

STATE SERVICE COMMISSION

ROAD MAP



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Purpose

The Road Map was created in 2014, and the information contained in this version reflect all current CNCS guidance, regulations, etc. applicable as of September 30, 2014. It is designed to offer guidance to new directors of State Service Commissions. The material included in the Road Map provides an overview of the varied role of commissions in the national service network. Information on CNCS staff and organizational structure, the federal budget process, the role of commissions, and more offer a broad view of the important role of commissions. The Road Map is intended to orient new Commission Executive Directors and highlight key aspects of commission management. It is meant to be used with each commission's staff orientation plan, state management requirements, and federal regulations and funding guidance.

Background & Acknowledgments

The State Service Commission Road Map was created on behalf of the Corporation for National and Community Service by Campaign Consultation, Inc., a CNCS national training and technical assistance provider.

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Introduction

The State Service Commission Road Map is a manual to inspire and equip State Service Commission Executive Directors (EDs), in order to help them better mobilize their commissions.

The Road Map covers the basic information critical for new leaders, with expertise from both new and experienced EDs, and includes links to best practices from across the country. The Road Map will provide a guide to the different facets of a new ED's role: from understanding the structure of the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS), to articulating compliance requirements, and ensuring every state commission is a strong, efficient organization.

The role of State Service Commissions is to elevate service and volunteerism in their state with the resources of CNCS. Since the launch of AmeriCorps in 1994, over 900,000 individuals have served the country, unleashing 1.2 billion hours of service across communities small and large.

Each state commission has an opportunity to build upon the vital assets in their state to create a story of impact and lives changed, combining the knowledge and expertise of their state commission colleagues across the country to increase their capacity and to strive towards results that transform communities.

Chapter 1:

The Corporation for National and Community Service

Learning Objectives

- Identify the major program areas, focus areas, and special initiatives of the Corporation for National and Community Service
- Recognize the steps of the federal budget process
- Summarize key staff roles at the Corporation for National and Community Service

Overview

- [CNCS Who We Are Overview](http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are>)

Established in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its core programs -- Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund -- and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

As the nation's largest grant-maker for service and volunteering, CNCS plays a critical role in strengthening America's nonprofit sector and addressing our nation's challenges through service.

CNCS harnesses America's most powerful resource -- the energy and talents of our citizens -- to solve problems. We believe that everyone can make a difference and that all of us should try. From grade school through retirement, CNCS empowers Americans and fosters a lifetime of service.

CNCS Mission and Guiding Principles

The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

The agency is guided by the following principles:

- Put the needs of local communities first.
- Strengthen the public-private partnerships that underpin all of CNCS programs.



- Use programs to build stronger, more efficient, and more sustainable community networks capable of mobilizing volunteers to address local needs, including disaster preparedness and response.
- Measure and continually improve the benefits of CNCS programs to service beneficiaries, participants, community organizations, and a national culture of service.
- Build collaborations wherever possible across programs and with other federal programs.
- Help rural and economically distressed communities obtain access to public and private resources.
- Support diverse organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations, minority colleges, and disability organizations.
- Use service-learning principles to put volunteer and service activities into an appropriate context that stimulates life-long civic engagement.
- Support continued civic engagement, leadership, and public service careers for all programs participants and community volunteers.
- Exhibit excellence in management and customer service.

History Overview

➤ [CNCS History Overview](http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/our-history) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/our-history>)

In 1993, CNCS was established to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. It merged the work and staffs of two predecessor agencies, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service.

At its inception, CNCS was directed to manage three main programs:

- The newly created [Senior Corps](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>), which incorporated the long-standing Foster Grandparents, RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), and Senior Companion programs;
- The newly created [AmeriCorps](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps>), which incorporated the longstanding VISTA, the new National Civilian Community Corps programs, and the full-time demonstration program that had been established under the 1990 Act; and
- Learn and Serve America, formerly known as Serve America.

Today CNCS serves more than five million individuals of all ages and backgrounds help meet local needs through a wide array of service opportunities. These include projects in six priority areas: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families through CNCS core programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund.



CNCS is part of our nation's history of commitment to building a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility. The [national service timeline](http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/our-history/national-service-timeline) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/our-history/national-service-timeline>) can be viewed on the CNCS website.

Program Overview

➤ [CNCS Program Overview](http://nationalservice.gov/programs) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs>)

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. Since the program's founding in 1994, more than 800,000 AmeriCorps members have contributed more than one billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve.

AmeriCorps Programs

AmeriCorps programs do more than move communities forward; they serve their members by providing pathways to opportunity for people from all walks of life. AmeriCorps places thousands of adults into intensive service positions where they learn valuable work skills, earn money for education, and cultivate a national ethic of service.

- [AmeriCorps State and National](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-state-and-national)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-state-and-national>)
This is the broadest network of AmeriCorps programs. These groups recruit, train, and place AmeriCorps members to meet critical community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.
- [AmeriCorps VISTA](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-vista)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-vista>)
VISTA provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.
- [AmeriCorps NCCC](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-nccc)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-nccc>)
AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time, team-based, residential program for men and women, ages 18-24. Its mission is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service.

For more information go to the [AmeriCorps website](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps>).

Senior Corps

Senior Corps connects adults, ages 55+, with the people and organizations that need them most. Senior Corps engages citizens as mentors, coaches or companions to people in need, or contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations. Volunteers receive guidance and training so they can make a contribution that suits their talents, interests, and availability.

Conceived during John F. Kennedy's presidency, Senior Corps currently links more than 360,000 Americans to service opportunities. Their contributions of skills, knowledge, and experience make a real difference to individuals, nonprofits, and faith-based and other community organizations throughout the United States.

Senior Corps Programs

Through grants and other resources—including the energy and efforts of citizens age 55 and better—Senior Corps helps meet the needs and challenges of America's communities. Grants administered through Senior Corps provide funding for the following programs:

- [Foster Grandparents](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/foster-grandparents) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/foster-grandparents>) Foster Grandparents serve as a role model, a mentor, and a friend. Serving at one of thousands of local organizations, Foster Grandparents help children learn to read.
- [RSVP](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/rsvp) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/rsvp>) RSVP offers a full range of volunteer opportunities with thousands of local and national organizations.
- [Senior Companions](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/senior-companions) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/senior-companions>) Senior Companions perform a variety of services that include giving families or professional caregivers much-needed time off, running errands, or simply being a source of comfort and friendship.

For more information go to the [Senior Corps website](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>).

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is a powerful approach to transforming lives and communities that positions the federal government to be a catalyst for impact—mobilizing public and private resources to find and grow community solutions with evidence of strong results. SIF unites public and private resources to evaluate and grow innovative community-based solutions that have evidence of results in low-income communities in any of three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.



In just a few years, SIF and its private-sector partners have invested more than \$500 million in compelling community solutions -- \$177.6 million in federal grants plus \$423 million in non-federal match commitments in 20 intermediary grantees and 217 nonprofits in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information, go to the [Social Innovation Fund website](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund>).

Volunteer Generation Fund

The Volunteer Generation Fund is a program authorized by [Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act](http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation/edward-m-kennedy-serve-america-act) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation/edward-m-kennedy-serve-america-act>) to support voluntary organizations and State Service Commissions in boosting the impact of volunteers in addressing critical community needs.

The fund focuses investments on volunteer management practices that increase both volunteer recruitment and retention. This program strengthens the ability of nonprofit organizations across the country to recruit and retain volunteers to meet critical challenges.

For more information go to the [Volunteer Generation Fund website](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/volunteer-generation-fund) (<http://nationalservice.gov/programs/volunteer-generation-fund>).

Focus Areas

- [CNCS Focus Areas and Special Initiatives](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas) (<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas>)

The Corporation for National and Community Service [2011-2015 Strategic Plan](http://nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan>) outlines the strategy for addressing the six focus areas identified in the Serve America Act: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

- [Disaster Services](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/disaster-services)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/disaster-services>)
Concerns the preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts that relate to disaster events.
- [Economic Opportunity](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/economic-opportunity)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/economic-opportunity>)
Addresses unmet needs of economically disadvantaged individuals, including financial literacy, affordable housing, and employment-related assistance.
- [Education](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/education)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/education>)
Addresses unmet educational needs within communities, especially those that help at-risk youth to achieve success in school and prevent them from dropping out.
- [Environmental Stewardship](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/environmental-stewardship)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/environmental-stewardship>)
Addresses energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, at-risk ecosystems, and behavioral change leading to increased efficiency.
- [Healthy Futures](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/healthy-futures)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/healthy-futures>)
Addresses unmet health needs, including access to health care, increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in youth, and increasing seniors' ability to remain in their own homes.
- [Veterans and Military Families](http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/veterans-and-military-families)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/focus-areas/veterans-and-military-families>)
Addresses unmet needs of veterans, members of the armed forces, and family members of deployed military personnel.

Special Initiatives

- [CNCS Special Initiatives](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives) (<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives>)

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) supports a variety of special initiatives, including:

- [A Billion + Change](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/billion-change)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/billion-change>)
This effort aims to generate and harness at least one billion dollars' worth of professional expertise to help the country's nonprofits meet critical social and community needs. Companies that participate in A Billion + Change receive customized technical assistance and research, and the program can even match corporate expertise with deserving organizations.
- [Employers of National Service](http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/employers-national-service)
(<http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/employers-national-service>)
This initiative builds a talent pipeline which connects AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni with leading employers from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to create recruitment, hiring, and advancement opportunities.
- [Let's Read. Let's Move.](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/lets-read-lets-move)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/lets-read-lets-move>)
Led by CNCS in collaboration with First Lady Michelle Obama, this initiative encourages America's youth to remain active to battle childhood obesity and reduce summer reading skill losses by encouraging summer reading and physical activity.
- [Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/mayors-day)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/mayors-day>)
As solution-focused local elected officials, mayors have a unique role in this country. CNCS' priority on expanding economic opportunity to create sustainable and resilient communities directly aligns with the goals of mayors.
- [National Mentoring Month](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/national-mentoring-month)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/national-mentoring-month>)
National Mentoring Month is an annual campaign to draw attention to the need for more volunteer mentors to help America's young people achieve their full potential.
- [President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/honor-roll)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/honor-roll>)
The President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, launched in 2006, annually highlights the role colleges and universities play in solving community problems and placing more students on a lifelong path of civic engagement by recognizing institutions that achieve meaningful, measureable outcomes in the communities they serve.
- [President's Volunteer Service Award](http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/presidents-volunteer-service-award)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/presidents-volunteer-service-award>)

America has a long and proud tradition of volunteer service. Now more than ever, volunteers are renewing their commitment to helping others and making new connections that bring us closer together as families, as neighbors, as communities, and as a nation.

- [Service Impact Awards](#)

(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/service-impact-awards>)

These challenge awards pay tribute to CNCS grantees, strategic partners, and service participants whose programs exemplify the best in national and community service.

- [United We Serve](#)

(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/united-we-serve>)

This nation-wide service initiative helps meet growing social needs, expands the impact of existing organizations by engaging new volunteers in their work, and encourages volunteers to develop their own "do-it-yourself" projects.

Days of Service

- [September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance](#)

(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/days-service/september-11th-national-day-service-and-remembrance>)

Since 2001, 9/11 victims' families and survivors have encouraged Americans to perform acts of service to honor the memories of their loved ones and pay tribute to those who continue to defend our nation.

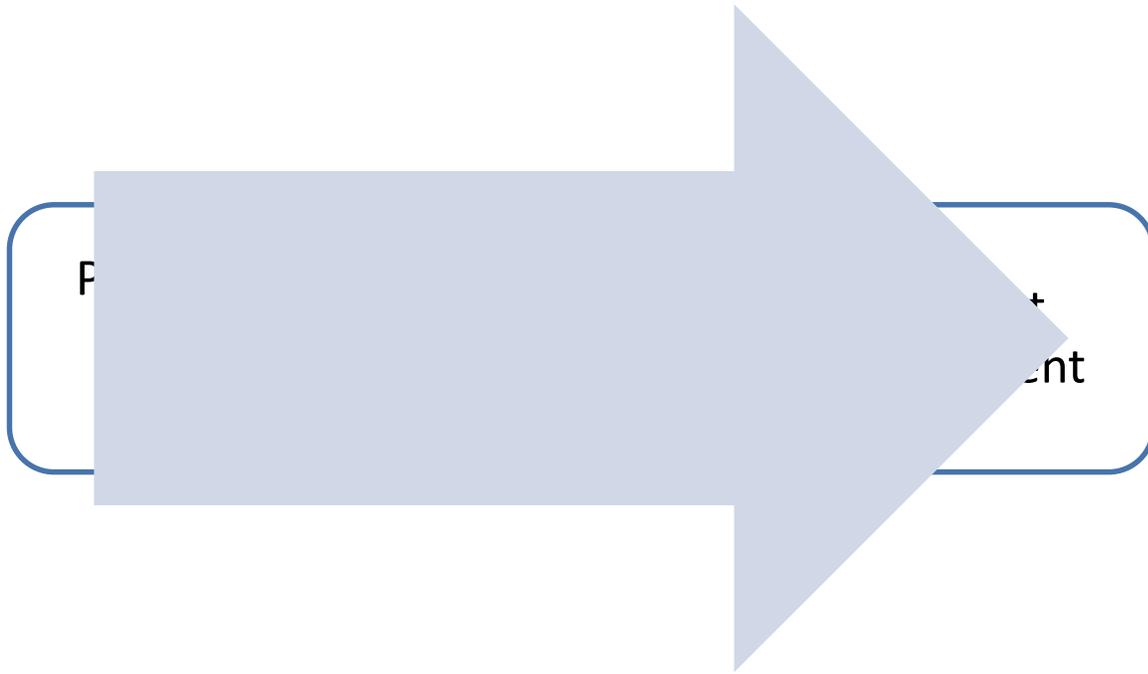
- [Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service](#)

(<http://nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/days-service/martin-luther-king-jr-day-service>)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" Each year, Americans across the country answer that question by coming together on the King Holiday to serve their neighbors and communities.

