



**Vermont AmeriCorps State
PLANNING GRANT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Program Year 2016-2017

Letter of Intent Deadline:
June 13, 2016, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
June 17, 2016, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

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ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont is the Vermont State Commission on National and Community Service and is responsible for administering the federally funded AmeriCorps State program. AmeriCorps State funds are made available through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that oversees National Service, including AmeriCorps.

Formerly the Vermont Commission on National and Community Service, SerVermont was established by Executive Order 05-98 on November 30, 1993 by Governor Howard Dean. The Governor appoints up to 25 individuals to serve three year terms as members of SerVermont's Commission. SerVermont's mission is to promote, support, and recognize volunteerism and community service throughout Vermont.

SerVermont currently funds, monitors, and supports six AmeriCorps State programs through Formula and national Competitive grants. On average there are between 100 and 150 AmeriCorps members serving in SerVermont funded programs. In the currently funded program year SerVermont funded AmeriCorps Programs will support nearly 200 AmeriCorps State members. Through all streams of service (AmeriCorps State, National, VISTA, and NCCC, as well as Senior Corps) there are approximately 2,900 people of all ages and background serving in Vermont at over 500 locations.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SerVermont announces the availability of AmeriCorps State formula funds to be awarded as Planning Grants to new AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for the 2016-2017 grant cycle. SerVermont will award up to \$75,000 in planning grants to up to 6 grantees.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is released in conjunction with the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) 2016 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) and Application Instructions. This RFP is not a guarantee of funding. SerVermont's RFP is based on the CNCS materials related to this competition, which can be found on the CNCS website at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2016>

SerVermont solicits planning grant proposal through this RFP and makes determinations on which proposals will be funded. Planning grants are funded with formula dollars which are made available to every state and are awarded directly from State Service Commissions to grantees through processes developed by each state. Formula funding is awarded independently from the national AmeriCorps State competition. Any eligible applicant seeking to apply for AmeriCorps State Planning Grant funds in Vermont must respond to this RFP and all related deadlines.

SerVermont's Request for Proposals should be read together with the AmeriCorps State and National FY 2016 NOFA, 2016 Application Instructions, 2016 NOFA Glossary, 2016 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents found on the CNCS website. CNCS' national-level documents regarding the 2016 AmeriCorps grant competition supersede this RFP.

AmeriCorps State grants support a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. Applications must propose designing a program that will respond to **at least one** of the Focus Areas as outlined in the CNCS NOFA. Focus areas are: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environment, Veterans and Military Families, Governor and Mayor Initiatives, Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper, Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure, and Safer Communities.

SerVermont is interested in proposals which would develop programs that; (1) demonstrate high alignment with the CNCS Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) provide focused and effective solutions that address local community needs; (3) offer meaningful AmeriCorps member experiences; (4) align with existing State and local initiatives; (5) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results, and (6) are cost effective, generating high ratio of federal funds to local funds and/or bringing significant outside financial support to the initiative.

SerVermont seeks to support a strong and balanced portfolio of AmeriCorps programs that; (1) addresses a wide range of CNCS focus areas, including focus areas under which SerVermont does not currently support an AmeriCorps program, (2) has diverse state-wide geographic representation, including placing AmeriCorps members in historically underserved communities, and communities that do not have AmeriCorps resources present; (3) engages historically underserved populations as AmeriCorps members, including "opportunity youth" (definition found in 2016 Notice Glossary) , veterans, individuals with disabilities, and individuals living in poverty. Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges, are responsive to the CNCS NOFA and Application Instructions, and those that leverage outside funding sources will be most competitive.

PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING GRANT

AmeriCorps planning grants allow organizations and consortiums to begin developing their plans to host an AmeriCorps program. Planning grant activities involve work to establish a new program in Vermont. Organizations use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the subsequent grant cycle. Activities that may take place under the grant include creating partnerships, developing position descriptions, developing

member training, supervision and monitoring policies and procedures, and developing budgets. Planning Grants DO NOT provide funding for staff time spent fundraising, or supporting AmeriCorps members.

