



Vermont AmeriCorps State REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Program Year 2017-2018

Letter of Intent Deadline:
October 14, 2016, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
November 18, 2016, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

109 State Street, 5th Floor

Montpelier, VT 05609-4801

Phone: 828-6409

servermont.vermont.gov

ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont's mission is to promote, support, and recognize volunteerism and community service throughout Vermont. SerVermont administers the federally funded AmeriCorps State program, sponsors and manages an AmeriCorps VISTA program, manages volunteers in disasters, and works with other national service and local partners to address pressing challenges in Vermont through 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 the SerVermont Commission.

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

SerVermont's single point of contact for this competition is Sharon Hearne, Program Officer. Sharon can be reached at (801) 828-6464 and/or Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov

AMERICORPS IN VERMONT

AmeriCorps State funds are made available through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that oversees National Service, including AmeriCorps. On average there are between 175 and 225 AmeriCorps State members serving in SerVermont funded programs. In the current program year, SerVermont funded AmeriCorps Programs will support nearly 250 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 backgrounds serving in Vermont at over 500 locations.

SerVermont currently funds, monitors, and supports six AmeriCorps State programs through Formula and national Competitive grants, as well as two Planning Grants. AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to recruit, train, and manage AmeriCorps member who address unmet community needs. In the last few years SerVermont has experienced an increase in interest from organizations interested in hosting an AmeriCorps program, and expects strong interest to continue.

AmeriCorps members are individuals engaged in community service who may receive a living allowance during their service. Upon successful completion of service, members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SerVermont announces the availability of AmeriCorps State funds for new or re-competing AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for the 2017-2018 AmeriCorps program year. SerVermont administers an annual Request for Proposals (RFP) process in conjunction with the release of the CNCS 2017 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funding

Opportunity (NOFO) and Application Instructions. SerVermont's RFP is based on the CNCS materials related to this competition.

Any eligible applicant seeking to apply for AmeriCorps State 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 2017 NOFO, 2017 Application Instructions, 2017 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, 2017 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents found on the CNCS website. CNCS' national-level documents regarding the 2017 AmeriCorps competition supersede this RFP.

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", veterans, individuals with disabilities, and individuals living in poverty.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, TERMS AND CONDITIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS

The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2017 NOFO 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/2017/amicorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2017>

Applicants should familiarize themselves with AmeriCorps programming by visiting the CNCS website. More information on how AmeriCorps State and National programs are administered can be found on the CNCS website on the "Applying for AmeriCorps State and National Grants" page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/applying-amicorps-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-amicorps-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>

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; Tribes; and intermediaries planning to subgrant awarded funds are encouraged to apply.

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.

TYPES OF AWARDS

AmeriCorps programs receive funding from one of two sources: Competitive or Formula Awards. Programs submit one proposal to apply for both types of awards. Regardless of Competitive or Formula funding, all AmeriCorps programs follow the AmeriCorps Regulations, Terms and Conditions, and State requirements.

Competitive Award

Competitive funds are awarded by CNCS. SerVermont selects applications to submit to CNCS for review in competition with proposals from all single and multi-state applicants. The Corporation runs a Peer and Staff Review to make funding determinations. Applications submitted to the completion that are not selected by CNCS for Competitive funding are automatically considered for a Formula Award from SerVermont.

Formula Award

Formula funds are awarded by SerVermont. Formula funds are made available to SerVermont based on the federal allocation for AmeriCorps. The amount of funds available to SerVermont depends on the allocation from CNCS. SerVermont does not run a separate process for Formula Awards, but considers all applications submitted to SerVermont for formula funding, including those which are not submitted to the CNCS competition.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Successful applicants will be expected to operate the full AmeriCorps program as proposed in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations at both the federal and state level.

MINIMUM PROGRAM SIZE

CNCS and SerVermont will not consider applications proposing fewer than 20 members. Potential applicants that cannot support 20 members are encouraged to collaborate with other organizations or applicants to achieve that threshold. AmeriCorps Programs should be large enough to make a significant difference in the communities they serve, and achieve an economy of scale. SerVermont encourages joint collaborative applications among organizations that have similar organizational missions, identified program goals, and community partner agencies.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Successful applicants will be expected to: 1) meet the performance measures outlined in their eGrants / CNCS application, 2) enroll 100% of the Member Service Years awarded to them, 3) retain 90% or more of the AmeriCorps members enrolled in the program (CNCS expects 100%), 4) utilize 100% of the AmeriCorps dollars awarded to them, 5) operate the program in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

METHOD OF AWARD AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

SerVermont solicits proposals annually, and makes determinations as to which proposals will be considered to compete in the national competition, and which proposals will be considered for Formula funding.