Federal Budget Process Overview

As a federal agency, CNCS is funded through the federal budget process.



Federal Budget Process Graphic

Step One: The President’s Budget Request

On or before the first Monday in February, the President submits his federal budget request for the upcoming federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30). The budget request is developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the request outlines priorities and policy changes. The President’s budget outlines specific funding levels for all federal programs.

Step Two: Congressional Budget Resolution

After the President’s budget is released, the House and Senate Budget Committees develop their budget resolutions. The Committees typically hold hearings with department officials to gather information and inform their resolutions. When the House and Senate Budget Committees have completed their budget resolutions, they go to the House and Senate floors for discussion and amendment (by a majority vote). Once passed, the budgets go to a House-Senate conference to resolve any differences, and a conference report is passed by both houses. The budget resolution deadline is April 15; should the process take longer, the budget can go to a continuing resolution to extend the time for deliberation and decision.

For more information go to the [CNCS budget website](http://nationalservice.gov/about/budget)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/about/budget>).

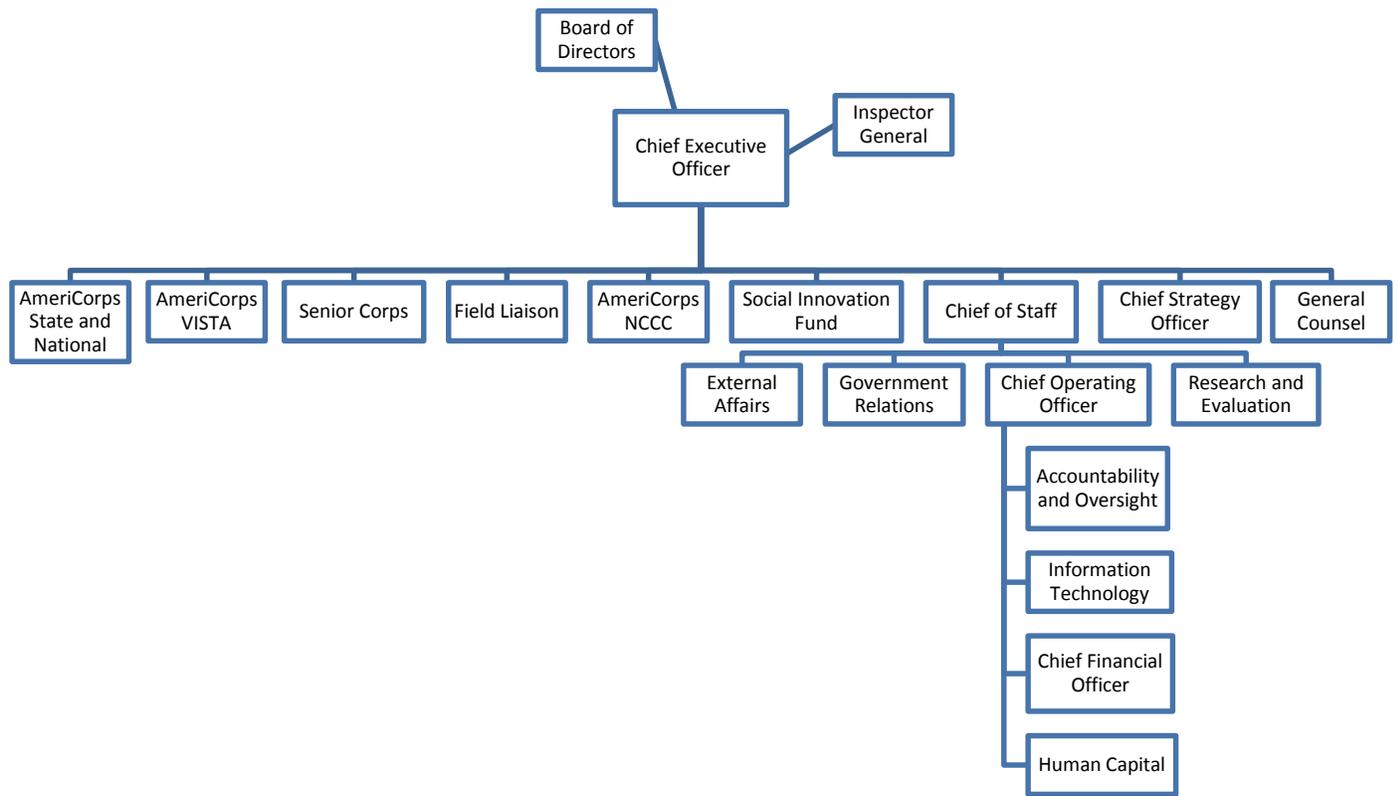


CNCS Staff Roles

There is a team of staff at CNCS to support State Service Commissions. The team includes:

- The Director of AmeriCorps State and National is responsible for the strategy and overall direction of the AmeriCorps State and National department at CNCS.
- The Deputy Director supervises senior level staff and oversees the unit's operations.
- Senior Program Officers (SPOs) supervise Program Officers and serve as Program Officers for a limited number of AmeriCorps grantees.
- Senior Program and Project Specialists (SPPs) are responsible for critical unit core operations such as the AmeriCorps grant review process, performance measurement data collection and reporting, internal controls, training, and technical assistance.
- Program Officers (POs) review progress reports and monitor grants for compliance with AmeriCorps requirements. Program Officers can answer questions about grant policies and application instructions. Program Officers work closely with other units at CNCS to provide quality support to programs and will assist in connecting to other personnel at the Corporation, as necessary.
- Grants Officers (GOs) work in the Office of Grants Management (OGM) and are responsible for fiscal issues concerning CNCS grants. The Program Officer will provide you with the name and contact information for each commission's Grants Officer. Grants Officers review Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) and monitor financial management systems for compliance with AmeriCorps requirements. Please copy the commission's Program Officer on correspondence sent to Grants Officers.
- CNCS State Offices are federal offices staffed by federal employees in the US states and territories. They conduct public outreach and program support. They are directly responsible for developing grants and projects, and for overseeing all Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA projects. Each CNCS State Office works closely with the governor-appointed State Service Commission in its state, and the State Office Director serves as an ex-officio member of the commission. Contact the [CNCS State Office](http://www.nationalservice.gov/stateoffices) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/stateoffices>) for more information about Senior Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA projects in your state.
- CNCS Area Managers manage a cluster or region of CNCS State Offices. Area Managers allocate resources to support each state's AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Corps grants and programs.

For a current list of staff members, consult [the CNCS leadership staff website](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/leadership) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/who-we-are/leadership>).



CNCS Organizational Chart Graphic

Helpful Links

- [Strategic Plan](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan>)
- [Legislation](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>)
- [Budget](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/budget) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/budget>)
- [CNCS Program Fact Sheets](http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/fact-sheets) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/fact-sheets>)
- [National Service Fit Finder](http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/new-national-service/fit-finder) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/new-national-service/fit-finder>)
- [National Service Knowledge Network](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/) (<https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/>)

CNCS Social Media

- [CNCS Website](http://nationalservice.gov) (<http://nationalservice.gov>)
- [Facebook](https://facebook.com/nationalservice) (<https://facebook.com/nationalservice>)
- [Twitter](https://twitter.com/nationalservice) (<https://twitter.com/nationalservice>)
- [YouTube](https://youtube.com/nationalservice) (<https://youtube.com/nationalservice>)
- [CNCS Email List](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCNCS/subscriber/new?origin=http%3A%2F%2Fservice.govdelivery.com%2Fdemos%2Fcncs%2F&email=Sign+up+for+email+updates&commit.x=18&commit.y=6)
(<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCNCS/subscriber/new?origin=http%3A%2F%2Fservice.govdelivery.com%2Fdemos%2Fcncs%2F&email=Sign+up+for+email+updates&commit.x=18&commit.y=6>)

Marketing and Branding

- [Logos](http://nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/logos) (<http://nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/logos>)
- [Videos and PSAs](http://nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/videos-and-psas) (<http://nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/videos-and-psas>)

Chapter 2:

State Service Commissions

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the duties of a commission
- Identify the key staff roles of a commission
- Distinguish between the guiding national service statute, regulations, provisions, and policies

Overview

Legislative Definition

As stated in the National and Community Service Act of 1990, state commissions must exist in order for a state to apply and accept national service grants. For more information, go to the [CNCS legislation website](http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>).

According to the Code of Federal Regulations §2550.2 (l), a State Service Commission is a bipartisan or nonpartisan state entity, approved by the Corporation, consisting of 15–25 members (appointed by the chief executive officer of the state), that is responsible for developing a comprehensive national service plan, assembling applications for funding, and approved national service positions, as well as administering national and community service programs in the state.

Duties of a State Commission

As stated in the National and Community Service Act of 1990, state commissions have the following key duties:

- Preparation of a national service plan for the state.
- Application for national service members for the state.
- Provide recommendations on priorities for national service programs.
- Make technical assistance available to program applicants and grantees.
- Assist in the provision of health care and child care benefits to participants in national service programs.
- Development and promotion of a state system for the recruitment and placement of participants in programs.
- Administration of the state-wide grant program to include selection, oversight, and evaluation of grant recipients.

- Development of projects, training methods, curriculum materials, and other materials and activities related to national service programs.
- In addition, many commissions have responsibilities declared by their states that include:
 - Supporting volunteerism through training, recognition, policy development, and promoting volunteer opportunities and trends.
 - Disaster support to include coordinating unaffiliated spontaneous volunteers or donations.
 - Direct program development that addresses social service or community needs in the state.

Effective Practices of State Commissions (Source: Alaska Commissioner Handbook, 2012)

- Possess an ambitious, expansive, and achievable vision and strategic plan
- Develop creative strategies for collaboration and inclusion in expanding the service infrastructure in the state
- Focus on the long-term sustainability of the commission and its programs
- Put a high priority on both internal and external communication
- Develop a strong marketing/public relations strategy to promote the ethic of service
- Engage commission members to their full potential and capitalize on their interests, expertise, and community connections
- Conduct effective, well-planned meetings
- Develop and maintain efficient working structures (committees or task forces) that produce tangible outcomes
- Strike the appropriate balance between staff and commission member roles that enhance the effectiveness of both

Staffing

State commissions range from staff teams of three to as many as 10 or more depending on the state established role of the commission and the size of the AmeriCorps portfolio.

Typical Roles and Responsibilities

- CEO/Executive Director/Director: Reporting to the State Service Commission, Board of Directors, and/or Fiscal Agent, the Executive Director (ED) will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for the commission’s staff, programs, expansion, and execution of its mission. S/he will initially develop deep knowledge of the national service field, core programs, operations, and business plans.
- Finance/Accounting: Performs accounting data entry for budgets and expenditures for local, state, federal, and private funding, contracts, and grants; monitors and reviews accounting and related system reports for accuracy and completeness; performs accounting data entry for revenue, expense, payroll entries, invoices, and other accounting documents; leads

and/or participates in subgrantee audits, which include planning, executing, directing, and/or completing financial audits.

- Commission Program Officer: The Program Officer manages the program portfolio, assisting in the development of an annual monitoring plan, management of monitoring and reporting activities, and overseeing compliance of grant agreements, regulations, and policies.
- Training/Events Manager: A training manager position works to strengthen subgrantees and communities through program development and management, event planning, training, and support.

FAQs

- Are all state commissions government agencies?

No. As of 2014, eight state commissions are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations including: Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wyoming. The remaining state commissions are state entities and are housed in various departments within state government including: the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Affairs (Alaska), Executive Office of the Governor (Florida), an independent state agency (Mississippi), and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (Kentucky).

- What is ASC?

The Association of State Commissions (ASC) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing and promoting State Service Commissions across the United States. Go to the [ASC website](http://www.statecommissions.org/index.cfm?nodeid=1) (<http://www.statecommissions.org/index.cfm?nodeid=1>) for more information and resources.

Helpful Links

- [State Service Commission Contact List](#)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>)
- [AmeriCorps State and National Compiled Search Document](#)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/documents/managing-amicorps-grants/2014/amicorps-state-and-national-megasearch-document>) includes legislation, regulations, 2014 Grant Provisions, FAQs, and relevant OMB Circulars (PDF).

