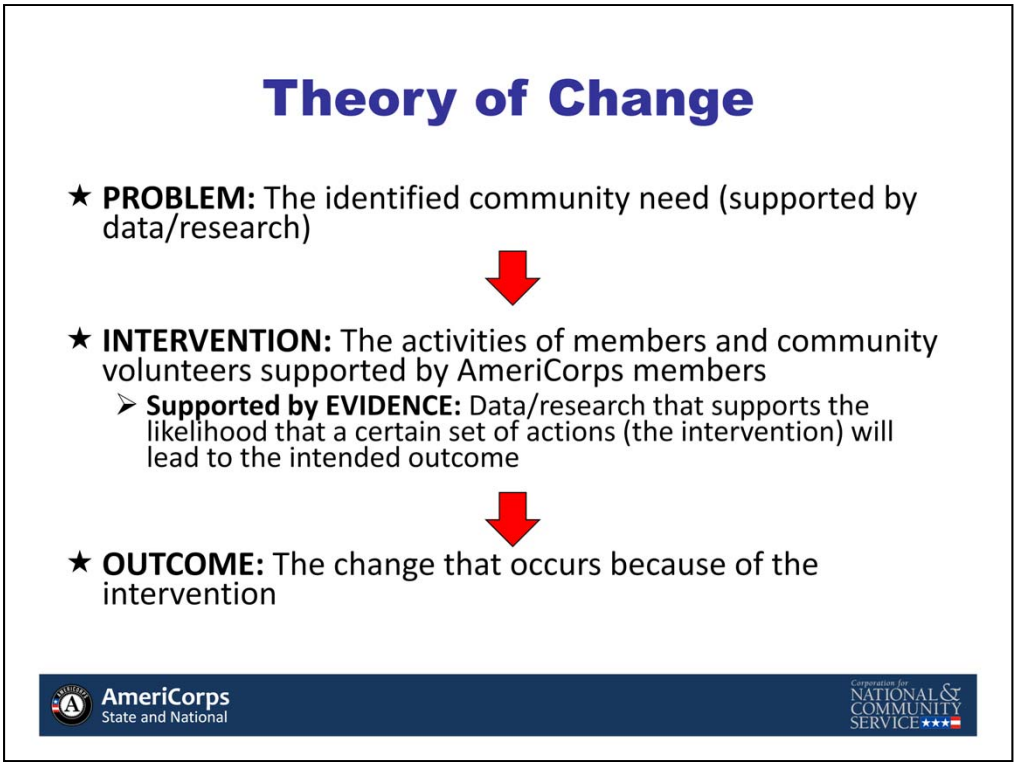
There are 3 basic management structures used by AmeriCorps programs:

In the **centralized** model, the grantee takes care of all the administrative functions and assigns members to operating sites and/or service locations. For example, a grantee might have operating sites that are small community-based organizations with limited capacity or they might be state offices of the grantee. The grantee chooses to centrally manage the grant. Operating sites and/or service locations may be involved in recruiting and selecting members, but the grantee handles the eligibility screening and the member files. The grantee provides a high level orientation and training for the AmeriCorps members, although the operating sites are generally expected to provide a local orientation. The grantee manages member stipend payments and other administrative functions and provides members to the sites, but no funds go to the operating sites.

In a **decentralized** model, the grantee sub-grants the funds, and the sub-grantee is responsible for member training, payroll and other administrative functions. For example, if you have operating sites with a history of successfully managing federal grants and they have the capacity to manage the AmeriCorps program, the grantee might choose to sub-grant the funds to each of their operating sites. Each site provides its own orientation and training for the AmeriCorps members. Each site manages member stipend payments and other administrative functions.

You can also have a **combination** of these structures with more shared responsibilities.

Remember, regardless of the management structure employed, the grantee organization is still ultimately responsible to CNCS for all funds and activities, so you will need to put into place a process for oversight and monitoring of your operating sites and service locations to ensure their compliance.



Now that you have learned a little about what your organization should have in place to manage an AmeriCorps program, we want to share the starting point for developing a program. A program design starts with your theory of change. A theory of change defines a cause and effect relationship between a specific intervention, or service activity, and an intended outcome.

It is essential to the program design that you be able to show how the problem you plan to address, the service activities (or intervention) the program will provide, and the anticipated outcomes relate to one another. It's also essential that you provide evidence that supports the likelihood that your intervention will lead to the intended outcomes.

Your theory of change is a method of explaining what needs to change, how you plan to create that change, why you think these particular activities will create the desired change, and the specific change you expect to see as a result.

Documenting the Need

Data should answer these questions:

- ★ **Scope of problem:** Who and how many are directly affected by the problem? How severe is the problem?
- ★ **Relevance of problem:** What makes this a compelling problem? Is it likely to become worse?
- ★ **Causes of problem:** Why does the problem exist? How is it perpetuated?

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It is extremely important to use data and evidence to support your program design. Data should be used to document the need in the community or to describe the problem your program will address.

