

## Operation AmeriCorps Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions

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**1. Are Operation AmeriCorps applicants required to request resources from all three AmeriCorps programs (AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC)?**

Operation AmeriCorps applicants are not required to apply for all three AmeriCorps programs. Applicants may choose to apply for one, two, or all three of the AmeriCorps programs. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the unique role that each program can play in achieving transformative change in their community.

**2. Are state service commissions allowed to apply for Operation AmeriCorps funding?**

Yes, state service commissions may apply as the prime grantee that will then subgrant to the government entity running the program.

**3. May a state service commission run an Operation AmeriCorps project?**

No, state service commissions are not allowed to manage an AmeriCorps State and National program. However, state service commissions are allowed to sponsor AmeriCorps VISTA members and help manage AmeriCorps NCCC members. In most cases we expect that if a state commission applies as prime applicant, their subgrantee (the city, county or other government entity) will serve as the sponsor for the AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC members in addition to managing the AmeriCorps State and National members.

**4. Should applicants apply through their state service commission or directly to CNCS?**

Most applicants will likely apply through their state service commission. However, if the state service commission in your state has opted not to participate in this competition, you will apply directly to CNCS. Please contact your state service commission for more details; the list of state service commissions is available [here](#). Organizations that propose to operate a program in more than one state or territory will apply directly to CNCS. Tribal governments will also apply directly to CNCS.

**5. Can AmeriCorps VISTA members help manage our Operation AmeriCorps project?**

The Grantee will have the primary responsibility to manage the operation of the project along with providing direct supervision for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members. However, in certain circumstances, AmeriCorps VISTA members and VISTA leaders may help manage a project. Such service activities may include developing and implementing a system to coordinate the Operation AmeriCorps service activities of other AmeriCorps VISTA members, AmeriCorps NCCC members, and State and National members, in addition to community volunteers.

As part of your application, you may request an AmeriCorps VISTA member or a VISTA leader to help manage your project. VISTA leaders are AmeriCorps VISTA members who have already completed at least one year of AmeriCorps VISTA service and are responsible

for supporting and coordinating the activities of other AmeriCorps VISTA members on their project.

While an invaluable support to the project supervisor and executive director, VISTA leaders may not supervise, manage, or direct other AmeriCorps VISTA members. Neither may they fulfill roles designed for the director, such as selecting or removing AmeriCorps members, certifying timesheets of AmeriCorps State and National members, signing or administering contracts or other legal documents, or submitting fiscal reports. Instead, VISTA leaders support, guide, and coordinate AmeriCorps VISTA members' efforts, and assist VISTA supervisors with matters like recruitment, training, and gathering information for reporting. Each locality must identify a staff member that will serve as the overall supervisor for the Operation AmeriCorps project and who will be responsible for signing contracts, AmeriCorps member timecards, and other legal or fiscal documents.

**6. Please provide an example of an Operation AmeriCorps project timeline.**

Applicants must determine at when in their Operation AmeriCorps project they want to engage each AmeriCorps program. The below timeline gives a sample of how applicants might engage AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC if they want each of these programs to begin their service at the beginning of the Operation AmeriCorps project in their community. However, applicants may decide that it makes more sense for their project to engage particular AmeriCorps programs at different stages throughout the life of their Operation AmeriCorps project.

April: Operation AmeriCorps grant is awarded

April: Develop AmeriCorps VISTA project plan and performance plan in eGrants

April: Submit sponsor application for AmeriCorps NCCC members

April: Begin recruiting AmeriCorps State and National members

May: AmeriCorps VISTA Memorandum of Agreement awarded, create assignment description for AmeriCorps VISTA members

June: AmeriCorps State and National members are on board

June-August: AmeriCorps VISTA members are on board (if not in August, next opportunity in November)

September: First AmeriCorps NCCC team arrives.

**6. What are National Performance Measures and how are they applied to Operation AmeriCorps?**

CNCS has established six Focus Areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, as well as for Capacity Building, CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives. AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary intervention and aligns with the program's theory of change.

**7. How can we best use AmeriCorps NCCC teams in our project?**

When planning how to use Operation AmeriCorps resources over the span of two years, consider how the infusion of a team of 8-12 AmeriCorps NCCC members can provide you an intensive human resource to accomplish a portion of your overall desired outcome. You can plan on a one time surge of people power or schedule several teams at key times throughout the two year grant. AmeriCorps NCCC teams typically serve for 6-8 weeks.

**8. What are the key components of a quality AmeriCorps NCCC project?**

AmeriCorps NCCC projects must address compelling community needs, have clearly stated and well planned tasks and objectives, have demonstrable, measurable goals, engage all team members in meaningful service throughout the project, provide opportunities for member growth and development, involve the community throughout the project and have a plan for sustainability after the team completes its service.

**9. Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?**

No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

**10. Are there certain activities in which AmeriCorps members and staff cannot engage?**

Yes. While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in advocacy, voter registration or similar political activities. A complete list of prohibited activities (as outlined in 45 CFR § 2520.65) is available [here](#). AmeriCorps VISTA members have additional restrictions including no outside employment; and their assignment must have a focus specifically on capacity-building activities with the purpose of supporting efforts to fight poverty.

**11. What does Cost per MSY mean?**

Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost to CNCS of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours). The cost per MSY is calculated by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if the application requests \$10,000 in CNCS funds and 10 MSYs, then the cost per MSY is \$1,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award a member may earn.

**12. How will a state commission that decides to opt in manage their review of submissions in eGrants?**

There is a two-step application process for Operation AmeriCorps. In Step 1, applicants will submit a concept paper of 10 pages or less that describes the program design.

In Step 1, state commissions that opt in to participate in Operation AmeriCorps will conduct their own review of Concept Papers outside of eGrants, prior to the deadline. Either the state commission or applicant(s) that they approve from their state may submit the concept paper in eGrants.

If a state's applicant(s) advances to Step 2, then the commission will establish a prime application with the approved sub(s) submitting their full application(s) to the commission per the regular AmeriCorps State process. The Step 2 application will look like the screens commissions are used to using.

**13. What will happen if an application in a state where the commission has opted in is submitted directly to CNCS without commission review?**

We encourage state commissions that are opting in to let potential applicants know about your review process and deadlines. CNCS will make it clear through our website, TTA calls, and other communications that applicants must apply through their state commissions in states that opt-in.

We recognize there is a chance that some applicants from opt-in states may apply directly to CNCS without going through their state commission. CNCS will monitor eGrants and share updates with commissions about applications from their states. We will provide a list of letters of intent that are received shortly after the letter of intent deadline and an updated list five days before the final deadline. In addition, CNCS will share a final list of concept papers with state commissions within one day after the January 13 submission deadline. We will provide 10 days for commissions to review any new concept papers that they did not have the opportunity to review previously.

**14. How do I ensure that I'm aware of any changes or new information?**

The best way to ensure you get emails to inform you of changes or new information is to sign up for updates by using the email link on the blue bar at the top of our website and check the box for "Funding Opportunities." Also, we encourage you to check these Operation AmeriCorps FAQs for additions on a regular basis.