



## Is An AmeriCorps Grant Right For Your Organization?

### What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps, gives citizens the opportunity to engage in full or part-time service to their community. Serving through a grassroots network of more than 1,000 national and local nonprofit and faith-based organizations, AmeriCorps members serve communities and address local need in the following funding priority areas: education, healthy futures, clean energy/environment, veterans, opportunity, and disaster preparedness, as described in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (2009).

### What do AmeriCorps members do?

AmeriCorps members help solve problems and make communities stronger. AmeriCorps members tutor and mentor at-risk youth, recruit and train volunteers, give children the boost they need to succeed, help job seekers connect to needed services and learn vital skills, build affordable housing, and improve our environment, among many other things.

### How many AmeriCorps members are serving in Minnesota?

During the 2016-2017 program year, more than 2,100 individuals will participate in AmeriCorps\*State programs in Minnesota serving in local communities across our state.

### Where do AmeriCorps members serve?

Members can serve with nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes.

### Who can serve as an AmeriCorps member?

#### Requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the U.S.
- Be at least 17 years old, although some service opportunities require an individual to be at least 18. For most programs there are no upper age limits.
- Some programs require experience, a certain level of educational achievement, or may have skill requests in certain areas

**Who can apply for AmeriCorps funds?** AmeriCorps funds can be awarded to nonprofit organizations, state and local units of government, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes in Minnesota.

### What is ServeMinnesota?

ServeMinnesota is the Minnesota State Commission for National and Community Service. In this role, we have the responsibility to thoughtfully grant Federal AmeriCorps and State funds to support high quality AmeriCorps programs that have proven, measurable impact on critical community needs across Minnesota. In addition, ServeMinnesota provides monitoring, training, and technical assistance to AmeriCorps\*State programs in Minnesota.

**Who makes the funding decisions?** 66% of AmeriCorps\*State funding is awarded Competitively by the Corporation for National and Community Service ("Corporation") at the Federal level (Competitive funding) while the remaining 33%, or Formula funding, is allocated based on population to State Commissions to award. Competitive funding (awarded directly by the Corporation) is awarded for a three year grant cycle. Formula funding (awarded by ServeMinnesota) is awarded for one year of funding.

**What does an AmeriCorps grant pay for?** There are three kinds of AmeriCorps grants:

- 1) **Operating grants** pay for member living allowances and benefits, member training, staff costs, operating costs, evaluation and administration. The Corporation will pay for a certain portion of these costs, while the local agency hosting the program is responsible for the remaining portion.
- 2) **Planning grants** are for eligible applicants that have a sound concept for an AmeriCorps program but require resources in order to plan, develop, and prepare the program for implementation. In general, planning grants are funded at a maximum of \$75,000.
- 3) **An Education Awards Program grant** provides up to \$800 per full-time equivalent to help support program operations. Agencies interested in applying for Education Awards Program grants must already have the majority of their operating expenses covered by other funding sources. In addition to both kinds of grants, the Corporation for National Service makes education awards available to members who complete their terms of service.

**How much do AmeriCorps members earn?**

Members serving in full-time positions must receive a minimum living allowance of at least \$12,630 during their year of service. This living allowance is to be evenly distributed over the member’s service term and is not tied directly to the hours served (i.e. not an hourly wage). Members also serve in part-time and summer positions. Members serving in a full-time capacity are eligible for health insurance and may be eligible for child care reimbursements paid directly from a contractor of the Corporation.

After they complete their terms of service, full-time members receive an education award of \$5,815 to pay for further education or qualified student loans. Other members receive a pro-rated award. The award can be used to pay for the costs of attending an institution of high education or to pay back qualified student loans. Members who have student loans may qualify for postponement, or forbearance.

**How much Federal funding is provided to run an AmeriCorps program?**

The cost is in part determined by the amount of funding that you are able to request and receive from the Corporation. The size of an AmeriCorps operating grant is determined by the number of full-time members or the equivalent of full-time members in shorter term positions. The equivalent of a full-time position is called a Member Service Year or MSY. The maximum amount for 2017-18 has been set by the Corporation at \$13,830 per MSY for cost reimbursement grants. To calculate the amount you can request, multiply the number of MSYs by \$13,830. For example, If you determine that you want 20 full-time members and request the full allowable amount of \$13,830 per MSY, you would calculate possible Federal funding in the following way:  $\$13,830 \times 20 = \$276,600$ . In order to comply with the application requirements, please see the complete 2017-18 ServeMinnesota Request for Proposals.

**Where do Agency Matching Funds come from?**

An AmeriCorps\*State program is required to match the AmeriCorps grant at 24% the first three years of operation. For example, a program receiving an annual \$250,000 grant will need to provide \$63,840 in matching funds, cash and/or in-kind each year. Matching funds come from many sources. Multi-site programs often require that each host site (the agency that hosts an AmeriCorps member) contribute a certain amount of the matching funds. See the chart below for specific increases to required program match.

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1,2,3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

**How many AmeriCorps members can an agency request?**

An AmeriCorps program operating in Minnesota must have at least the equivalent of 20 full-time members serving (20 MSY). There is currently no maximum on the number of AmeriCorps members an applicant can request.

**What if I only want to involve one or a few AmeriCorps members?**

You have two options. You can find an agency to apply for and manage the funds (as a fiscal host) that would then place the members at service sites throughout a community, county, region or statewide. And/or you can contact the Corporation for National Service State Office, which manages AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Senior Service Corps programs (e.g., Retired Senior Volunteer Program). For more information, contact the Corporation's Minnesota State Office at (612) 334-4083.

**When does the AmeriCorps program/contract year begin?** An AmeriCorps program contract year typically lasts for one year and begins in/around September. Programs may request an early start date and should work directly with the State Commission for permission.

**How long can an agency receive AmeriCorps funds?**

Programs which receive competitive funding enter into a three year grant cycle, assuming annual demonstration of sufficient progress towards meeting program objectives and funding availability. During the first and second years of funding, the program must submit a continuation application. After the third year of funding, the program must submit a full application, which is the same application that is completed by programs that have never received AmeriCorps funds from the State Commission.

**Which agencies in Minnesota State currently manage AmeriCorps programs?**

Please refer to the following link: <http://serveminnesota.org/programs/program-list/>

**How do I apply for AmeriCorps funds?**

Begin your application process by answering the following questions:

- What critical need or problem does your proposed program address and how?
- Why are you proposing to use AmeriCorps to solve the identified problem?
- What will members do and where will that service take place?
- How will you measure the direct and demonstrable impact of your program?
- How will you raise financial resources to support the program?

If you feel as though you have strong and complete answers to the above questions, please see the ServeMinnesota NOFO and Application Instructions at <http://serveminnesota.org/grants/grant-competition/>.