Data should be used identity the scope of the problem: Who is affected by the problem? How many are directly affected? How severe is the problem? It is important that the need is documented at the local level where members will serve, if at all possible.

In addition, data should identify the relevance of the problem, in other words, what makes this a compelling problem? Is it likely to become worse?

You also need to identify the causes of the problem so you can tackle it as close to the root cause as possible. Ask yourself repeatedly, ”why does the problem exist? How is the problem perpetuated?”

Evidence Basis

The evidence basis for an intervention:

★ documents why you think your intervention (using AmeriCorps members and community volunteers) will achieve the intended outcome

★ supports the use of a particular design, frequency, intensity and duration of intervention that is optimal

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Evidence should be used to support the basis for the proposed intervention. As a grant applicant, you need to design activities for AmeriCorps members that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems.

The evidence basis for the intervention should demonstrate that the proposed intervention is likely to solve the identified problem and should support a particular design, frequency, intensity and duration of the intervention that is optimal to achieve the desired outcomes.

Evidence Basis (cont.)

Evidence for the intervention (member service activities) could be supported by:

- ★ Results of impact evaluations
- ★ Research studies
- ★ Past performance measurement outcome data

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The evidence basis for an intervention, or member service activities, may come from one or more of the following:

- The results of impact evaluation(s) of the proposed program or of similar programs;
- Experimental or quasi-experimental research studies that document the effectiveness of this or similar programs;
- Past performance measurement data showing the outcomes of the program

Considerations

Both the data that documents the need and the evidence for the intervention should be:

- ★ Relevant
- ★ Compelling
- ★ Up-to-date
- ★ From reliable sources

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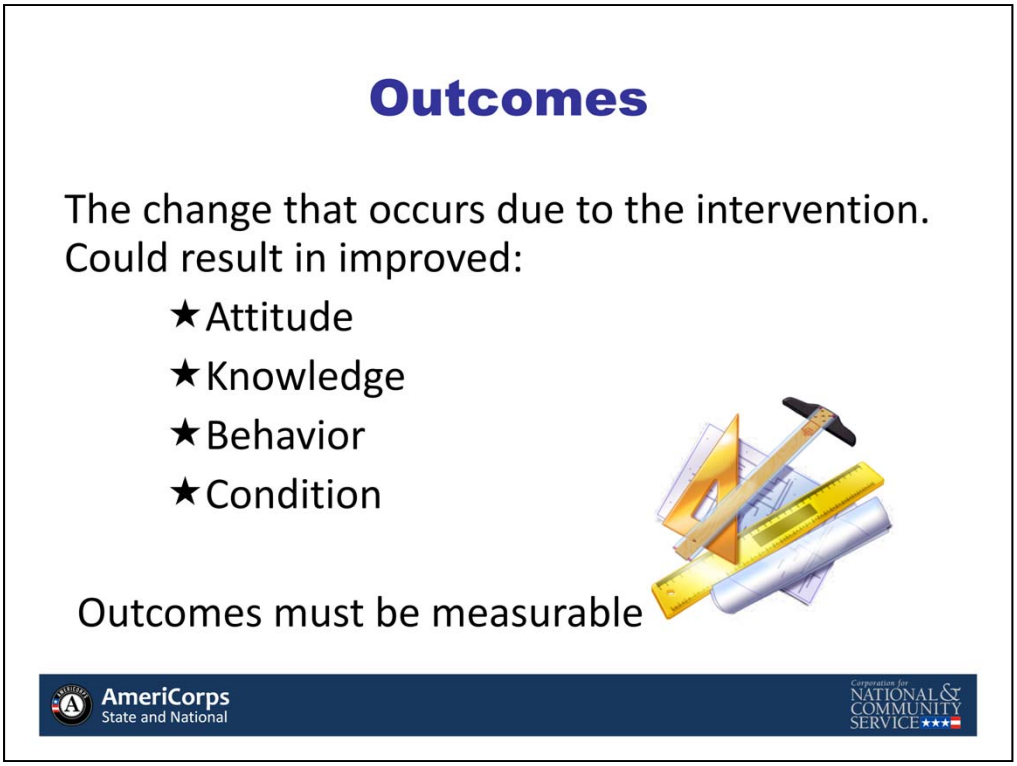
Data that supports the need and evidence for your intervention should be:

