2024-2025 Pennsylvania AmeriCorps State Planning Grants

Spring Competition Request for Applications

Intent to Apply due by **5:00 PM February 1, 2024**

Information and Technical Assistance Session:
February 15, 2024, 2:00 – 3:00 pm
Register Here

Applications due by **5:00 pm March 6, 2024**

The Honorable Josh Shapiro

Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Nancy Walker
Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry

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PA AmeriCorps State Planning Grants: 2024-2025 Spring Request for Applications

The Funding Opportunity

PennSERVE is excited to announce the availability of AmeriCorps state planning grants for application. This opportunity is open to community and faith-based organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions (refer to page 14 for detailed information on eligible applicants).

AmeriCorps planning grants aim to support organizations in achieving the following objectives:
- Identifying community needs to be addressed through an AmeriCorps program.
- Assessing organizational capacity to operate an AmeriCorps program and manage a corresponding grant.

Designing an AmeriCorps program, including:
- Developing a plan for member service activities.
- Establishing a theory on how these service activities will instigate positive change.
- Creating a method to measure the outcomes of AmeriCorps member service.
- Developing policies, procedures, and materials for member recruitment and management.

Planning grants are distinct from AmeriCorps program grants. Planning grantees do not operate an AmeriCorps program or enroll AmeriCorps members. Organizations use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle; however, a Planning Grant award does not guarantee the applicant will be awarded a program operating grant in future cycles. When developing an AmeriCorps program design, planning grantees should plan for a minimum of five full-time equivalent members (five Member Service Years).

PennSERVE plans for the grant and project period of this planning grant to span from August 20, 2024, to August 19, 2025. Final dates will be established upon grant award. PennSERVE and the AmeriCorps agency retain the right to modify the grant amount and/or the grant period.

AmeriCorps planning grants, granted by PennSERVE, operate as Cost Reimbursement Grants. Typically, these grants cover staff time dedicated to activities outlined in the approved grant narrative. They may also cover staff training, travel costs, and expenses related to hiring subject matter experts for program development. Awardees are required to submit a budget and financial reports, and they commit to meeting all specified deadlines and requirements as conditions for grant reimbursement. In this competition, Planning Grant awards are capped at $50,000.

PennSERVE

PennSERVE, Pennsylvania's state service commission, encourages, develops, and facilitates volunteerism and service. Each year, PennSERVE awards federal funding to AmeriCorps programs. Through funding and support, PennSERVE engages Pennsylvania residents in strengthening our communities. Each year, PennSERVE awards approximately $17 million in federal funding from the AmeriCorps agency to AmeriCorps programs.

Table 1: PennSERVE 2024 State Service Plan Funding Priorities

Education	- PreK-12 - College access and completion - Adult basic education
Health	- Mental health - Access to healthy food - Reducing alcohol and/or drug abuse

	• Ongoing health impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic
Economic Opportunity	• Improving housing access for individuals and families experiencing homelessness • Workforce development
Education/Health/ Economic Opportunity	• Bridging the digital divide and increasing technology access for un-derserved or under-connected communities • Empowering individuals and families, including youth and young adults, who are impacted by the juvenile and/or criminal justice system; efforts may include but are not limited to diversion, re-entry, and engaging credible messengers to provide or connect in-dividuals with support, treatment, or other services.
Program Structure	• Programs that strategically embed the workforce development of AmeriCorps members in program design • Programs that embed principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in program design • Programs that provide a living allowance above the minimum re-quired by the federal AmeriCorps agency

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a program funded by the U.S. Congress under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 94.006. The national organization supporting AmeriCorps is the Corporation for National and Community Service d/b/a AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps agency's legal authority to award these grants is found in the National and Community Service Act (NCSA) of 1990, *as amended*, 42 U.S.C. § 12501 *et seq*.

The AmeriCorps agency brings people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges, through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. AmeriCorps helps make service to others a cornerstone of national culture.

The AmeriCorps agency receives AmeriCorps program funding from Congress and awards funding to state commissions, including PennSERVE, to grant and oversee AmeriCorps programs in each state.

