Volunteer Florida
Frequently Asked Questions
FY 2020 AmeriCorps Planning Grant Funding Opportunity

GENERAL

1) What is the email address for submitting questions and contact phone number?

Please send any questions to americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org or contact Volunteer Florida at 850.414.7400.

2) Is there a sample available of an AmeriCorps application that received funding?

Please visit the CNCS Open Government Initiative, Result of Grants Competitions at:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition

Individuals can review a data base of submitted applications per grant competition. Organizations may also contact Volunteer Florida to request a sample AmeriCorps application.

3) What are the required criminal history checks to include for staff?

CNCS requires a three part National Criminal History Check that involves: Nationwide US Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website Check (NSOPW) (www.NSOPW.gov), a fingerprint based national FBI check, a State of Florida (FDLE) criminal history check and an official state criminal background checks from the states from which the members applied (if not Florida). Truescreen and Fieldprint are the CNCS approved vendors for staff and member criminal history checks. Requirements are included at: https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check

APPLICATION

4) Where do applicants respond to the need for the Planning Grant, as a result of COVID-19?

Applicants will respond in the need section of the Program Design portion of the narrative. This section includes prompts for response related to the challenges organizations have faced due to COVID-9 and how the Planning Grant will be used to address challenges.

5) Can a Planning Grant be used to address contact tracing, adult literacy, employment skills or disaster recovery?

Yes. The Planning Grant is a one-year planning period with the goal of submitting an application for operational AmeriCorps funding in the subsequent year. The focus areas of
operational AmeriCorps programs include: Disaster Services, Education, Economic Opportunity, Environmental Stewardship, Health Futures, and Veterans and Military Families.

6) Are organizations who are currently receiving AmeriCorps funding, eligible to apply?

Yes. However, the proposed project must be different and be considered ‘not the same project’ per CNCS definition.

7) Can statewide organizations apply for the Planning Grant and develop partnership at the county level?

Yes.

8) Are applicants required to have all partners identified in the Planning Grant application?

No. Awarded organizations will have the opportunity to further identify partners in the planning process.

9) What is the typical grant period for a future operational AmeriCorps Grant?

Organizations that submit an application for an operational AmeriCorps Grants submit a single application for a three-year period. After year one and after year two, applicants provide updates (i.e. continuation changes, budget, performance measures) to their original application. After year three, applicants ‘recompete’ by completing another full application for consideration of another three year period. Volunteer Florida issues one year contracts to sub grantees.

10) If awarded the Planning Grant, are organizations guaranteed to be awarded an operational grant?

Volunteer Florida cannot guarantee awards as each funding opportunity is a competitive process. However, the purpose of Planning Grants is to support organizations in the development of a well-designed future AmeriCorps program including the submission of a strong application.

MEMBERS

11) Do AmeriCorps members serve during a planning grant year?

No. AmeriCorps members do not serve during a planning grant year. A future AmeriCorps operational grant is required to include a request of at least 10 full time members or the equivalent (i.e. 20 half time members).
12) Do future AmeriCorps members provide services that are different from staff activities?

Yes. AmeriCorps members must provide direct service and cannot displace or supplant staff or volunteers.

**FINANCIAL**

13) Explain the 5% Indirect Cost option and explain the calculation.

Administrative costs are general or centralized expenses of the overall administration of an organization that receives CNCS funds and do not include particular project costs. These costs may include administrative staff positions. For organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs mean those costs that are included in the organization’s indirect cost rate agreement. Such costs are generally identified with the organization’s overall operation.

There are two methods that can be used to calculate allowable administrative costs, the Fixed Percentage Rate Method or the Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Method. Regardless of the option used, the CNCS share of administrative costs is limited to 5% of the total CNCS funds actually expended under the grant. Also, Volunteer Florida opts to draw 2% of the total 5% allowable, which means you will be able to claim the remaining 3%.

The first method is called the Fixed Percentage Rate (5%) Method. If this method is chosen, you will use the Corporation Fixed Percentage section and include calculations for both the Corporation Fixed Amount and the Commission Fixed Amount.

**The Corporation Fixed Amount** includes 3% of the administrative costs that are incurred by the lead agency for administering this grant. These costs are reimbursable under this line item. The calculation for this section is the CNCS Section 1 Total x .0526 x .60.

**The Commission Fixed Amount** is the fiscal agent fee paid to Volunteer Florida for overseeing the AmeriCorps grant awards. Each program must allocate the 2% out of the 5% maximum allowable in their budgets to this line item. Volunteer Florida will draw the Commission Fixed Amount from each program based on the amount expended. The calculation for this section is the CNCS Section 1 Total x .0526 x .40.

The second method is called the Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Method. You will only use this method if your organization has a Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate. If you have a federally approved indirect cost rate, the rate will constitute documentation of your administrative costs, not to exceed the 5% maximum payable by CNCS. Applicants using a Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate are required to provide a copy of the approved rate documentation with the Budget in Blackbaud Grantmaking. You will only use the Federally Approved Indirect Cost line item in the Budget. You will leave the Corporation Fixed Amount and the Commission Fixed Amount lines empty.
To calculate the Federally Approved Indirect Cost amount, you will need to determine the base amount of direct costs to which you will apply the IDC rate as prescribed by your established rate agreement (i.e., based on salaries and benefits, total direct costs, or other.) You will then multiply the sum of the direct costs as determined by .0526. This is the maximum amount that can be claimed as the CNCS share of indirect costs. Please note that the Commission will retain 2% (which is calculated by taking the sum x .40).

14) Is there a match on the AmeriCorps Planning Grant?

No, there is no match required per CNCS authority to issue a blanket waiver under 42 U.S.C. § 12571(e)(4) and consistent with 45 CFR 2521.70.”

For operational AmeriCorps programs, a first-time successful applicant is required to match at 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60. The 24% match can be a combination of cash/in kind. See sample budget posted at: http://www.volunteerflorida.org/grants/available-grants/.

15) Explain the 2% cost difference.

- A Commission may elect to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available to programs for administrative costs, that decision is identified within each sub grantee’s budget. Per CNCS, Commissions may require sub grantees to allocate up to two (2%) percent of the five (5%) to cover commission-level administrative costs. Administrative funds retained by the Commission will be used solely in support of the AmeriCorps programs from which they have been retained.
- The allocation between commission and sub grantee shares would be calculated as follows:
  a. ([CNCS Section I] + [CNCS Section II] x 0.0526) x (.40) = Commission Share
  b. ([CNCS Section I] + [CNCS Section II] x 0.0526) x (.60) = Sub grantee Share

16) Once an organization submits the monthly reimbursement request and support documentation, what is the timeline on receiving payment?

Volunteer Florida has a 45-day period to process correct invoices.

17) What is the maximum funding amount for an operational AmeriCorps program?

There is no maximum. The allowable federal request is based on an amount per one full time member service year or MSY. That amount changes each year. See Previous Grants at www.volunteerflorida.org for FY20 AmeriCorps Formula Application and funding amounts.