SerVermont uses a multi-step process that includes the submission of a Letter of Intent, technical assistance with concept development, review and feedback from SerVermont Commissioners, and the submission of a full proposal that responds to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions. Please refer to the full timeline within this RFP for all deadlines.

The Letter of Intent allows applicants to express their interest in AmeriCorps funding, and briefly present their proposed program concept. SerVermont staff will review all Letters of Intent and offer technical assistance to all interested applicants to ensure strong program designs and full applications are submitted.

Full applications will be submitted into the eGrants system, and SerVermont staff will be available to provide technical assistance with doing so.

SerVermont staff and commissioners will review full proposals to ensure compliance with CNCS guidance, offer suggestions and guidance to make proposals stronger, and make determinations as to which applications are submitted into the national competition based upon proposal quality, strategic considerations, and past performance.

SerVermont is interested in funding proposals that; (1) align with the CNCS Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) focus on CNCS Funding Priorities outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (3) offer specific, proven and effective solutions that address local community needs; (4) offer meaningful AmeriCorps member experiences; (5) align with existing State and local initiatives; (6) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results, and (7) are cost effective, generating high ratio of federal funds to local funds, bringing significant outside financial support to the initiative, and/or propose a low cost per Member Service Year (MSY).

The first Commission review (December, 2016) is held after SerVermont staff and commissioners have reviewed all eligible applications. During the review meeting, suggestions and comments will be compiled for feedback to the applicant. During the review meeting the SerVermont commission will put together a draft slate of proposals to submit to the competition. The slate will be conditionally approved pending applicant responsiveness to feedback. Feedback (Clarification) will be provided to applicants by December 16, 2016.

After commissioner review, applicants will have an opportunity to clarify their proposals and respond to commission feedback for **final submission on January 6, 2017**. Once final applications are submitted to SerVermont, the proposed slate will be reviewed once more, and a final AmeriCorps State portfolio will be submitted to the CNCS competition by the January 18, 2017 deadline.

Applications that are submitted to the national competition are considered for “Competitive funds.” Competitive funding determinations are made by CNCS with notifications expected **no later than May 15, 2017**. Funding is contingent upon timely full year federal appropriations.

Formula funding decisions are made by SerVermont after the announcement of national competition results from CNCS. Final funding for all grant awards is contingent upon federal appropriations from CNCS. Applications which are not submitted to the national competition may be considered for “Formula funds” at the state level. All applications submitted to the CNCS competition will be automatically considered for Formula funding if not selected for Competitive funding by CNCS.

The selection process includes reviewing applications against the basic selection criteria included in the AmeriCorps NOFO, 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 program design, organizational capacity to manage the grant and program, budget adequacy, and past performance if applicable.

SerVermont makes funding decisions based upon the strength of individual applications, as well as strategic considerations at the statewide level. SerVermont will make funding decisions that

maximize the opportunities to serve in VT, address critical needs, leverage available dollars, and strengthen the national service field in VT. In order to maximize the impact of AmeriCorps resources in Vermont, SerVermont will fund programs that can 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).

Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges, are based on strong evidence, are responsive to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions, and those that leverage outside funding sources and/or request a low cost per MSY will be most competitive.

APPLICATION

The application should be responsive to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions, and provide reviewers with a clear and compelling understanding of the program, the need in the community, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the described AmeriCorps intervention and roles of AmeriCorps members in that intervention. Reviewers should be able to envision what AmeriCorps members will be doing on a daily basis in program delivery and what the overall goals and outcomes are for the program. Applicants should not assume that reviewers are familiar with the proposed program, even if applicants are re-competing.

Applications should propose activity under **at least one** of the Focus Areas as outlined in the CNCS NOFO. In addition, CNCS has established Funding Priorities and seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in programs that address issues outlined in the funding priorities. Strong applications will propose activities that demonstrate high alignment with CNCS Funding Priorities. AmeriCorps program designs should not propose the AmeriCorps program itself being a solution to the problem. AmeriCorps members should be implementing an intervention to address a problem through direct service.

SerVermont will not support applications that are unresponsive to the CNCS AmeriCorps NOFO, do not follow the CNCS Application Instructions, and/or do not follow the SerVermont timeline. SerVermont anticipates a high level of response to this RFP. As a result of high interest and limited funding availability, SerVermont does not anticipate being able to fund all applicants.