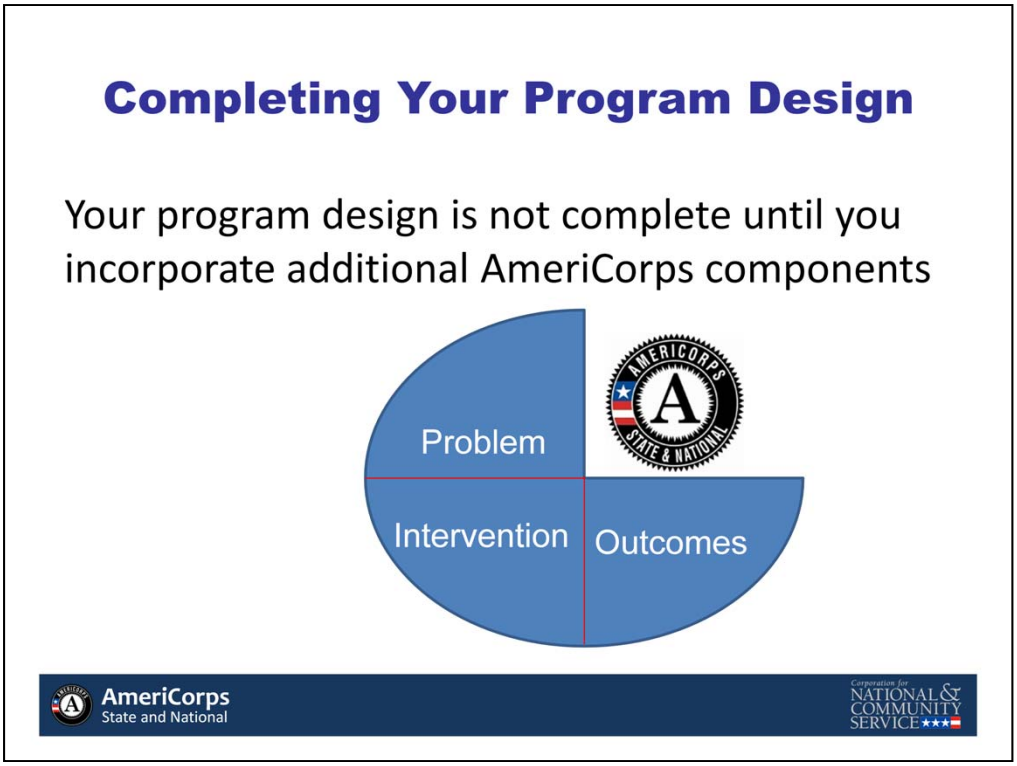
- Relevant
- Compelling
- Up-to-date, and
- From reliable and objective sources



Not only do you need to define the problem you want to address and identify the intervention to be carried out by the AmeriCorps members, you also need to identify your outcomes.

Your outcome is the change in attitude, knowledge, behavior, or condition that results from the intervention. Outcomes may reflect changes in individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment.

Whatever outcomes you select, they must be measurable and must align with the problem and intervention you identified.



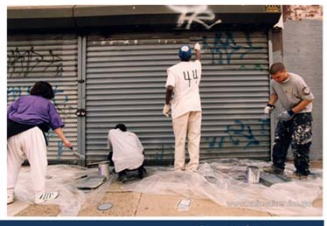
You have just learned how to connect the components together that address the theory of change for a program, however, having an identified problem, an intervention to address that problem, and measurable outcomes that result from the intervention, does not complete your AmeriCorps program design.

You will need to further develop components that will give your program its AmeriCorps identity, allow members to have a powerful service experience, and engage community volunteers to expand your impact.

AmeriCorps Components

- ★ AmeriCorps members as a highly effective means to solving the problem
- ★ Plans to recruit, train, and supervise AmeriCorps members
- ★ Design a powerful member service experience
- ★ Engage community volunteers
- ★ AmeriCorps Identity

AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions can be found here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities



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The AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Application Instructions will outline the specific criteria that you should address (and program components you should develop) as you complete your AmeriCorps application.

You can find much more information about how to describe and document:
Why AmeriCorps Members are a highly effective means to solving your identified community problem,
How you plan to recruit, train and supervise your AmeriCorps members,
How your program will provide a powerful service experience for members,
How community volunteers will be engaged in your service activities,
And your organization's commitment to identify itself as an AmeriCorps program and its members as AmeriCorps members.

You will need to review the Notice and the Application Instructions together to fully address all of the application selection criteria and the required narrative, budget, and performance measurement information.

Additional Resources

Webinar Series:
Introduction to AmeriCorps State and National
Key AmeriCorps Grant Terms and Concepts
Introduction to AmeriCorps Members
Categories of AmeriCorps Grants
AmeriCorps Program Management and Design

Current AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and other applicant resources are available at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities

Live Topical Calls: AmeriCorps State & National hosts Q&A calls with potential applicants. You can find the call schedule by following the link above and clicking on the current NOFO.

Sign up for Email Updates! Visit www.nationalservice.gov and click on the "Email" icon on the blue bar near the top right-hand corner of the page.

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This concludes the AmeriCorps Program Management and Design presentation. This is the final webinar to assist grant applicants in understanding how to apply for AmeriCorps funding. In addition to these webinars, please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity and other materials posted on our website to help you prepare to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

In addition to the various online resources, the AmeriCorps Outreach team will host calls in the fall to assist applicants as you complete the application process. You can also sign up for periodic email updates by clicking on the "Email" icon in the blue bar near the top right-hand corner of the CNCS website.

Evaluation

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ACwebinarEval

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Thank you for your participation, please complete the session evaluation.

If you have any questions, please contact CNCS via internet or phone at AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov or 202.606.7508