While efforts are made to keep information in this consolidated document current, please consult the primary source for the most up-to-date information. Provisions apply based on the year of the award. This document provides an opportunity to search for terms relevant to grant administration across the statute, regulations, rules, and policies.

- [AmeriCorps Grant Management Resources](#)
(<http://nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-amicorps-grants>)

Chapter 3:

Governance

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the required voting members on a state commission
- Identify the key practices and processes for state commissioner support and management

Commissioner Recruitment

According to §2550.2 (l), a State Service Commission is a bipartisan or nonpartisan state entity, approved by the Corporation, consisting of 15–25 members (appointed by the chief executive officer of the state), that is responsible for developing a comprehensive national service plan, assembling applications for funding and approved national service positions, and administering national and community service programs in the state.

Voting members of a state commission must be appointed to renewable three-year terms.

§2550.50 (b) *Required voting members on a State Service Commission.* A member may represent none, one, or more than one category, and each of the following categories must be represented:

- A representative of a community-based agency or organization in the state;
- The head of the state education agency or his or her designee;
- A representative of local government in the state;
- A representative of local labor organizations in the state;
- A representative of business;
- An individual between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, who is a participant or supervisor of a service program for school-age youth, or of a campus-based or national service program;
- A representative of a national service program;
- An individual with expertise in the educational, training, and development needs of youth, particularly disadvantaged youth;
- An individual with experience in promoting the involvement of older adults (age 55 and older) in service and volunteerism; and
- A representative of the volunteer sector.

Additional guidance on federal requirements for commissioner recruitment can be found on the [CFR website](http://ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=d73c38f05da93425514a6ba0bcdd7535&node=se45.4.2550_150&rqn=div8) (http://ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=d73c38f05da93425514a6ba0bcdd7535&node=se45.4.2550_150&rqn=div8).

State requirements for commissioner recruitment, management, and recognition can be obtained from the state's Executive Appointments Office.

Commissioner Management

Commissioners are volunteers and, as such, should be managed using the best practices of volunteer management. Setting clear expectations (beginning with a position description and commissioner orientation), communicating regularly, providing resources needed to fulfill expectations, and providing opportunities for reflection and evaluation of progress or performance are critical.

Sample Documents

- [CNCS Commissioner Orientation Online Training](https://nationalserVICEResources.gov/links/state-commissioner-orientation#.U-zFk0g7n6Y)
(<https://nationalserVICEResources.gov/links/state-commissioner-orientation#.U-zFk0g7n6Y>)
- [Oregon Commissioner Handbook](http://oregon.gov/gov/pdf/form/handbook.pdf) (<http://oregon.gov/gov/pdf/form/handbook.pdf>)
- [Alaska Commissioner Handbook](http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/Portals/4/pub/SAC_handbook.pdf)
(http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/Portals/4/pub/SAC_handbook.pdf)
- [Connecticut Commission Meeting Agendas and Minutes](http://ctohe.org/cccs/CCCS_Meetings.shtml)
(http://ctohe.org/cccs/CCCS_Meetings.shtml)

Commissioner Recognition

Throughout a commissioner's term, it is important to recognize their time, talent, and contributions.

Recognition Ideas

- Mark milestones such as the commissioner's birthday and anniversary of joining the commission.
- Nominate commissioners for local, state or national volunteer awards, such as:
 - Board Source and Points of Lights' Board Member of the Month Award. Click on the [Points of Light website](http://pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/board-member-month) (<http://pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/board-member-month>) for more information.
 - Daily Points of Light Award, which recognizes volunteers across the US who are making a difference in the life of their communities. Award winners receive a certificate signed by President George H. W. Bush. For more information, go to the [Daily Points of Light](http://pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/dpol/nomination) (<http://pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/dpol/nomination>) website.
- Provide an opportunity for leadership such as committee lead or serving on the executive committee of the commission.
- Thank commissioners as their term ends with a letter from the Governor and a small gift; present these and recognize their contribution at their last commission meeting.

Additional Governance

The organizational structure or by-laws of the commission may provide for additional commissioner or volunteer leadership opportunities such as serving on the Board of Directors (for 501(c)3 commissions with a separate board from the commission), advisory committees, or workgroups.

Sample Workgroups or Committees

- [California: Executive Committee, AmeriCorps Committee, Special Events Committees](http://californiavolunteers.org/index.php/calvol/public_notices)
(http://californiavolunteers.org/index.php/calvol/public_notices)
- [Michigan: Executive Committee, Board Development Committee, and Outreach Committee](http://michigan.gov/mcsc/0,4608,7-137-6113_6904_8067---,00.html)
(http://michigan.gov/mcsc/0,4608,7-137-6113_6904_8067---,00.html)

Helpful Links

- [“How to Become a Commissioner” Webinar](https://student.gototraining.com/5115y/recording/3458405331787464192)
(<https://student.gototraining.com/5115y/recording/3458405331787464192>)
Hosted by AmeriCorps Alums and the Association of State Commissions.
- [Engaging Young People on State Service Commissions: Identifying Effective Practices](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r4054#.U_otkkg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r4054#.U_otkkg7n6Y)
- [Best Practices of Boards: An ‘executive summary’ highlighting the top five ‘promising practices’](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/best-practices-boards) (<https://nationalserviceresources.gov/best-practices-boards>) in Board Governance from three leading sources in board development; namely, Doug Eadie, Richard Chait, and Barbara Taylor. This document offers boards and commissions an opportunity to think strategically about how to move their organizations forward.
- [BoardSource](https://boardsource.org/eweb/) (<https://boardsource.org/eweb/>) has become a go-to resource for funders, partners, and nonprofit leaders who want to magnify their impact within their community through exceptional governance practices. BoardSource provides customized diagnostics, live and virtual trainings, membership programs, and a comprehensive library of governance resources and publications that include original content.

Chapter 4:

Building Resources and Support for the Work of the Commission

Learning Objectives

- List the key sources of funding for a commission
- Identify potential partners and collaborators in the state

Key Tasks for Commission Directors

- Put the mission statement into conversation format
- Know your fund development needs and goals
- Cultivate internal collegial relationships
- Develop, nurture, and expand your networks
- Create strategic and operational plans to accomplish the commission's goals

Funding

Most funders decide to give because of an organization's mission, objectives, and impact. Funders want to support expanding and deepening programs that improve communities and society. Fundraising success for organizations, particularly for restricted projects, occurs when donors are presented with the possibility of accomplishing something greater than what currently exists. Engaging funders for advice early in the process, while a new project is being developed, may make them more inclined to support an official proposal later. Funders generally have specific areas of expertise, so it is important to do your homework and find out about the issues they fund and the specific areas of expertise they hold that might contribute to the development of a new project.

Giving USA 2014 Report

Each year [Giving USA](http://givingusareports.org/) (<http://givingusareports.org/>) publishes trends in giving in the US.

Total 2013 contributions: \$335.17 billion

Total giving by American individuals, foundations, estates, and corporations rose for the fourth consecutive year.

2013 contributions by source:

- 72% Individuals (Increased by 4% from 2012)
- 15% Foundations (Increased by 5.7% from 2012)
- 8% Bequests (Increased by 8.7% from 2012)
- 5% Corporations (Decreased by 1.9% from 2012)

Note: Giving USA does not track government funding to nonprofit organizations.

Note: As many commissions are state agencies, this can complicate or preclude the Executive Director's ability to fundraise. It is recommended that this aspect of the Executive Director role be initially clarified with the state agency hosting the commission.

State, County, or Local Government

Several state commissions receive other categories of government funds or in-kind support beyond funding from CNCS.

Program Support

As a first step, consider "who cares about the impact we are trying to achieve?"

Seek out departments or elected officials who have common interests and would therefore be a champion or potential funder for your work. There is never a better time than the beginning of one's tenure as an Executive Director to share the organization's vision and seek out those who can support the work of the commission through direct financial support or opening doors to other potential supporters.

Administration Support

Support of administration or capacity can be a more difficult ask for a state commission. Consider the opportunity for in-kind finance and accounting support, office space, office equipment, training or event space as well as other resources that exist within government that could be an asset to the work of the state commission. In addition to local, county, or state

government agencies, consider public education resources including higher education institutions.

Private Sector and Foundations

To be successful in soliciting financial support from businesses or foundations, imagine sitting behind their desks. Consider why a funder would support the work of the state commission. How can the commission match their goals for visibility in the community and impact on community needs?

It is important to develop a case for support for the state commission. A case for support is “the reasons why an organization both needs and merits philanthropic support” (definition from the [Association for Fundraising Professionals: *http://afpnet.org*](http://afpnet.org)).

The internal case for support should include:

- The commission’s mission, vision, and values
- History
- Commissioner list and bios
- Staff list and bios
- Organizational chart
- Strategic plan
- Programs and services
- Community needs
- Beneficiaries
- Accomplishments/impact
- Media coverage
- Collateral (brochures, annual reports)
- Governance structure
- Current operating budget
- Sources of financial support
- Audited financial report or financial review
- Letters of support
- Specific need or ‘ask’ to the funder

Upon choosing a funder to approach, the information that is requested will likely be compiled from the above list for the conversation or submission of a proposal.

More on building a case for support can be found on the [National Service Knowledge Network](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/videos/building-your-case-support#.U_NPBeg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/videos/building-your-case-support#.U_NPBeg7n6Y).

Individuals

As identified in the Giving USA report, individual giving is the largest source of nonprofit contributions in the US. Engaging individuals in the work of the commission through frequent communication and updates, opportunities to volunteer, and requests for financial support will provide on-going capacity for the commission.

Individual Appeal Opportunities

Face-to-Face Request

The most effective fundraising is cultivating support face-to-face. Seek out opportunities to tell the story of your work and invite other organizations or individuals to further the work through funding, promotion, or as a volunteer.

Direct Mail

Though fundraising continues to evolve with new technology, a direct mail campaign illustrating the work of an organization and asking for a financial gift is still an effective and important strategy.

Tips for Direct Mail:

- [The Power of Direct Mail](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/videos/power-direct-mail#.U_pMHUg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/videos/power-direct-mail#.U_pMHUg7n6Y), a gizmo on the National Service Knowledge Network.
- Hitchcock, Stephen (2004). *Open Immediately: Straight Talk on Direct Mail Fundraising: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*. Medfield, MA: Emerson and Church. Warwick, Mal (2004)
- *Testing, Testing 1, 2, 3: Raise More Money with Direct Mail Tests*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Online

According to the [Blackbaud 2013 Charitable Giving Report](https://blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/2014/2013.CharitableGivingReport.pdf) (<https://blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/2014/2013.CharitableGivingReport.pdf>), 6.4% of overall fundraising came from online giving. To prepare for this opportunity, it is important to have a commission website that is mobile, responsive, and easily accessible for donors.

Tips for Online Giving:

- [Online Fundraising Handbook: Making the Most of the Web and E-mail to Raise More Money Online](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r1978#.U_pONUg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r1978#.U_pONUg7n6Y), downloadable on the National Service Knowledge Network

- [Using the Internet to Raise Funds and Build Donor Relationships: Tools, Tips, and Techniques for Boosting Donations](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r2874#.U_pPVUg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r2874#.U_pPVUg7n6Y), downloadable on the National Service Knowledge Network
- Grobman, Gary M. and Gary B. Grant (2006). *Fundraising Online: Using the Internet to Raise Serious Money for Your Nonprofit Organization*. Harrisburg, PA: White Hat Communications
- Kanter, Beth. (2012, Mar 1). [How to Put Online Fundraising on Steroids](http://bethkanter.org/social-fundraising/) (<http://bethkanter.org/social-fundraising/>)

Ask by Phone

Whether it is a phone call from the Executive Director or a volunteer, it is important to share information about the organization or program and obtain input – then you make the ask.

Hold a Special Event

From a small breakfast of key champions to a gala with hundreds of supporters, convening community members who care about the commission’s vision and impact can result in increased visibility and funds to further the work.

Tips for Special Events:

- Jackson, Robert and Steven Wood Schmader (1997). *Special Events: Inside and Out*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Press
- Swaim, Samantha (2013). [Checklist for a Brand New Event](http://swaimstrategies.com/2013/01/21/checklist-for-a-brand-new-event/). (<http://swaimstrategies.com/2013/01/21/checklist-for-a-brand-new-event/>)
- Janell Shride (1995). *Fundraising Ideas: Over 225 Money Making Events for Community Groups, with a Resource Directory*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company

Resources

- [Building Fundraising Champions](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/links/build-fundraising-volunteer-champions#.U_NNikg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/links/build-fundraising-volunteer-champions#.U_NNikg7n6Y)
- [ASK to Sustain, Resource Development](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/w2774#.U_OMdUg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/w2774#.U_OMdUg7n6Y)
- [Ten Nonprofit Funding Models](http://ssireview.org/articles/entry/ten_nonprofit_funding_models) (http://ssireview.org/articles/entry/ten_nonprofit_funding_models), Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- [2014 Nonprofit Benchmarks Study](http://www.nten.org/research/the-2014-nonprofit-benchmarks-study), Nonprofit Technology Network (<http://www.nten.org/research/the-2014-nonprofit-benchmarks-study>)

Partnerships

Through partnerships, outcomes are expanded and deepened through the possibilities of joint program implementation, added resources, and the increased visibility of reaching those connected to the potential partner. Reciprocal partnerships are a goal where both partners benefit from the relationship.