PRE-BID / GRANT INFORMATION SESSIONS

SerVermont will host two Grant Information Sessions via GoToMeeting webinar / conference call. These sessions are not mandatory; however, attendance is strongly encouraged. The sessions will be on **August 26, 10-11am EST**; and **September 1, 2-3pm EST**. To register for either session please email Philip.kolling@vermont.gov or call at 828-6409, specifying which session

you would like to attend, your name, organization, contact phone number and email. *If you are unable to attend either session, alternative arrangements can be made with prior notice.*

INTENT TO APPLY

Applicants are **required** to submit Letters of Intent for AmeriCorps funding to SerVermont via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@vermont.gov) by **October 14, 2016 at 5:00 PM EST**. A completed Organizational Risk Assessment, available on SerVermont's website (servermont.vermont.gov/programs), should be attached to the email.

Only applicants that have submitted a letter of intent and organizational risk assessment by the deadline will be considered for funding.

Letters of Intent must be no longer than two types pages (not including the Organizational Risk Assessment), and must include the following information:

Page 1: Cover Sheet

1. Legal Name of Applicant
2. AmeriCorps Program Name, if different from Legal Name of Applicant
3. Contact Person
4. Contact information including: address, phone, email and fax.
5. CNCS Focus Area that the program will address (if any).
6. CNCS Funding Priority that the program will address (if any).
7. Estimate of the number of AmeriCorps members and MSY the application will request.

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept, including what members would be doing, and what research supports this approach.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In an effort to develop a diverse and competitive portfolio of proposals and programs, SerVermont will offer technical assistance to all applicants as they develop their proposals. Two technical assistance "office hour" sessions will be held via GoToMeeting on **September 8, 1-2 pm EST** and **October 6, 10-11am EST**. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in attending either or both sessions. Between **September 5** and **October 14**, SerVermont will offer technical assistance regarding concept development and program design. Technical assistance will be available from SerVermont staff on an on-going basis during business hours and as they

are available by contacting: Sharon Hearne, Program Officer Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov, 828-6464 -or- Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov, 828-6409

Technical assistance regarding concept development will not be available after the letter of intent deadline (October 14). Technical assistance regarding program design will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent from **October 17 to November 11. November 14** through **November 18**, technical assistance will be provided related to submission of applications in eGrants only.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION IN eGRANTS

Applications are submitted through CNCS' eGrants system. Applicants unfamiliar with CNCS' eGrants system are **strongly encouraged** to create an eGrants account as soon as possible and familiarize themselves with the system's rules of behavior. NOTE: All individual eGrants users must establish their own unique eGrants account. SerVermont **strongly recommends** beginning an application in eGrants no later than 10 days before the due date. SerVermont **strongly recommends** submitting applications in eGrants as early as possible prior to the due date, and allowing sufficient time to address any technical issues prior to the deadline. Applications are due to SerVermont in eGrants by **November 18, 2016, 5pm EST**.

Applications submitted in eGrants after the deadline will not be considered for funding. If an applicant submits late as a result of technical issues with the eGrants system (system is down, etc.), the commission may consider the application for funding if the applicant provides evidence that establishes: 1) an eGrants help desk ticket explaining the issue was submitted prior to the deadline, 2) the issue was completely technical in nature. SerVermont is not obligated to consider any applications submitted after the deadline.

MINIMUM INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must meet the minimum insurance requirements required by the state, as outlined in state Attachment C: Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants, revised July 1, 2016. A link to Attachment C can be found on SerVermont's website: servermont.vermont.gov/programs

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

ACTION	DATE
Notice of Funding released from CNCS	August 11, 2016
Request for Proposals released by SerVermont	August 15, 2016
Grant Information Meetings (via Go To Meeting, or phone)	August 26, 2016: 10-11am September 1, 2016: 2-3pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to all	September 5- October 14, 2016
Open Technical Assistance Sessions	September 8, 2016: 1-2 pm October 6, 2016: 10-11am
Letter of Intent to Apply and Organizational Risk Assessment due to SerVermont	October 14, 2016 5:00pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent	October 17 – November 11, 2016
Technical Assistance Available regarding submission of applications in eGrants ONLY	November 14 – November 18, 2016
Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont	November 18, 2016 5:00pm
SerVermont Review of Proposals	November 21 – December 8, 2016
Commissioner Approval of Proposals	December 8, 2016
Clarification to Applicants	December 16, 2016
Final Application due to SerVermont	January 6, 2017 5:00pm
Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to CNCS for competition.	January 18, 2017 5:00pm
CNCS Competitive funding decisions	May 15, 2017
Formula funding decisions made by SerVermont	Late May 2017