AmeriCorps Focus Areas

The Serve America Act, Pub.L. 111–13, Apr. 21, 2009, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on the following focus areas:

Disaster Services
Grants will support increased and improved disaster services for individuals and communities to prepare and adapt to disasters, including but not limited to climate change events. Activities will provide support to increase preparedness for disasters, improve readiness to respond to disasters, support recovery efforts from disasters, and/or assist in the implementation of pre-disaster mitigation and adaptation measures. Grants will support communities and individuals in planning for disasters, with an emphasis on engaging disadvantaged communities in the planning process.

Economic Opportunity
Grants will provide support for and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into

or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education
Grants will provide support for and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or prepare economically disadvantaged students for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

Environmental Stewardship
Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive life events: programs that conserve natural habitats, protect clean air and water, maintain public lands, support wildland fire mitigation, cultivate individual and community self-sufficiency, and provide reforestation services after floods or fires.

Healthy Futures
Grants will provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition.

Veterans and Military Families
Grants will improve the quality of life of veterans and improve military family well-being; increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their caregivers, families, and survivors served by AmeriCorps programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps programs.

AmeriCorps Members

Planning grantees utilize their awards to develop and evaluate their capacity to oversee programs that involve AmeriCorps members in community service. AmeriCorps members actively participate in community service and may receive a living allowance and additional benefits during their service. These members are recruited, trained, supervised, and managed by organizations that have received AmeriCorps program grants. Upon the successful completion of their service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust, which can be used to cover higher education expenses or applied to qualified student loans.

Special Requirements for AmeriCorps Programs in Pennsylvania

- In crafting a planning grant proposal, it is essential to consider the following requirements for AmeriCorps program grants:

- AmeriCorps programs funded by PennSERVE must have adequate staff to effectively manage the size and scope of the AmeriCorps program. Generally, programs funded by PennSERVE should have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) dedicated to AmeriCorps program management. All planning grant applicants must include at least 0.5 FTE.

- PennSERVE programs must be identified as AmeriCorps programs.

- AmeriCorps programs may be obligated to participate in local disaster preparedness and/or response efforts, such as emergency management training, volunteer management, and public

health outreach. AmeriCorps members may be requested or offered the opportunity to engage in disaster services as needed.

- AmeriCorps programs funded by PennSERVE have mandatory training activities for program staff and annual AmeriCorps Week activities for AmeriCorps members. Applicants must incorporate the cost of travel to these events in their budgets. Note: Planning grant recipients are expected to attend these training activities.

- AmeriCorps programs funded by PennSERVE utilize a specific online program management system called OnCorps. Planning grant recipients are required to use this system for financial reporting. The instructions below outline how to include the cost of this system in your budget.

Submission Requirements

Applicants are required to submit their initial proposals as either a Word document or a PDF attachment via email. In the subsequent stage, selected applicants will be asked to submit their applications through the AmeriCorps agency's web-based system, eGrants. Detailed instructions for the eGrants submission process will be provided along with preliminary funding notifications.

Due Dates and Funding Timeline

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm on March 6, 2024. Please refer to **Table 2** below for a comprehensive overview of application and funding timelines. For a detailed list of required documents and delivery instructions, consult **Table 3**: Required Application Documents. PennSERVE may entertain late submission requests accompanied by documentation explaining the rationale for the delay and retains the discretion to accept such applications on a case-by-case basis. Throughout the application process, additional deadlines may be imposed, including those for mandatory revisions and responses to clarification questions.

Table 2: Application/Funding Timeline

Intent to Apply – submitted via Microsoft forms	**February 1, 2024, by 5PM**
Information and Technical Assistance Session: Register Here	**February 15, 2024, 2:00 – 3:00 pm**
Applications due	**March 3, 2024, 5 p.m.**
PennSERVE Feedback and Clarification Period; revisions may be required	**April 8 – 30, 2024**
Preliminary grant award notifications, resolutions, and eGrants entry	**May 13 – June 3, 2024**
Starting Strong Training, Harrisburg, PA (required for all funded planning grantees)	**June 20 – 21, 2024**
Grant/Program Period Begins (pending receipt of grant award from the AmeriCorps agency)	**August 2024**

Narratives

Submit your narrative as either a Word document or PDF. The cumulative character count for all narrative sections, encompassing both the Planning Proposal and Organizational Capability, must not exceed 25,000.

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Tips for Crafting a Robust Narrative:

1. **Sequential Responses:** Respond to questions in sequence and utilize headings to clearly indicate the question you are addressing.