State, County, and Local Government

As mentioned in the funding section, the opportunities to connect with government agencies and educational institutions can provide added opportunities for the state commission.

Opportunities to connect with government

- Joint programming: An example on the federal level is the AmeriCorps FEMA Corps, which is a partnership between FEMA and AmeriCorps. Are there state agencies that would provide a connection to placement sites for AmeriCorps members? Are there agencies that would be interested in co-creating an AmeriCorps program to reach mutually beneficial goals in your state?
- Evaluation: A shared focus on community provides an opportunity to share evaluation outcomes and measurement processes. Are there outputs measured by state or local government that lends to the focus or story of the commission?
- Funding: Joint asks, direct funding, and in-kind support; there are many possibilities when the needs and opportunities are identified.
- Communication: What are the communication goals of the commission? Are there communication outlets or expertise that could lend to the commission's capacity?
- Training: The community need expertise across government is vast. Do you need an inspirational speaker or training for AmeriCorps members?

Community-Based Organizations

Community organizations provide similar partnership opportunities to government. In addition, consider joint convening opportunities to support the State Service Plan development, AmeriCorps site recruitment, member recruitment, and training. What are other opportunities to partner with community-based organizations?

Corporations

- Corporate partnership resources on the [National Service Knowledge Network](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-financial-and-grant-management/corporate-partnerships#.U_pS-kg7n6Y) (https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-financial-and-grant-management/corporate-partnerships#.U_pS-kg7n6Y)

Developing a partnership with local and state-wide companies can provide increased visibility, resources, and, ultimately, deepened impact.

Opportunities to connect with corporations

- Corporate philanthropy – direct financial contribution from the company to the state commission or its programs.
- Corporate sponsorship – contribution to offset costs of a special event or program such as AmeriCorps member or Program Director training, recognition events, or fundraising events.
- Employee volunteering – encouraging employees to spend their time in the community volunteering alongside commission staff or at AmeriCorps programs across the state.

Resources on Employee Volunteers

- [Seven Practices of Effective Employee Volunteer Programs](http://pointsoflight.org/sites/default/files/corporate-institute/ubm_b4b_whitepaper8.pdf) (http://pointsoflight.org/sites/default/files/corporate-institute/ubm_b4b_whitepaper8.pdf)
- [Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers Resources](http://pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/resources/recruiting-and-retaining-volunteers) from Points of Light (<http://pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute/resources/recruiting-and-retaining-volunteers>)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Volunteering](http://energizeinc.com/art/subj/corpres.html) articles on Energize Inc. (<http://energizeinc.com/art/subj/corpres.html>)

Cause-related Marketing

Cause-related marketing, corporate social marketing or cause marketing – donating a percentage of revenue from sales to a nonprofit or supporting behavior change campaigns.

Examples of cause-related marketing include:

- NAU, a clothing company donates 2% of their proceeds to organizations that are their “[Partners for Change](http://www.nau.com/about/business-unusual/partners-for-change.html)” (<http://www.nau.com/about/business-unusual/partners-for-change.html>).
- [Target](https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility) (<https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility>) donates 5% of their proceeds to communities around the world.
- Alex and Ani, a jewelry company, donates to various charitable organizations based on the sales of their “[Charity by Design](http://www.alexandani.com/collections/charity-by-design/make-your-mark-charm-bracelet.html)” (<http://www.alexandani.com/collections/charity-by-design/make-your-mark-charm-bracelet.html>) program.

Helpful Links

- [The Foundation Center](http://fdncenter.org) (<http://fdncenter.org>)
The Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on US and, increasingly, global grant-makers and their grants. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance knowledge of philanthropy at every level.
- [Regional Grantmaker Organizations](http://givingforum.org) (<http://givingforum.org>)
The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers is a national network that supports and strengthens regional associations in their promotion of effective philanthropy to improve life in their communities.
- [Guidestar](http://guidestar.org) (<http://guidestar.org>)
GuideStar gathers and disseminates information about IRS-registered nonprofit organizations gathered from filed 990 forms; 990s provide information on a nonprofit's mission, staff, board, programs, and financials.
- [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](http://philanthropy.com/section/Home/172) (<http://philanthropy.com/section/Home/172>)
The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* is a news source, in print and online, for nonprofit leaders, fundraisers, grant-makers, and other people involved in philanthropy. For more than 20 years, *The Chronicle* has been connecting the nonprofit world with news, jobs, and ideas.
- [David Lamb's Research Page](http://lambresearch.com/) (<http://lambresearch.com/>)
The Research Page compiles website addresses to support grant and fundraising prospecting.
- [Local Business Journals](http://bizjournals.com/) (<http://bizjournals.com/>)
Reaching 10 million viewers, local Business Journals provide comprehensive coverage of business news from a local, regional, and national perspective. Business Journals provide information to inform fundraising and partnership opportunities as well as to promote the work of the commission.
- [Stanford Social Innovation Review](http://ssireview.org/topics/category/philanthropy) (<http://ssireview.org/topics/category/philanthropy>)
The *Stanford Social Innovation Review* is a magazine and website that covers cross-sector solutions to global problems. *SSIR* is written for and by social change leaders in the nonprofit, business, and government sectors who view collaboration as key to solving environmental, social, and economic justice issues.

Chapter 5:

Organizational Development

Learning Objectives

- Identify key components of the State Service Plan
- List roles and responsibilities for commission staff
- Cite next steps to strengthen external communication for the commission

Strategic Planning

State Service Plan

Beginning in 1997, the requirement to develop a State Service Plan presented an opportunity for the state commission to exercise inclusive leadership. It required the principal service actors in the state to collaborate in a more formal and structured way. The National and Community Service Trust Act requires that a plan “be developed through an open and public process...that provides for maximum participation and input from national service programs within the state and other interested members of the public.”

The State Service Plan serves as a vehicle for creating a broad vision for promoting national service and volunteering and for building a solid infrastructure of high quality service programs and support services. The plan should be a blueprint for identifying state priorities, themes, and areas of emphasis among all the streams of service.

SEC. 178. [42 U.S.C. 12638] State Commissions on National and Community Service

The state commission or alternative administrative entity for a state shall be responsible for the following duties:

- (1) Preparation of a national service plan for the state that--
 - (A) is developed through an open and public process (such as through regional forums, hearings, and other means) that provides for maximum participation and input from national service programs within the state and other interested members of the public;
 - (B) covers a three year period;
 - (C) is updated annually;
 - (D) ensures outreach to diverse community-based agencies that serve Under-represented populations, by--
 - (i) using established networks and registries at the state level; or
 - (ii) establishing such networks and registries; and
 - (E) contains such information as the state commission considers to be appropriate or as the Corporation may require.

The State Service Plan addresses the following questions, per CNCS instructions:

- What are your strategies or approaches for outreach to community and faith-based organizations as well as intermediaries that may be interested in operating an AmeriCorps program?
- What program focus areas are you working on with your partners and collaborators?
- What are your on-going efforts or special initiatives that involve convening of and/or collaborating with the CNCS State Offices, multi-state AmeriCorps programs, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, Senior Corps, State Education Agencies, state networks of volunteer centers, tribal programs, Campus Compacts, and/or other volunteer service organizations within the state?
- What non-monetary support can the Corporation (headquarters and/or your CNCS State Office) provide to ensure the success of your State Service Plan?

In recent years, CNCS has also asked commissions to address the sustainability of their national service efforts:

- Sustainability of national service at the state level , through financial, in-kind, and bipartisan political support, including the supportive legislation; and
- Other support, including financial, in-kind, and other support of the private sector, foundations, and other entities and individuals.

State Service Plan Examples

- [Iowa State Service Plan](#)
(<http://volunteeriowa.org/Portals/1/Documents/State-Service-Plan-August2010.pdf>)
- [Washington State Service Plan](#)
(http://www.ofm.wa.gov/servewa/about/StateServicePlan_2010-12_Final.pdf)
- [Pennsylvania State Service Plan](#)
(http://dli.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennserve/10382/pennsylvania_state_service_plan/552325)

Organizational Strategic Plan

In addition to the State Service Plan, it is important for the commission to have clear direction and goals for the organization and programs. Though trends in strategic planning are moving away from developing a three or five year strategic plan, taking time to regularly review commission opportunities, strengths, weaknesses, and threats is important. Developing a clear sense of direction and goals for staff, commissioners, and partners provide an opportunity to engage each in future activities.

Strategic Planning Resources

- [Five Cs - What is Strategic Planning?](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/cci-five-cs-what-strategic-planning#.U_qqHEg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/cci-five-cs-what-strategic-planning#.U_qqHEg7n6Y)
- La Plana, David (2008). Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid-Response World. St. Paul, Minn.: Fieldstone Alliance
- Stanford Social Innovation Review, [The Strategic Plan is Dead. Long Live Strategy](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/the_strategic_plan_is_dead._long_live_strategy)
(http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/the_strategic_plan_is_dead._long_live_strategy)

Assessment

Self-assessment and self-evaluation are integral for effective organizational management. Executive Directors of state commission, like other public, nonprofit, and private sector managers, should consider organizational self-assessment to be part of an on-going “environmental scan” designed to help manage better and accomplish more.

Because state commissions are public institutions, supported by federal and state funding (or in-kind support), there are specific legal requirements designed to assure that they are open, accessible, and accountable. The logical starting place for state commissions’ self-evaluation efforts, therefore, is the issue of their compliance with applicable federal and state regulations and requirements. Compliance is a critical concern in designing self-evaluation.

There are three primary sources of guidance which relate to state commissions’ self-evaluation responsibilities. The first source is Section 2250.80 of the regulations, which describes the duties of state commissions and lists specifications for carrying out those duties.

The second source is the CNCS guidance issued as part of the application guidelines for State Administrative Funds. In the application guidelines, there is information provided on the role of the state commission to include administrative functions, support to programs, and a larger strategic role in the state.

The third source is the CNCS AmeriCorps Grant Provisions which set forth specific requirements and conditions each grant year.

AmeriCorps Performance Measurements

- [eGrants Modules](http://learning.nationalserviceresources.org/mod/page/view.php?id=3064)
(<http://learning.nationalserviceresources.org/mod/page/view.php?id=3064>)
- [Volunteer Florida State-wide Evaluation of AmeriCorps](http://volunteerflorida.org/national-service/statewide-evaluation/)
(<http://volunteerflorida.org/national-service/statewide-evaluation/>)

Human Resources

State commissions range from staff teams of three to as many as 10 or more depending on the state established role of the commission and the size of the AmeriCorps portfolio.

Typical Roles and Responsibilities

- CEO/Executive Director/Director: Reporting to the State Service Commission, Board of Directors, and/or Fiscal Agent, the Executive Director (ED) will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for the commission's staff, programs, expansion, and execution of its mission. S/he will initially develop deep knowledge of the national service field, core programs, operations, and business plans.
- Finance/Accounting: Performs accounting data entry for budgets and expenditures for local, state, federal, and private funding, contracts, and grants; monitors and reviews accounting and related system reports for accuracy and completeness; performs accounting data entry for revenue, expense, payroll entries, invoices, and other accounting documents; leads and/or participates in subgrantee audits, which include planning, executing, directing, and/or completing financial audits.
- Commission Program Officer: The Program Officer manages the program portfolio, assisting in the development of an annual monitoring plan, management of monitoring and reporting activities, and overseeing compliance of grant agreements, regulations, and policies.
- Training/Events Manager: A training manager position works to strengthen subgrantees and communities through program development and management, event planning, training, and support.

HR Management Resources

- [Staff Screening Tool Kit: Building a Strong Foundation Through Careful Staffing](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r3300#.U_sMgUg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/online-library/items/r3300#.U_sMgUg7n6Y)
- Harvard Business Review, [How to Use Content to Recruit Top Talent](https://linkedin.com/today/post/article/20140317130037-86319010-how-to-use-content-to-recruit-top-talent)
(<https://linkedin.com/today/post/article/20140317130037-86319010-how-to-use-content-to-recruit-top-talent>)
- Journal of Business and Communication, [Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2868990/)
(<http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2868990/>)

- University of Minnesota, [Generational Differences in the Workplace](http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/2_18_Gen_diff_workplace.pdf)
(http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/2_18_Gen_diff_workplace.pdf)

External Communication

Good work is best when the community knows about it and can contribute to its success. Becoming a household name is not easy work. Community members will find you via the commission's website, social media, traditional media, and publications. Creating a compelling story will ensure that community members want to be a part of your future.