AWARD / PROJECT PERIOD

Programs funded through this RFP are funded for one year projects only. The project start date is September 1, 2016 and grants last up-to one year, ending on or prior to August 31, 2017. The project start date may not occur prior to CNCS awarding the grant. Grantees may not incur costs prior to the start of the planning grant contract.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within Vermont (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Tribes.

Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this RFP, and related CNCS documents. Organizations described in section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to apply.

All applicants must be able to comply with the Agency of Human Services' customary grant provisions and attachments.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, GRANT PROVISIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS

The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2016 NOFA and Application Instructions can be found at the CNCS website on the "Funding Opportunities" page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2016>

Applicants should familiarize themselves with AmeriCorps Programming by visiting the CNCS website. More information on how AmeriCorps State and National Programs work can be found on the CNCS website on the "Applying for AmeriCorps State and National Grants" page:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/applying-ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants>

Information on managing AmeriCorps grants can be found on the CNCS website on the "Managing AmeriCorps Grants" page:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>

A downloadable copy of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended by the Serve America Act and a downloadable copy of the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR Chapter XXV (2012) can be found at this link:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>

2016-2017 GRANTS PROCESS

SerVermont uses a multi-step process that includes the submission of a Letter of Intent, technical assistance with concept development, and the submission of a full planning grant proposal that responds to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions.

The Letter of Intent allows applicants to express their interest in AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding, and briefly present the proposed program concept they plan to develop during the grant term. SerVermont staff will review all Letters of Intent and offer technical assistance to all interested applicants to ensure strong planning grant designs and final applications are submitted.

Full applications will be submitted via the eGrants system (www.egrants.cns.gov). It is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process as soon as possible.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process includes reviewing proposals against the basic selection criteria included in the AmeriCorps NOFA, and ensuring innovation and geographic, demographic, and programmatic diversity across the AmeriCorps State portfolio. In evaluating applications for funding, SerVermont staff and commissioners assess overall concept, organizational capacity to manage the grant and program, and budget adequacy. In order to maximize the impact of AmeriCorps resources in Vermont, SerVermont will fund planning grants that will develop programs which demonstrate community impact and solve community problems using **evidence-based** or **evidence-informed approach** (e.g. performance measure data, quality of research, theory of change).

The proposal should provide reviewers with a clear and compelling understanding of the applicant's desire to host an AmeriCorps program in the future, the need for the program in the community, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the stated need.

INTENT TO APPLY

Applicants are **required** to submit Letters of Intent for AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@vermont.gov) by **June 13, 2016 at 5:00 PM EST**. A completed Organizational Risk assessment (available from Sharon Hearne) should be attached to the email.

Letters of Intent must be no longer than two types pages (not including the Organizational Risk Assessment), may be in Microsoft Word or PDF format, and must include the following information:

Page 1: Cover Sheet

1. Legal Name of Applicant
2. Contact Person
3. Contact information including: address, phone, email and fax.
4. CNCS Focus Area that the program will address.

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept the grant will plan, including what members may be doing, and what research supports the proposed approach.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In an effort to develop a diverse and competitive portfolio of proposals and programs, SerVermont will offer technical assistance to all planning grant applicants as they develop their proposals. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in technical assistance:

Sharon Hearne, Program Officer Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov, 828-6464

Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov, 828-6409

Technical assistance regarding program design will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent from **June 1** to **June 17**.

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

| ACTION | DATE |
|--|----------------------------------|
| AmeriCorps Planning Grant Request for Proposals released by SerVermont | June 1, 2016 |
| Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to all | June 1, 2016 to June 10, 2016 |
| Letter of Intent to apply and organizational risk | June 13, 2016 |

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| assessment due to SerVermont | 5:00pm |
| Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent | June 13 – June 17, 2016 |
| Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont | June 17, 2016 5:00pm |
| SerVermont Review of Proposals | June 17 – June 22, 2016 |
| Clarification to Applicants (if any) | June 22, 2016 |
| Final Application due to SerVermont | June 23, 2016 noon |
| Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to CNCS for formula funding. | June 24, 2016 5:00pm |