2. **Elaborate on How:** Provide a detailed explanation of how the proposed project aligns with the specified criteria. Merely stating that criteria will be met is insufficient.

3. **Relevant Information Only:** Include information pertinent to this application. While detailing your organization is essential, a comprehensive organizational history is not required.

4. **Assume Limited Knowledge:** Assume that reviewers are unfamiliar with your organization, proposal, partners, or beneficiaries, even if you have received prior funding from PennSERVE or the AmeriCorps agency. When using acronyms, spell them out initially, and define any industry-specific terms.

5. **Feedback Seeking:** Seek feedback before submitting your application. Have someone unfamiliar with your project read and critique the narrative to ensure clarity and understanding.

Executive Summary (Required – 0 percent)

Please fill in the brackets of these sentences to complete the executive summary. Do not deviate from the template below.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program serving in [the location(s) the AmeriCorps program will serve] that will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)]. For the Planning Grant, the AmeriCorps investment of $[amount of request] will be matched with $[amount of projected match], $[amount of local, state, tribal, and federal funds] in public funding and $[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

The Planning Grant will be used to [describe the rationale for applying for a Planning Grant and what you hope to achieve during the one-year period].

Program Design (50 percent)

Program Concept (25 points)

- **Service Locations and Host Sites:** Specify the geographical areas where AmeriCorps members would serve, including counties, municipalities, neighborhoods, and any specific organizations serving as service sites or host sites.
- **Roles of AmeriCorps Members:** Describe the proposed roles of AmeriCorps members, detailing the services they will provide and identifying the target beneficiaries.
- **Anticipated Benefits:** Explain how AmeriCorps member service is expected to benefit the locations where they serve.
- **Development of AmeriCorps Members:** Describe the skills, knowledge, and experience AmeriCorps members will acquire during service. Clarify how this service will prepare them for future careers or post-secondary education. Address the support provided to AmeriCorps members who have completed post-secondary education or retired, detailing the assistance in transitioning to their next opportunity.
- **Community Engagement:** Outline your strategy for involving the community in determining AmeriCorps member service activities. Specify how ongoing community feedback will be obtained throughout the program planning and potential operational phases.

- **Integration with Existing Programs:** If proposing to add or expand an AmeriCorps component to an existing program or initiative, elucidate how this addition/expansion enhances the organization's ability to address community needs. Clearly distinguish the scope and/or program design differences resulting from the incorporation of AmeriCorps.

Planning Process/Timeline (25 points)

Describe your proposed planning process, including:

- **Leadership:** Provide a detailed description of the individuals or team who will lead the planning process. Clearly outline their roles, responsibilities, and qualifications, emphasizing their expertise in program development and management.

- **Timeline for Planning Activities:** Present a well-developed timeline outlining key planning activities. Include milestones, deadlines, and dependencies to ensure a comprehensive and organized planning process.

- **Community Partnerships:** Share information about existing community partnerships and describe the potential for developing new partnerships during the planning period. Define the roles and responsibilities of each partner in the AmeriCorps program, emphasizing collaboration and community engagement.

- **Development of Program Components:** Outline how the planning period will be utilized to develop essential components for managing an AmeriCorps program. Specify the focus on key aspects such as recruitment strategies, training protocols, service site identification, and community outreach. Emphasize how these components align with AmeriCorps program requirements and community needs.

Organizational Capability (35 percent)

Organizational Background and Staffing (18 points)

- **Organizational Experience:** Provide a detailed overview of your organizational experience and track record in the proposed area of programming. Highlight achievements and previous successes relevant to the AmeriCorps program's focus.

- **Experience with Federal Grants:** Outline any experience your organization has in managing federal grants, if applicable. Share insights into your organization's track record of effectively handling federal grant funding.

- **Staff Involvement in Planning:** List the staff members who will actively participate in the planning process, specifying their roles and responsibilities. Highlight their expertise and qualifications relevant to AmeriCorps program development.

Compliance and Accountability (17 points)

- **Monitoring and Oversight Procedures:** Detail whether your organization currently has monitoring and oversight procedures in place to ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing your work. If such procedures exist, provide a description of their scope and effectiveness.