External Communication Resources

- [National Service Knowledge Network](https://nationalservicerresources.gov/program-financial-and-grant-management/marketing-and-media#.U_sU5kg7n6Y) (https://nationalservicerresources.gov/program-financial-and-grant-management/marketing-and-media#.U_sU5kg7n6Y) includes webinars, toolkits, and related websites.
- [ASK to Sustain: Marketing and Communications](https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/online-library/items/w2758#.U_uKVkg7n6Y)
(https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/online-library/items/w2758#.U_uKVkg7n6Y)
- Claxon Marketing , [Marketing and Branding Toolkits](http://www.claxonmarketing.com/resources/claxon-diy-tools/)
(<http://www.claxonmarketing.com/resources/claxon-diy-tools/>)
- [Beth Kanter's Blog](http://www.bethkanter.org/)
(<http://www.bethkanter.org/>)
Beth Kanter has over 30 years working in the nonprofit sector in technology, training, capacity building, evaluation, fundraising, and marketing.

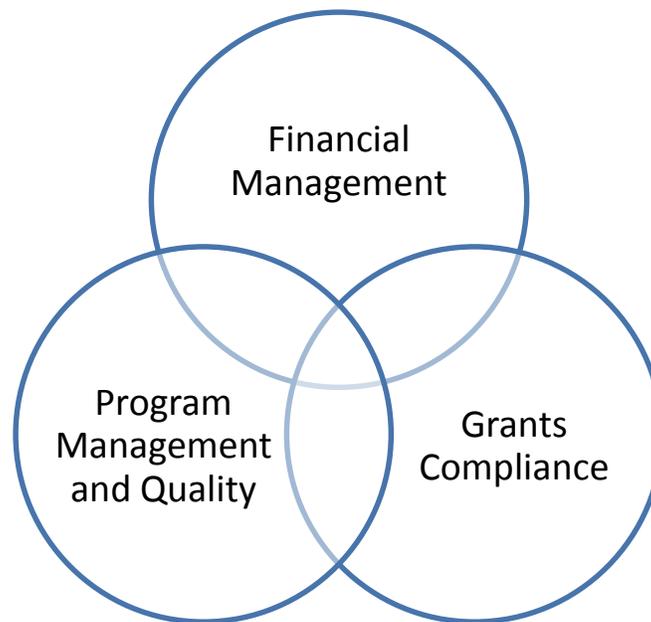
Chapter 6:

AmeriCorps Grants

Learning Objectives

- Describe the state commission's role in AmeriCorps grant management
- Explain the difference between laws, regulations, provisions, and policies
- Identify the steps in the AmeriCorps grant award process
- Discuss the various ways a state commission monitors subgrantees

As key facilitators of state and national service programs, state commissions assume a principal responsibility for implementing and overseeing a competitive grant process and ensuring that resulting programs, projects, and activities are carried out effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with various federal regulations, policies, and grant requirements. This grant management role involves a broad array of responsibilities in three primary areas: project management and quality, financial management, and grant compliance. While there are distinct components in each area, they often have overlapping or intersecting aspects that can be depicted as:



Grants Management Role Graphic

Definitions

Planning Grants: Planning grants support the development or improvement of a program so that it may be better prepared to successfully compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle. Planning grants do not include AmeriCorps member positions. During the planning period, the program will define the roles and activities members will perform in the program.

Competitive Grants: Competitive grants are AmeriCorps program proposals that are put into a pool of applicants from across the country for a national grant review process.

Formula Grants: Formula grants are AmeriCorps program proposals that are put into a pool of applicants at the state commission level for a decision on funding made by the state's commissioners.

No-cost extensions: A no-cost extension is an opportunity provided by CNCS to continue the program or grant activities beyond the grant timeline in order to complete programmatic outcomes and complete use of grant funds. No additional funding is provided.

Carry-over funds: Similar to no-cost extension funds, carry-over funds are unexpended funds that are utilized beyond the grant year contract. Carry-over fund requests are submitted by the commission to the CNCS Office of Grants Management and approved by the state commission's Grants Officer.

Supplemental funds: Supplemental funds are additional funds provided to support additional activities during the grant year. Should supplemental funds become available, CNCS will alert the state commission about the availability and application timeline.

Fixed-amount Grants: Recipients of fixed-amount grants do not have minimum match requirements, are not required to maintain documentation of the match that is raised in support of the AmeriCorps program, and have fewer fiscal reporting requirements than cost-reimbursement grants. While fixed-amount grants do not have a specified minimum match requirement, the amount provided by CNCS does not cover the full cost of operating a program. The maximum cost per MSY for a fixed-amount grant is typically lower than for a cost-reimbursement grant. Under a fixed-amount grant, grantees may receive funds based on the enrollment of members for Education Award Program (EAP) grants or for the enrollment and hours served for stipended full-time and Professional Corps fixed-amount grants.

Cost-reimbursement Grants: With a cost-reimbursement grant, recipients have a minimum match requirement and must maintain documentation of all grant expenses. Under a cost-reimbursement grant, the grantee can access and retain all funds for legitimate and allowable costs.

Grants Compliance

In order to run an effective program, commission grantees must know the rules of AmeriCorps, which can be difficult to navigate even for organizations that have prior federal grant experience.

AmeriCorps requirements include laws, regulations, provisions, and policies:

- *The law* is The National and Community Service Act of 1990 (Public Law 101–610, Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 3127) (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.) [As Amended Through P.L. 111–13, Enacted April 21, 2009]. The statute authorizes the federally funded initiative of AmeriCorps. For more information go to the CNCS website to read the [National and Community Service Act](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1990_serviceact_as%20amended%20through%20pl%20111-13.pdf) (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1990_serviceact_as%20amended%20through%20pl%20111-13.pdf).
- *The regulations* are Corporation for National and Community Service’s interpretations of the statute and set out the agency's purpose and powers, and the circumstances of applying the statute. Regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The AmeriCorps regulations can be found in Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 25 beginning with section 2520.10. Citations for regulations are written like this: 45 CFR §2522.230 or abbreviated as §2522.230. For more information go to the [CFR website](http://ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=d73c38f05da93425514a6ba0bcdd7535&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45cfrv4_02.tpl#2500) (http://ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=d73c38f05da93425514a6ba0bcdd7535&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45cfrv4_02.tpl#2500).
- *AmeriCorps Grant Provisions* are additional grant requirements. New provisions are issued each year. Citations for provisions are written like this: [AC I. B.2]. For more information, go to the [CNCS website](http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation) (<http://nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>).
- Each year, the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions include the basic responsibilities of grantees (below are the 2014 contents) and are a critical area of understanding for state commissions.
 - Changes from the previous AmeriCorps Grant Provisions
 - Legislative and Regulatory Authority
 - Other Applicable Statutory and Administrative Provisions
 - States, Indian Tribes, US Territories, and Local Governments
 - Nonprofit Organizations
 - Educational Institutions
 - Other Applicable Statutes and Regulations
 - Exemptions for Fixed-amount Grants
 - Order of Precedence

- AmeriCorps Special Provisions
 - Definitions
 - Affiliation with the AmeriCorps National Service Network
 - Member Recruitment, Selection, and Exit
 - Supervision and Support
 - Changes in Member Terms of Service or Program Slots
 - Living Allowances, Other In-service Benefits, and Taxes
 - Member Records and Confidentiality
 - Budget and Programmatic Changes
 - Reporting Requirements
 - Grant Period and Incremental Funding

- General Provisions
 - Responsibilities under Grant Administration
 - Financial Management Standards
 - The Office of Inspector General
 - Reporting of Fraud, Waste, and Abuse
 - Whistleblower Protection
 - Program Income
 - Safety
 - Non-discrimination Public Notice and Records Compliance
 - Grant Products
 - Suspension or Termination of Grant
 - Fixed-amount Awards
 - Trafficking in Persons
 - Central Contractor Registration and Universal Identifier Requirements
 - Transparency Act Award Term (for grants and cooperative agreements of \$25,000 or more)

- Attachment
 - Grant Program Civil Rights and Non-harassment Policy

The regulations and provisions are the primary sources of information for the day-to-day management of CNCS commission grants, and the CNCS Program Officer will assist in becoming familiar with them.

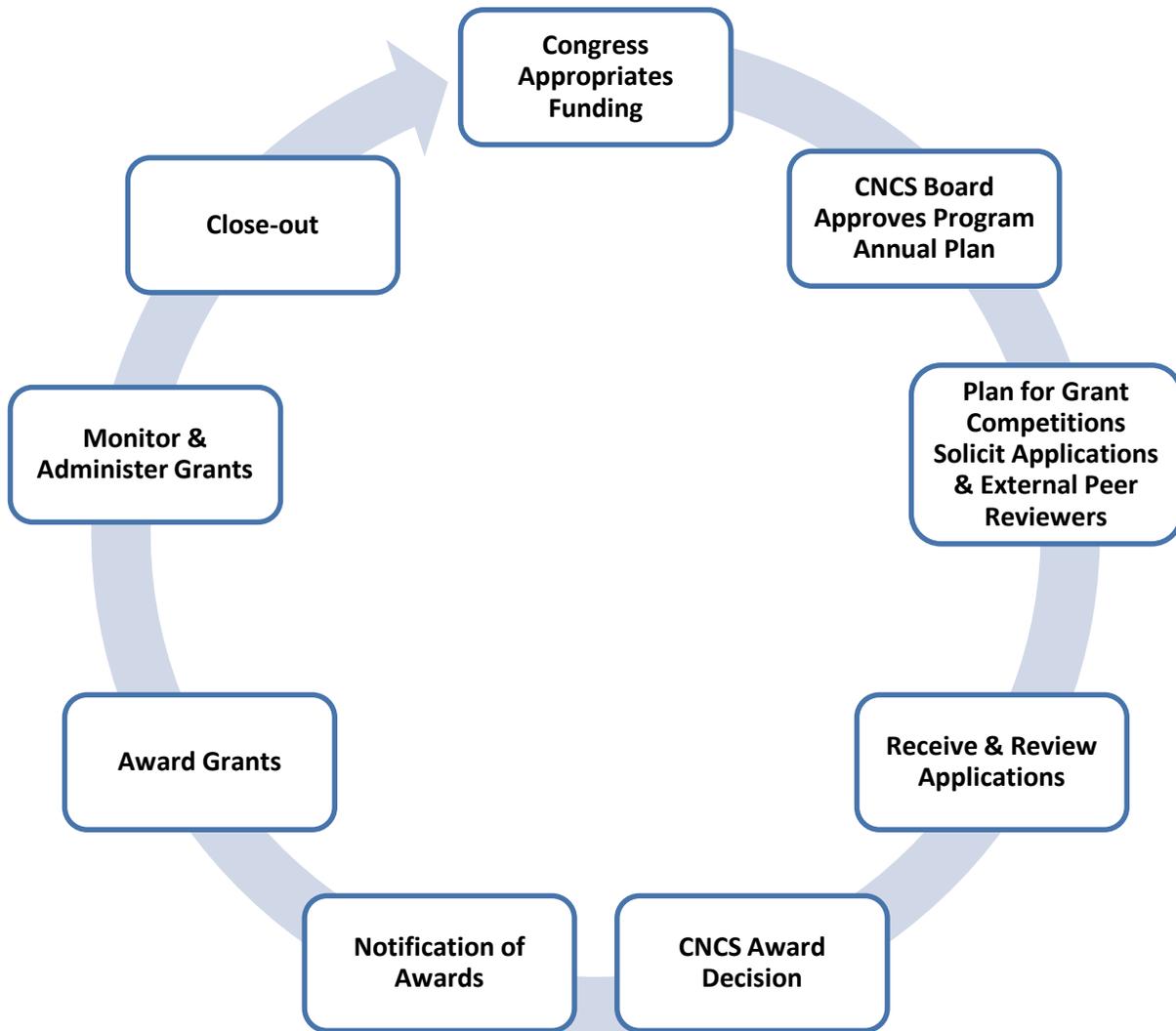
The items mentioned above are accessible at the “[Manage Current Grants](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/index.asp)” (http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/index.asp) section of the AmeriCorps website.

Other Requirements

- *State Laws:* AmeriCorps programs must become aware of the state laws in which their members serve. For example, you should find out about the state laws pertaining to procurement, grant solicitation, taxes, workers compensation, background checks, etc.
- *OMB Circulars:* OMB Circulars are issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and outline administrative requirements and cost principles for nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, and educational institutions using federal funds. Understanding the applicable OMB Circulars is critical to operating a compliant federal grant. For more information, please see the [OMB website](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html>).

CNCS Grant Award Process

The diagram below shows the CNCS grant-making process from the appropriation of funds and awarding grants, through monitoring activities, to close-out.