Budget (15 percent)

Utilize the Budget Instructions (Appendix A) and Budget Checklist (Appendix B) to craft your budget. Submit the budget in the template downloadable from
https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/1pSFhfh1t9Q1fhh3XZXwLBoM

PennSERVE will assess your budget based on the following criteria:
- **Alignment with Narrative Activities:** Confirm that your proposed costs align with the activities described in the narrative, showcasing a clear connection between the budget and program goals.
- **Transparent Calculations:** Clearly demonstrate how you calculated each budget item, ensuring transparency and understanding of the financial breakdown.
- **Inclusion of PennSERVE Required Costs:** Verify that your budget includes PennSERVE-required costs, as outlined in the Budget Instructions.
- **Grant Amount and Match:** Request no more than $50,000 and ensure inclusion of a 24% match.
- **Section 3 (Administrative Costs):** If including Section 3 costs (administrative costs), provide a comprehensive calculation and ensure adherence to the maximum allowable limit.

Prohibited Activities

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the AmeriCorps agency, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 C.F.R. § 2520.65):

1. attempting to influence legislation;

2. organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;

3. assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;

4. impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;

5. engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;

6. participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;

7. engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;

8. providing a direct benefit to—

    a. a business organized for profit;

    b. a labor union;

    c. a partisan political organization;

    d. a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; or

e. an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph 7. above, unless the AmeriCorps agency assistance is not used to support those religious activities;

9. conducting a voter registration drive or using the AmeriCorps agency funds to conduct a voter registration drive;

10. providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; or

11. such other activities as the AmeriCorps agency may prohibit.

Per the AmeriCorps agency guidance, the following activities are also prohibited:

- **Census Activities.** AmeriCorps members and volunteers associated with AmeriCorps grants may not engage in census activities during service hours. Being a census taker during service hours is categorically prohibited. Census-related activities (e.g., promotion of the Census, education about the importance of the Census) do not align with AmeriCorps State and National objectives. What members and volunteers do on their own time is up to them, consistent with program policies about outside employment and activities.

- **Election and Polling Activities**. AmeriCorps member may not provide services for election or polling locations or in support of such activities.

Staff paid for with planning grant or matching funds may not engage in these activities while on grant time. AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-AmeriCorps agency funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing any of the above activities on their personal time.

Required Documents

Please refer to Table 3 for a comprehensive list of necessary documents. Attach the documents to an email and send them to pennserve@pa.gov with the subject line *"(Your Organization's Name) – Application Documents."*

In the body of the email, provide a list of each document attached. If needed, send your documents in multiple emails to ensure each attachment is below 5MB, as PennSERVE cannot accept emails with attachments exceeding this size.

Application Narratives and Budget

- Submit required narratives via email as a Word document or PDF.
- Use the provided budget template for the budget submission.
- Specific criteria for narratives and the budget are outlined in this RFA.
- If chosen for funding, the narratives, budget, and performance measures must be entered into eGrants.

Federal Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

Applicants who hold a federal negotiated indirect cost rate must submit a valid indirect cost rate document to PennSERVE with the application.

Delinquent on Federal Debt

Disclose any delinquency on federal debt at the time of application by submitting a complete explanation to pennserve@pa.gov concurrently with the application.

Table 3: Required Application Documents

Documents to be emailed as attachments to pennserve@pa.gov.	All Applicants	If Applicable
PennSERVE AmeriCorps State Planning Grant Application to include: • Narratives • Budget; download template from https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/1pSFhfh1t9Q1fhh3XZXwLBoM	X	
Federally approved Indirect Cost Agreement		**X – Required if not submitted to PennSERVE within the last 12 months (March 2021)**
Delinquent on federal debt explanation		X

System Requirements

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants **must** register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at https://www.sam.gov/SAM and maintain an active SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier until the application process is complete and, if a grant is awarded, throughout the life of the award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. **Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and physical address on all grant applications to PennSERVE and AmeriCorps agency. The legal applicant's name and physical address in eGrants must match exactly the applicant's SAM-registered information.** Applicants that do not comply with these requirements may become ineligible to receive an award.

It is recommended that applicants **finalize a new SAM registration or renew an existing one at least three weeks before the application deadline**. This should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise. It typically takes seven to ten days to finalize SAM.gov registration. To complete the registration process, you will need to submit detailed information on your organization in various categories relevant to federal procurement and financial transactions:
- General information, such as organization name, EIN, DUNS, location, income, and number of employees;
- Corporate information, such as organization type (e.g., state government, nonprofit);
- Financial information, such as financial institution, bank account numbers, and credit card information; and,
- Point of contact information, such as primary and alternate points of contact.

Use the [SAM Quick Guide for Grantees for more information](#). You should review the guide before you begin the registration process.

Applications must include a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is generated as part of the SAM registration process. AmeriCorps will not make awards to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and UEI.

Applications must include an Employer Identification Number. The UEI and Employer Identification Number must be entered by the organization's Grantee Administrator as an organization attribute, and this will apply the information to all applications for the organization.

PA Vendor ID

Pennsylvania mandates the inclusion of a Pennsylvania Vendor Number in all grant applications. All applicants must be registered as vendors to apply, be awarded funds, or receive payment. Obtain a vendor number at no cost by contacting the Vendor Data Management Unit at 717-346-2676 or 1-877-435-7363, or online at www.vendorregistration.state.pa.us (click on "Non-Procurement Vendor Site"). Allow up to two weeks to receive a vendor number. If unable to obtain a Pennsylvania vendor number promptly, you may submit the application, but no grant will be awarded without a Pennsylvania vendor number.

PennSERVE Contact

Direct inquiries about this funding opportunity to PennSERVE at pennserve@pa.gov. Use the email subject line "AmeriCorps Spring Application Question <Applicant Name>."

Reallocation of Funding

PennSERVE retains the right to reallocate funding in the event of a disaster or other compelling need for service.

Application Resources

All applicants are encouraged to review the AmeriCorps Regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45chapterXXV.tpl

Table 4: Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Topics	Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations
Member Service Activities	§2520.20 - §2520.55
Prohibited Activities	§2520.65
Tutoring Programs	§2522.900-2522.950
Matching Funds	§2521.35-2521.90
Member Benefits	§2522.240-2522.250
Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	§2522.485
Performance Measures	§2522.500-2522.650

Eligible Applicants

The following non-federal entities, as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.69, with DUNS numbers and registration in the System for Award Management (SAM), are eligible to apply:

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- Indian tribes (2 C.F.R. § 200.54)
- Institutions of higher education (2 C.F.R. § 200.55)
- Local governments (2 C.F.R. § 200.64)
- Nonprofit organizations (2 C.F.R. § 200.70)
- States (2 C.F.R. § 200.90)

Programs applying to PennSERVE must operate exclusively within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

For planning grants leading to the development of multi-state programs, direct application with the AmeriCorps agency for program funding is required.

Under Section 132A(b) of the NCSA, organizations convicted of a federal crime are ineligible for assistance described in this RFA.

Furthermore, as per Section 745 of Title VII, Division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, corporations with unpaid federal tax liability, exhausted remedies, and non-compliance with payment agreements are ineligible for an award. A similar restriction may apply with the appropriation funding this RFA.

In compliance with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, organizations engaged in lobbying activities and described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code are ineligible for AmeriCorps funding.

Review and Selection Process

The grant selection process comprises the following steps:
1. **Compliance Check:** Ensure proposals adhere to application requirements, deadlines, and eligibility criteria.
2. **Basic Selection Criteria:** Apply fundamental selection criteria outlined in the AmeriCorps regulations.
3. **Alignment Assessment:** Determine the level of alignment with criteria detailed in the RFA.
4. **Diversity and Innovation:** Ensure geographic, demographic, and programmatic diversity and encourage innovation in the PennSERVE AmeriCorps portfolio.

PennSERVE will use a multi-stage process involving reviews by staff and approval by the Pennsylvania Advisory Board to select applications for funding.

Reviewers will evaluate program design, organizational capability, cost-effectiveness, and budget adequacy in assessing applications. The weights assigned to each category and sub-category are provided in the narrative outline. Applications will be measured against these criteria, and weights will be applied accordingly.

PennSERVE may seek additional clarification or require revisions as necessary during the evaluation process.

Documents that Govern the Grant/Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The RFA, and approved application are all part of the binding commitment under the grant. Also included in the binding agreement are the requirements of applicable sections of the NCSA of 1990 and

other applicable statutes. Awards will also be subject to the AmeriCorps regulations and grant terms and conditions, as described below.