The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants Graphic

- Congress Appropriates Funding: Congress appropriates funding to CNCS each fiscal year as part of the federal budget process.
- CNCS Board Approves Program Annual Plan: CNCS develops an annual plan and budget for each grant competition. The CNCS Board of Directors reviews and approves the plan.
- Plan for Grant Competitions: The planning process includes developing an agency-wide Grant Application Review Calendar, the Notice of Federal Funding Availability or Opportunity Notice, Application Instructions, and grant application review protocols.
- Solicit Applicants & External Peer Reviewers: For each competitive grant program, CNCS publishes a Notice that describes eligibility criteria, funding priorities, program requirements, and the applicant's responsibilities. CNCS also recruits external peer reviewers.
- Receive Applications: CNCS reviews each submitted application for compliance with the published eligibility requirements. The eligible applications are then sorted and assigned to review panels.
- Review Applications: CNCS conducts a multi-stage review process to assess applications, using external peer reviewers (in many cases) and CNCS staff.
- CNCS Award Decision: The Chief Executive Officer makes award decisions after the staff review is completed.
- Notification of Awards: Congress and applicants are notified of the award decision. The public is informed through a press release.
- Award Grants: CNCS obligates and awards federal funds to each application approved for funding.
- Monitor & Administer Grants: The grantee implements the program and fulfills the reporting and other requirements. CNCS provides training and technical assistance for the grantee and conducts audits and program reviews.
- Close-out: At the end of the grant life cycle, any remaining grant funds are de-obligated and CNCS disposes of any property or equipment.

State Commission Grant Compliance Role: Monitoring and Management

Risk-based Monitoring

Upon review of the state's grantee portfolio, there will be sites that require additional support due to their years of AmeriCorps funding, staff turn-over, or other factors that put the grantee in potential risk of not managing and utilizing funds at the level of quality expected. As such, commission staff should schedule additional communications or check-ins and then direct additional coaching and training support, as needed.

Risk Assessment Samples

- [National Service Knowledge Network Risk Assessment Rating](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/risk-based-monitoring-tool-risk-assessment-rating#.U_p40Ug7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/risk-based-monitoring-tool-risk-assessment-rating#.U_p40Ug7n6Y)
- [National Service Knowledge Network Risk Assessment Form](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/risk-based-monitoring-tool-risk-assessment-form#.U_p4I0g7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/risk-based-monitoring-tool-risk-assessment-form#.U_p4I0g7n6Y)

Site Visits

Grantee site visits either pre- or post-award are recommended to ensure policy compliance, to gather additional insight into support needs, and to strengthen the partnership by getting to know the strengths of the program. For new grantees, a pre-application site visit is recommended to assess financial systems and management competency. For year one grantees, a site visit four months after member enrollment is recommended to assess member files and financial systems. For more experienced grantees, the commission may determine an annual or bi-annual site visit schedule, depending on staff transitions, size of program, or size of the state and required distance for travel. Larger states may institute a virtual site visit to include an online meeting using technology like Skype and a desk audit process to receive and review subgrantee files at the commission office.

Samples

- [National Service Knowledge Network Financial Site Visit Resource](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/financial-management-online-sample-resources-0#.U_p3Hkg7n6Y)
(https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/financial-management-online-sample-resources-0#.U_p3Hkg7n6Y) This includes provisions, sample documents, site visit checklists, and sample forms.

Monitoring Portal Stats

In addition to site visits, state commission staff can monitor several key statistics through eGrants for subgrantees. These statistics including member enrollment and exit, slot fill rates, service location completions, etc. Each commission should create an annual plan to thoroughly review all subgrantee Portal statistics throughout the grant year.

Here is a sample compliance check process provided by the Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSV):

A GOSV staff member will review the status of the program's members each month. S/he will complete a Portal compliance checklist and contact the program staff if there are any missing items or outstanding issues to address. A corrective action plan will be implemented within 30

days to resolve the issues or problems. In general, the Portal compliance check will be conducted on the first business day of each month.

The monthly checklist includes the following:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Location in the Portal</i>
<i>Service location matches approved grant</i>	<i>Service Locations Report</i>
<i>Service location address</i>	<i>Service Locations Report</i>
<i>Site supervisor</i>	<i>Service Locations Report</i>
<i>Site supervisor contact info</i>	<i>Service Locations Report</i>
<i>Members assigned to service locations</i>	<i>Manage Programs, View Members</i>
<i>Currently enrolled slots</i>	<i>Slot Info</i>
<i>Currently enrolled MSYs</i>	<i>Slot Info</i>
<i>% enrolled ≤ 30 Days</i>	<i>Enrollment Approval Cycle Report</i>
<i>Enrollment rate</i>	<i>Enrollment Rate Report</i>
<i>Retention rate</i>	<i>Retention Rate Report</i>
<i>% exited ≤ 30 Days</i>	<i>Exit Approval Cycle Report</i>

The compliance check will also monitor slot conversions and refills. Revolving items will be addressed at certain times of the year. The GOSV also makes note of any Portal irregularities during the monthly compliance check and notes improvement in Portal compliance.

Reporting (Progress and Financial)

As set forth in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions, state commissions are responsible for timely submission of periodic financial and progress reports during the project period, submitting a final financial report, and setting submission deadlines for its subgrantees that ensure the timely submission of grantee reports.

State Commission Grantee Progress Reports

The grantee shall complete and submit progress reports in eGrants to report on progress toward achievement of its approved performance targets.

- Due Date Reporting Period Covered
April 30 Start of grant through March 31
October 31 Start of grant year through end of grant year or September 30, whichever is sooner
- [Grantee Progress Report](#)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/videos/completing-ameri-corps-grantee-progress-report-gpr#.U_ovZkg7n6Y)

Financial Reports

The grantee shall complete and submit financial reports in eGrants (Financial Status Reports on menu tree) to report the status of all funds. The grantee must submit timely cumulative financial reports in accordance with CNCS guidelines according to the following schedule:

- Due Date Reporting Period Covered
April 30 Start of grant through March 31
October 31 April 1 – September 30

A grantee must set submission deadlines for its subgrantees that ensure the timely submission of grantee reports.

National Professional Corps grantees submit one financial report per year.

All grantees, including fixed-amount grantees, must submit the Federal Financial Report (FFR) - Cash Transactions Report on a quarterly basis to the Department of Health and Human Services Payment Management System per the Electronic Funds Transfer Agreement.

Reporting Other Federal Funds

The grantee shall report the amount and sources of federal funds, other than those provided by CNCS, claimed as matching funds. This includes other federal funds expended by subgrantees and operating sites, and claimed as match. This information shall be reported annually on the

financial report due October 31, or at the time the final financial report is submitted if the final report is due prior to October 31. Fixed-amount grantees are not required to report this information.

Requests for Extensions

Each grantee must submit required reports by the required deadline. Extensions of reporting deadlines will be granted only when 1) the report cannot be furnished in a timely manner for reasons, in the determination of CNCS, legitimately beyond the control of the grantee, and 2) CNCS receives a written request explaining the need for an extension before the due date of the report.

Extensions of deadlines for financial reports may only be granted by the Office of Grants Management, and extensions of deadlines for progress reports may only be granted by the AmeriCorps Program Office.

Final Financial Reports

A grantee must submit, in lieu of the last semi-annual financial report, a final financial report. This final report is due no later than 90 days after the end of the project period.

Final Progress Reports

A grantee must submit, in addition to the last semi-annual project report, a final project report. This final report is due no later than 90 days after the end of the project period.

Financial Reports for Fixed-amount Grants

Fixed-amount grantees are not required to submit financial reports to CNCS; this includes the final financial report.

Program Management and Quality

Grant Selection Processes

Outreach to New Grantees

AmeriCorps funding can benefit communities small and large through reaching the organizations leading interventions on each community's most pressing needs. In order to assemble the strongest state AmeriCorps program portfolio a combination of general and targeted outreach strategies are recommended.

General outreach connects with a broad audience of nonprofits and agencies as potential grantees or host sites. Consider sending the funding announcement out through the following partners and networks:

- State Nonprofit Association
- United Ways
- Volunteer centers
- State government nonprofit registry organization
- Higher education institutions (specifically internship and practicum placement sites utilized by schools such as Education or Social Work)
- Philanthropic organizations
- Elected officials

In order to reach organizations that best align with funding priorities, utilize targeted outreach. Consider which organizations address the issue area or geographical priorities. A list of organizations to target could be generated by the state organization that registers nonprofits (Secretary of State, Department of Revenue, or other state agency).

Some state commissions build in an initial concept paper phase for new applicants over the summer and early fall in order to provide additional screening. Steps could include: concept paper completion, presentation to the state commission, and an invitation to submit a full grant application in eGrants.

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Each state will release an RFP for AmeriCorps funding. The RFP will include all competitive and formula funding opportunities in addition to any program-specific information released by CNCS.

Sample RFPs in 2014

- [New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service](http://www.nj.gov/state/programs/dos_program_community_service_grant_opp.html)
(http://www.nj.gov/state/programs/dos_program_community_service_grant_opp.html)
- [Serve Minnesota](http://www.serveminnesota.org/grants/program-year-14-15-grant-competition)
(<http://www.serveminnesota.org/grants/program-year-14-15-grant-competition>)
- [Serve Montana](http://serve.mt.gov/?page_id=11991&preview=true)
(http://serve.mt.gov/?page_id=11991&preview=true)

Proposal Review and Selection

Once proposals are received, they should be reviewed by commission staff and other external reviewers to assess quality, strength, and alignment with published application criteria.

Samples

- [CNCS 2013 Competitive Grant Review and Selection Process](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cncs_2013_grant_review_and_selection_process_0.pdf)
(http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cncs_2013_grant_review_and_selection_process_0.pdf)
- [School Turnaround AmeriCorps FY13 Review Handbook](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Review_Handbook_STAC_2013.pdf)
(http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Review_Handbook_STAC_2013.pdf)
- [School Turnaround AmeriCorps FY13 Review Scoring Rubric](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Rating_System_Overview_Rubric_STAC_13.pdf)
(http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Rating_System_Overview_Rubric_STAC_13.pdf)

Grant Submission in eGrants

Once the subgrantee applications are submitted and to the level of quality desired by the state commission, the state commission will review the subgrantee applications one additional time in eGrants, add the Prime Application Submission Narratives, then verify and authorize the Prime application. The commission will then select “Submit to CNCS” in eGrants to complete the state portfolio grant application.

Tip: Save the Prime Application information outside of eGrants, so that it may be accessed at any time. This includes copies of all subgrantee narratives, budgets, and attachments, as well as the commission narratives, program summary charts, and funding summary charts.

Example of State Commission Timeline for Subgrantee Selection Process

On-going	Outreach to potential grant applicants
Late September	RFP released (timing may depend on CNCS release of NOFO)
Mid-October	Training and Technical Assistance Calls
Mid-November	Applications due in eGrants to state commission Commission staff review for compliance and eligibility Written feedback provided to applicants
Mid-December	Final competitive grants due to state commission Commission staff compliance and application review Written feedback provided to applicants
January	State commission competitive Prime applications due to CNCS
April	Notification of competitive funding by CNCS Formula grants submitted to commission immediately following

On-going Training and Technical Assistance

The following characteristics describe the elements of a successful training and technical assistance program.

Adequate Resources

- Staff members have appropriate background in adult education training methodologies.
- Offers opportunities for professional development for dedicated training and technical assistance (TTA) staff.
- Provides office space, equipment, and access to technology.
- Utilizes in-kind contributions/partnerships for materials, facilities, trainers, etc.
- Accesses national TTA resources provided by CNCS.
- Develops and uses appropriate training materials and methodologies.

Systematic Needs Assessment Process

- Uses appropriate and various methodologies of assessing needs: formal and scheduled, such as written surveys, interviews, focus groups, evaluations, process reports, and site visits; and informal and unscheduled, such as documented anecdotal information and on-going informal observation.
- Considers required competencies and characteristics of successful programs and identifies performance gaps.
- Includes a process for collecting and documenting methodology and storing the data collection for reporting purposes.

Training and Technical Assistance Plan Development

- Content of specific activities is based on analysis of needs of programs and their staff.
- Involves pertinent parties, i.e., state service partners, program staff, and site staff.
- Describes specific activities with planned follow-up.
- Identifies resources to implement the plan, i.e., money, facilities, and trainers.
- Identifies potential dates and coordinates those dates around other activities.
- Continues to develop on an annual basis and builds from one year to the next.

Training and Technical Assistance Plan Implementation

- TTA activities include measurable learning objectives that address specific individual and program needs, including a series of activities if necessary.
- Utilizes appropriate methodologies, curriculum, and materials that adhere to adult education principles.
- Ensures participation of those in greatest need of specific content areas.

- Identifies qualified facilitators for each content area.
- Ensures ADA and Section 508 compliance (e.g., accessibility and reasonable accommodation).
- Utilizes local, state, and national resources as appropriate.
- Makes and documents appropriate adaptations to the plan in response to changing circumstances.

Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance Plan

- Establishes and follows a process to collect, analyze, and share feedback from participants, stakeholders, and partners.
- Considers evaluations in the development of subsequent training plans.
- Determines and analyzes any difference between planned and completed activities.
- Reviews the planned budget against actual expenditures.
- Identifies ways to measure effectiveness of training, linking program improvements to staff and/or member participation in specific training programs.

Commission Subgrantee Training and Technical Assistance

To support subgrantees, it is important to cover the following topics and best practices in-person and/or online:

Orientation

- Project management and quality, including AmeriCorps member management
- Financial management
- Grant compliance including federal and state regulations

On-going support should occur via subgrantee program director meetings or targeted training and conferences. Visit the National Service Knowledge Network website (<https://nationalserviceresources.gov>) for resources and ideas.

Sample Grantee Support Websites

- Florida State Service Commission, [Volunteer Florida](http://volunteerflorida.org/national-service/ameri-corps/program-directors)
(<http://volunteerflorida.org/national-service/ameri-corps/program-directors>)
- Texas State Service Commission, [OneStar Foundation](http://onestarfoundation.org/ameri-corpstexas/grantees/grantee-resources)
(<http://onestarfoundation.org/ameri-corpstexas/grantees/grantee-resources>)

AmeriCorps Members

Needs Assessment

To support AmeriCorps members in the most effective way, it is important to conduct a needs assessment with program directors, AmeriCorps members, or both to establish areas for support. Upon reviewing data over multiple years, trends will become clear for annual planning and curriculum development.

Samples

- [AmeriCorps Member Survey](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/samples/americorps-member-survey-tool#.U_sRUUg7n6Y)
(https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/samples/americorps-member-survey-tool#.U_sRUUg7n6Y)
- [AmeriCorps Member Civic Leadership Development Survey](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/samples/americorps-member-civic-leadership-development-survey#.U_sRskg7n6Y)
(https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/samples/americorps-member-civic-leadership-development-survey#.U_sRskg7n6Y)

Events

Kick-off

Several state commissions hold an AmeriCorps kick-off each fall in order to convene AmeriCorps members for orientation and training as well as to raise awareness for the state commission's work in the community.

Sample Agendas and Events

- [Oregon AmeriCorps Kickoff 2013](https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/americorps-kickoff-2013)
(<https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/americorps-kickoff-2013>)
- [2013 Michigan's AmeriCorps Member Celebration](http://www.michigan.gov/mcsc/0,4608,7-137-8074-316731--,00.html)
(<http://www.michigan.gov/mcsc/0,4608,7-137-8074-316731--,00.html>)

Life After AmeriCorps

Similarly, many state commissions hold a culminating Life After AmeriCorps event in the spring or summer to celebrate the accomplishments of the service year and to support AmeriCorps members' transition to employment, education, or training.

Sample Resources, Agendas, and Events

- [Planning a regional "Life After AmeriCorps" training](http://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/practice/planning-regional-life-after-ameri-corps-training#.U_oxhkg7n6Y)
(http://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/practice/planning-regional-life-after-ameri-corps-training#.U_oxhkg7n6Y)
- [Serve DC Life After AmeriCorps Resource Guide](http://serve.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/serve/publication/attachments/Life%20After%20AmeriCorps%20Resource%20Guide_v.140211.pdf)
(http://serve.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/serve/publication/attachments/Life%20After%20AmeriCorps%20Resource%20Guide_v.140211.pdf)
- [Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism Life After AmeriCorps Resource Guide](http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/5DDFBF89-6F3B-4C87-971F-2D598551C5A9/0/LifeAfterAmeriCorpsResources.pdf)
(<http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/5DDFBF89-6F3B-4C87-971F-2D598551C5A9/0/LifeAfterAmeriCorpsResources.pdf>)

Alumni Relations

Staying in touch with AmeriCorps alumni who have graduated from AmeriCorps programs in your state can provide stories of impact as well as on-going support as donors, volunteers (trainers, job networking for recent AmeriCorps graduates, etc.), or educators on the value of AmeriCorps. For resources on engaging alumni, reach out to [AmeriCorps Alums](http://www.americorpsalums.org) (<http://www.americorpsalums.org>).

Close-out of Grants

CNCS grants usually are awarded for a three-year project period, consisting of three yearly budget periods. CNCS direct grantees are responsible for meeting the submission deadlines for close-out. Close-out documents are due to your CNCS Grants Officer no later than 90 days after the expiration of the project period. Review all guidance on close-out carefully to understand the requirements, see [Instructions for Closing Corporation grants](http://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/06_1204_ac_lsa_closeout.pdf) (http://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/06_1204_ac_lsa_closeout.pdf).

Financial Management

The adequacy of financial management systems, including accounting methods, internal controls, income and expense documentation, and written cost allocation policies are critical for strong programs and sustained CNCS funding.

Accounting and Finance

Systems, Policies, and Procedures

Written policies and procedures are most important for a commission and program's financial management system since they govern the organization's operations. Written policies and procedures maintain a program's crucial operations and serve as a useful tool in orienting new staff.

These are required written financial policies and procedures based on federal grant regulations:

- General financial management policies, procedures, manual, or guidelines
- Internal controls of grant funds, e.g., approval and documentation of expenses, separation of duties, delegation of authority, check issuance, cash receipts, cash management, bank reconciliation, travel, and payroll
- Procurement and purchasing procedures
- Property management for equipment purchased with federal funds
- Time and effort distribution (time-keeping)
- Record retention and destruction
- Procedures to minimize the time between the transfer of federal funds from the HHS Payment Management System to the grantee
- Procedures for determining the reasonableness, allocability, and allowability of costs in accordance with the applicable cost principles and the terms and conditions of the award
- Codes of conduct for employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts
- Travel

Other key written financial policies and procedures based on federal grant regulations include:

- Cost allocation plans
- Payroll
- Cash receipts and disbursements
- Cash drawdowns and reimbursements
- Financial reporting
- Site management and monitoring
- Close-out of subgrants

Reporting Requirements

A Federal Financial Report (FFR) is a quarterly financial assessment tool used by CNCS and the state commission. The FFRs show the awarding agencies how subgrantees are using federal funds, the amount of federal funds being spent per quarter, and how a grantee is matching federal funds. They also help to ensure that administrative costs do not exceed grant limitations and to ensure that costs per member requirements are being met. See [Federal Financial Report Information](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/ffr#.U_uHG0g7n6Y) (https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/ffr#.U_uHG0g7n6Y) on the National Service Knowledge Network.

Helpful Links

- [MyAmeriCorps Support for AmeriCorps State Commission and Subgrantees](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/myamericorps-support-americorps-state-commission-and-sub-grantees#.U_ouAkg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/myamericorps-support-americorps-state-commission-and-sub-grantees#.U_ouAkg7n6Y)
- [2012 Financial and Grants Management Institute](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/2012-financial-and-grants-management-institute#.U_uE60g7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/2012-financial-and-grants-management-institute#.U_uE60g7n6Y)
- [AmeriCorps Financial and Grant Management Resources](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/americorps-financial-grant-managment#.U_uLEg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/americorps-financial-grant-managment#.U_uLEg7n6Y)
Includes information on budgets, FFRs, match, in-kind donations, fundraising, and eGrants.
- [Checklists for New AmeriCorps Programs](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/checklists-americorps#.U_uD70g7n6Z)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/checklists-americorps#.U_uD70g7n6Z)
- [eGrants Program Management](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-management-presentation-state#.VB5IUec7n6Z)
(<https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-management-presentation-state#.VB5IUec7n6Z>)
- [CNCS Forms](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-management-presentation-state#.U_owgkg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-management-presentation-state#.U_owgkg7n6Y)
- [Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism Grantee Handbook](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/files/americorps-state-grantee-manual_0.pdf)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/files/americorps-state-grantee-manual_0.pdf)
- [Hosting Webinars](https://nationalserviceresources.gov/best-practices-interactive-webinars#.U_ov_kg7n6Y)
(https://nationalserviceresources.gov/best-practices-interactive-webinars#.U_ov_kg7n6Y)

Chapter 7:

Appendices

Best Practices for Commission Executive Directors

- Adapted from [Resources for State and National Planning Grantees FY12](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac_state_national_resources_2012.pdf) (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac_state_national_resources_2012.pdf)
- Participate in regular check-in calls with the CNCS Program Officer. Prepare questions in advance so that you can get the most out of these discussions. Program Officers are equipped to clarify grant requirements, application instructions, etc. He/she can help think through the advantages and disadvantages of various program designs and specific program implementation plans and systems you are considering or developing. POs can also provide contact information of current grantees that might be able to offer you tips on planning your program.
- Take advantage of all of the training and technical assistance opportunities available to you. In addition to being in close contact with your Program Officer, be sure to attend all CNCS training conferences, utilize the tutorials and other tools available through the [National Service Knowledge Network](http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov) (www.nationalserviceresources.gov) participate in CNCS sponsored webinars and conference calls.
- Spend a lot of time getting to know the provisions, regulations, policy FAQs, etc. AmeriCorps grant requirements are complex even for grantees with prior experience with federal programs, and it is essential that you keep AmeriCorps grant requirements in mind as you plan your programs and develop a state-wide strategy.
- Use the Resources for AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grantees, the Learning Pathways for Program Start-up, the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), and the Grant Application Instructions to help guide your planning processes.
- Call and email other state commissions to learn about their program designs, how they manage their subgrantees and projects, and how they raise funds to support their commissions.

Benchmarks for Grant Success

- Adapted from [Resources for State and National Planning Grantees FY12](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac_state_national_resources_2012.pdf)
(http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ac_state_national_resources_2012.pdf)

The following are suggested benchmarks for success during a planning year. Talk with your CNCS Program Officer to determine the order that makes the most sense for your work.

By the end of May, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least one check-in call with your CNCS Program Officer
- Begun meeting with an advisory committee/stakeholders who will provide input on the planning process
- Read all AmeriCorps Grant Provisions and Regulations
- Read the [Learning Pathways for Program Start-up](http://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-start-up)
(<http://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-start-up>) and the other sections of “Guidance for AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grantees”
- Become familiar with the tools available through the National Service Knowledge Network
- Solidified your planning timeline and begun crossing off some of your early action items

By the end of June, it is suggested that you have:

- Begun contacting current grantees to learn about their programs
- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Determined what evidence-based intervention(s) can be utilized by AmeriCorps members to address a compelling community problem
- Continued meeting with stakeholders to inform your planning
- Started to identify your potential community partners and service sites, or at least the criteria by which they will be selected
- Identified potential in-kind and cash donors
- Considered the number of AmeriCorps members needed, slot types, and service activities
- Drafted a program budget

By the end of July, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Continued meeting with stakeholders for planning input
- Defined stakeholder roles for program implementation
- Completed the documentation of community needs to be addressed by member activities
- Determined your staffing needs for the program
- Developed member outcomes and plans for recruitment, selection, orientation, training, supervision, support, and retention
- Begun development of a strategy to measure program impact, including consideration of performance measures, data collection, and data aggregation plans
- Developed a volunteer generation plan
- Developed a program sustainability plan

By the end of August, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Developed your plans for organizational capacity, site training plans, monitoring and oversight plans, and program evaluation
- Developed your plans to demonstrate cost-effectiveness
- Made significant progress towards identifying your partner sites where members will serve

By the end of September, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Attended the AmeriCorps State and National Symposium
- Developed an updated commission budget
- Completed your community needs statement and efforts to document need

- Determined member activities and roles, and how they align with unmet community need and the outcomes you will measure
- Completed plans for member recruitment, training, and support
- Completed development of a strategy to measure program impact, including performance measures, data collection, and data aggregation plans

By the end of October, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Finalized your site selections
- Completed a site training plan
- Finalized all program plans
- Made significant progress securing match for the program

By the end of November, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Completed at least one draft of your grant application
- Received feedback on subgrantee application from stakeholders

By the end of December, it is suggested that you have:

- Had at least two more check-in calls with your CNCS Program Officer
- Completed a second draft of subgrantee application
- Begun to enter your application into eGrants

By the end of January, it is suggested that you have:

- Submitted your grant application
- Begun working on forms and templates to support program implementation (member contract, memo of agreement with sites, member timesheet, eligibility form, etc.)
- Begun preparing your systems for program implementation (payroll, financial management, time tracking, monitoring and oversight tools, program evaluation tools, etc.)
- Begun working on an AmeriCorps policy and procedures manual for your programs

- Developed detailed member orientation and training curricula

By the end of April, it is suggested that you have:

- Completed work on forms and templates to support program implementation (member contract, memo of agreement with sites, member timesheet, eligibility form, etc.)
- Finished preparing your systems for program implementation (payroll, financial management, time tracking, monitoring and oversight tools, program evaluation tools, etc.)
- Developed an AmeriCorps policy and procedure manual for your commission-funded programs

Additional Resources for State Service Commissions

Visit [the National Service Knowledge Network](http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov) (<http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov>). The Knowledge Network is the place to access how-to guides, locate information on best practices for managing an AmeriCorps grant, take online tutorials to sharpen your skills, and much more.

The following pages are especially helpful:

- [Learning Pathways for Program Start-Up](http://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-start-up)
(<http://nationalserviceresources.gov/program-start-up>)
- [The EnCorps Collection](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/encorps-resources-support-member-recruitment-and-development)
(<https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/encorps-resources-support-member-recruitment-and-development>) – tools for member management
- Join the [AmeriCorps State and National GovDelivery Email List](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCNCS/subscriber/new?origin=http%3A%2F%2Fservice.govdelivery.com%2Fdemos%2Fcncs%2F&email=Sign+up+for+email+updates&commit.x=25&commit.y=13)
(<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCNCS/subscriber/new?origin=http%3A%2F%2Fservice.govdelivery.com%2Fdemos%2Fcncs%2F&email=Sign+up+for+email+updates&commit.x=25&commit.y=13>)
(<http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/resources/calendar>)
- Visit the [AmeriCorps website](http://www.americorps.gov) frequently
(<http://www.americorps.gov>)

Key Documents for Review

Federal

- National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
- CNCS Background, Structure, and Programs
- CNCS Strategic Plan
- CNCS Regulations
- AmeriCorps Grant Provisions
- State Service Plan Guidelines
- State Commission Administration Application Guidelines
- AmeriCorps State Application Guidelines and Instructions for State Commissions
- Program Legislation and Appropriations or Budget Language
- Directory of State Service Commission Executive Directors
- Directory of State Commission Chairs
- Grant Award Letters
- Member Enrollment
- Member Change of Status
- Member Exit
- Annual TTA Calendar
- CNCS Website

State

- Executive Order and/or Authorizing Legislation Establishing State Service Commission
- State Service Plan
- State Administrative Procedures Act
- State Agency Administrative Agreements
- State Procurement Procedures
- Commission By-laws
- Commission Meeting Minutes
- List of State Service Commission Members with Terms of Office and Biographies
- Commission Member Handbook
- AmeriCorps Program Director Handbook
- AmeriCorps Member Handbook
- Financial Status Reports
- Federal Cash Transactions Reports
- Progress Reports
- Annual Progress Reports

National Service Terms and Acronyms

➤ Adapted from [Serve Montana](http://serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/NationalServiceTermsAcronyms.pdf)

(<http://serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/NationalServiceTermsAcronyms.pdf>)

Acronyms

272	SF-272 Federal Cash Transactions Report	K-12	Kindergarten through 12th Grade
269	SF-269 Financial Status Report	LEA	Local Education Agency
425	SF-425 Federal Financial Report	MSY	Member Service Year
AC	AmeriCorps	NCCC	National Civilian Community Corps
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009	NGA	Notice of Grant Award
BPMR	Budget, Performance, and Management Reporting	NOFA	Notice of Funds Availability
CB	Community-based	NOFO	Notice of Funds Opportunity
COB	Close of Business	NSKC	National Service Knowledge Center
CFDA	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	OCR	OnCorps Reports
CFR	Code of Federal Regulation	OIG	Office of Inspector General
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service	OMB	Office of Management and Budget
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System (Dun & Bradstreet)	OGM	Office of Grants Management
EAP	Education Award Only – AmeriCorps Program	PER	Periodic Expense Report
EIN	Employer Identification Number	PFI	Programming for Impact
FFMC	Field Financial Management Center (CNCS)	PMS	Payment Management System
FFR	Federal Financial Report	PO	Program Officer
FGP	Foster Grandparents Program	PN	Programs of National Significance
FICA	Federal Insurance Contributions Act	PPR	Program/project Progress Report
FTE	Full-time Equivalent	PPVA	Project Profile and Volunteer Activity
FMS	Financial Management System	PSSA	President’s Student Service Award
GARP	Grant Application Review Process	RFP	Request for Proposals
GED	General Equivalency Diploma	RGAs	Request for Grant Applications
GME	Grant-making Entity	RSVP	Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
GO	Grants Officer	SAA	Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009
HHS	US Department of Health and Human Services	SC	Senior Corps
IDC	Federally-approved Indirect Cost Rate	SCP	Senior Companion Program
		SIF	Social Innovation Fund
		SUTA	State Unemployment Tax Act
		T/TA	Training and Technical Assistance
		VGF	Volunteer Generation Fund
		VISTA	Volunteers in Service to America
		VSY	Volunteer Service Year

Terms

AmeriCorps – An umbrella term that refers to programs that are designated by CNCS as national service programs and the participants in them. AmeriCorps includes AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC.

AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) – A residential AmeriCorps program in which 18-24-year-old-members are housed and trained together on military bases and deployed in teams to service sites throughout the surrounding region.

AmeriCorps State and National – AmeriCorps State grants are distributed through the state commissions; AmeriCorps National grants are distributed to organizations directly from CNCS and have service sites in multiple states.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) – A full-time, national service program for men and women ages 18 and older interested in developing lasting solutions to the problems of poverty in America. AmeriCorps VISTA members serve nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations and agencies to develop permanent infrastructure that aids and expands services, strengthens programs, and empowers low income individuals. AmeriCorps VISTA is under the AmeriCorps umbrella and is administered by the CNCS State Offices.

Campus Compact – A national organization of college and university presidents with numerous state affiliates committed to advancing service on their campuses.

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) – The independent federal agency that encompasses the work and staff of two previously existing agencies, the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION. CNCS was created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA) – The DVSA authorizes AmeriCorps VISTA, the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the RSVP program. The legislation was last amended in 1993 as part of the creation of CNCS.

Education Award Program – An AmeriCorps program that receives a small administrative grant and uses its own or other resources to pay the members' living allowance and support program costs.

eGrants – The CNCS online grant management system.

Evaluation – A formal external assessment of program effectiveness and outcomes at the end of a given period of time.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) – One of the three National Service Senior Corps programs created in 1973. Foster Grandparents devote their service to children with special or exceptional needs.

Formula Funding – The annual allotment given to each state against which the state commissions solicit state proposals for AmeriCorps funding.

Grantee – The direct recipient of an AmeriCorps Grant.

Living Allowance – AmeriCorps members may receive a modest living allowance during their terms of service. This benefit is in addition to the education award. (See also *Stipend*.)

Matching Funds – Any allowable and allocable expenditure by an organization of its own funds or resources, and third party in-kind contributions as part of the recipient’s cost sharing or matching to meet its share of total program or project costs. Matching funds are not paid by the federal government under another award, except where authorized by federal statute to be used for cost sharing or matching. Not all CNCS programs have the authority to use federal funds as match.

Members – Participants in AmeriCorps (including AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps State and National programs) are referred to as members - not as volunteers.

Mission Statement – A mission statement expresses the program’s vision with regard to national service and indicates the ultimate impacts to be achieved. A program’s annual objectives are derived from the program’s mission statement.

National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 – The law that created AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The 1993 legislation amended the National and Community Service Act of 1990.

National Competitive Funding – An annual pool of funds against which state commissions may compete to fund additional AmeriCorps programs in their states.

National Directs (aka AmeriCorps National) – AmeriCorps programs funded directly by CNCS through multi-state nonprofit organizations.

National Service Senior Corps (NSSC) – The umbrella term that encompasses the three senior service programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

National Service – Results-oriented service by an individual or group of individuals that helps meet the nation’s needs.

NCCC – See *AmeriCorps NCCC*.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – A legal notification, published in the Federal Register, describing the availability of funds for a new federal program.

Participant – The general term used to describe any individual enrolled in a program funded by CNCS, as opposed to the more specific term “member,” which refers to individuals enrolled in an AmeriCorps program.

Presidents' Summit for America's Future – This historic gathering in Philadelphia in April 1997 at which former Presidents Clinton, Bush, Carter, and Ford, and Secretary of State Colin Powell called for all Americans to find ways to ensure that all children have access to the fundamental resources they need:

- Caring adults in their lives, as parents, mentors, tutors, and coaches;
- Safe places with structured activities in which to learn and grow;
- A healthy start and healthy future;
- An effective education that equips them with marketable skills; and
- An opportunity to give back through their communities through their own service.

Program – A coordinated group of activities linked by common elements such as recruitment, selection, and training of participants and staff, regular group activities, and assignment to projects organized for the purpose of achieving the mission and goals of national service.

Program Sponsor – An entity responsible for recruiting, selecting, and training members, providing them benefits and support services, engaging them in regular group activities, and placing them in projects.

Project – An activity, or set of activities, carried out through a program that receives assistance under the NCSTA that results in a specific identifiable service or improvement that otherwise would not be done with existing funds, and that does not duplicate the routine services or functions of the employer to whom participants are assigned.

Project Sponsor – An organization, or other entity, that has been selected to provide a placement for a participant or participants.

Request for Proposals (RFP) – A term used to describe the document used by commissions or program to solicit proposals from other organizations. This type of document may also be called a grant application or bid. State commissions may use RFPs to solicit AmeriCorps program or planning grant applications from nonprofit organizations, local governments, higher education institutions, Indian Tribes, and state agencies.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) – One of the three National Service Senior Corps programs created 1973.

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award – A post-service benefit earned by all AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service. The award is paid directly to a lending or educational institution and may be used to pay off education loans or to finance college, graduate school, or approved vocational training.

Senior Companion Program (SCP) – One of the three National Service Senior Corps programs created in 1973. Senior Companions receive a stipend, and they help other seniors live independently in their own homes.

Service-learning – A method by which students improve academic learning and develop personal skills through structured service projects that meet community needs. Service-learning builds upon students’ service activities by providing them with opportunities to learn by preparing, leading, and reflecting upon their service experiences.

Service Recipient – a community beneficiary who receives a service or benefit from the service of AmeriCorps members.

Signature Service – A project undertaken by a large group of participants, often from many different programs and usually in conjunction with a special day to highlight service programs and their participants, such as Martin Luther King Day or National Youth Service Day.

State Commission – A 15-25 member, independent, and bipartisan body appointed by a Governor to implement national service programs.

State Service Plan (SSP) – A three-year plan developed by each state commission in partnership with the CNCS State Office, the State Education Agency, and other appropriate organizations in the state. The State Service Plan should describe the broad vision for promoting national service and volunteering and for building a solid infrastructure of high quality programs and support services in the state.

Stipend – A cash benefit that is an alternative to the education award; this is an option only for AmeriCorps VISTA members. The term is not synonymous with living allowance. (See also *Living Allowance*.)

Streams of Service – A term used to refer to the many types of service programs (e.g., K-12, higher education, conservation corps, or Senior Corps programs).

VISTA – See *AmeriCorps VISTA*.

Youth Civic Engagement – The process of engaging youth in affecting policy and taking action on issues in their communities.

Youth Service – The involvement of young people in providing services to their schools and/or communities. This term should not be confused with “youth services” which typically refers to programs where youth are the recipients of service.

Other Useful Terms

Audit – To examine with intent to verify, usually regarding financial accounts.

Citizen – A person who owes allegiance to and is entitled to the enjoyment of full rights in the United States, either by birth or naturalization.

Community-based Organization (CBO) – Any private nonprofit organization (including a church or other religious entity) that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a

community; and is engaged in meeting, human, environmental, or public safety community needs.

Consortia – A group of organizations whose purpose is to collectively facilitate and support the work of a service program in ways that add material and human resources beyond those available to each organization individually.

Fiscal Year – A period used for calculating annual ("yearly") financial statements in businesses and other organizations. The federal fiscal year is October 1 – September 30. Commissions may also operate on a state fiscal year (e.g., July 1 – June 30).

In-kind – Contributions and donations made in services and projects, not cash.

Partnership – Two or more entities that have entered into a written agreement specifying the goals and activities of the relationship as well as the responsibilities, goals, and activities of each partner.

National Service Calendar – Example

Each year, the deadlines for the CNCS grant processes and reporting schedules will change. The example below is provided to illustrate the general flow of the national service year for commissions.

January

- Grantee Progress Reports and Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) due to CNCS
- Submission of new and renewal AmeriCorps State and National Competitive applications to CNCS
- [Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration](http://mlkday.gov/index.php) (<http://mlkday.gov/index.php>)

February

- CNCS begins AmeriCorps State and National Grant Application Review Process (GARP)

March

- CNCS continues GARP
- [AmeriCorps Week](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-week) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-week>)

April

- CNCS continues GARP; commissions may be asked to provide clarifications or corrections to their Prime and/or subgrantee applications
- Grantee Progress Reports and Federal Financial Reports due to CNCS
- [Mayors Day of Service](http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/mayors-day) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/mayors-day>)
- Participation in National Volunteer Week/Earth Day/Global Youth Service Day celebration and projects

May

- CNCS concludes GARP and announces recipients of AmeriCorps State and National Competitive grants
- [Senior Corps Week](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/senior-corps-week) (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/senior-corps-week>)

June

- Commissions submit unexpended funds reports and prepare Formula Prime applications

July

- Deadline for Formula Prime submissions to CNCS
- Federal Financial Reports due to CNCS

August

- AmeriCorps member graduations
- Screening and selection of new AmeriCorps members by programs

September

- Programs launch and hold opening ceremonies (exact timing depends on program designs)
- Pre-service orientations and trainings for AmeriCorps members and staff
- Commissions and Direct Grantees attend the AmeriCorps State and National Symposium
- 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance
- Disaster Preparedness Month

October

- Grantee Progress Reports and Federal Financial Reports due to CNCS
- Programs launch and hold opening ceremonies
- Make A Difference Day (Fourth Saturday)

November

- Veterans Day (November 11)
- Family Volunteer Day (Fourth Saturday)

December

- Commissions conduct sugrant application review processes for AmeriCorps State Competitive Grant Cycle