Uniform Guidance

All awards under this notice are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), now consolidated in [2 C.F.R. Parts 200](#) and [2205](#).

Requests for Improper Payment Information

The AmeriCorps agency may, from time to time, request documentation from recipients to monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, *as amended*. Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on temporary manual hold, reimbursement only, or other remedies as appropriate. In addition, the AmeriCorps agency may, in appropriate circumstances, consider in its funding decisions any previous failures to make timely responses.

AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this RFA will be subject to the 2024 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the 2024 AmeriCorps State and National Specific Terms and Conditions. These terms and conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. Current versions of the Terms and Conditions for the AmeriCorps State and National Grants is available at https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2021ASNProgram508TC20210603.pdf.

National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a mandated screening procedure aimed at safeguarding the beneficiaries of national service. Recipients are obligated by law to conduct and document NSCHCs on individuals, including award-funded staff, national service participants, or volunteers, receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend, or education award through a program funded by AmeriCorps.

> **Eligibility Criteria:** An individual is ineligible to serve in a position funded by AmeriCorps if the individual is registered or required to be registered as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. NSCHC costs are allowable expenses under the award, and grantees should budget accordingly for comprehensive checks on all covered individuals. Utilizing the designated vendors engaged by the AmeriCorps agency is strongly recommended, and failure to conduct NSCHCs may lead to significant disallowed costs.

> **Mandatory Checks:** Unless a written exemption or approval of an alternative search procedure is provided by the AmeriCorps agency, the following checks must be performed:
> - A nationwide name-based check of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW)
> - A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person's state of residence and the state where the person will serve/work
> - A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check

> All NSCHC components must be completed and adjudicated before the start of work or service. Refer to 45 C.F.R. §§ 2540.200–2540.207 and https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check for comprehensive information and FAQs.

Additional Requirements:
- All staff and national service participants funded by the AmeriCorps/CNCS Share or Grantee Share, aged 18 or older at the start of work or service, must undergo NSCHCs.
- Grantees must complete the NSCHC eCourse provided by the AmeriCorps agency annually.
- Certification of course completion must be submitted to PennSERVE as part of the grant record.

Adherence to these NSCHC requirements is crucial to ensuring the safety and integrity of AmeriCorps-funded programs.

Use of Material

To ensure public access and availability, materials produced with AmeriCorps funding grant the AmeriCorps agency a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials under the award, including data. This right extends to authorizing others to do so (2 C.F.R. § 200.315(b)).

Reporting Requirements

Grantees are obligated to provide the following reports and documentation:

- Reporting via the PennSERVE-determined online reporting system, including mid- and end-of-year reports
- Monthly expense reports and invoices for reimbursement
- Quarterly and year-end aggregate financial reports
- Participation in both desk and on-site monitoring by PennSERVE and/or the AmeriCorps agency
- Any additional reporting as required by PennSERVE and/or the AmeriCorps agency

PennSERVE will report on all grantee performance to the AmeriCorps agency semi-annually or as required by the agency.

Match Requirements

A first-time successful applicant must match at 24 percent for the initial three-year funding period. From year four onwards, the match requirement gradually increases annually, reaching 50 percent by year ten, as indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Grantee Match Requirements Based on Year of Funding

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

Grantees using other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant must report the amount and source of these funds quarterly to PennSERVE and annually on a Federal Financial Report.

Program requirements, including match requirements, are detailed in the AmeriCorps regulations, summarized as follows:

- The minimum grantee share is 24 percent for the first three years, gradually increasing to 50 percent by the tenth year and thereafter.
- Acceptable sources of matching funds include federal, state, local, and/or private sector funds.
- In the "Source of Funds" field, provide a brief description of the match, identifying each source separately, specifying the dollar amount, match classification (cash or in-kind), and source type (private, state/local, or federal).
- Grantees using other federal funds as match must obtain and maintain letters from the federal agency(ies) permitting the use of funds as match and report sources and amounts on quarterly financial reports.

Appendix A. Budget Instructions

Please use budget template provided; download from
https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/1pSFhfh1t9Q1fhh3XZXwLBoM

Section I. Program Operating Costs

Complete Section I, Program Operating Costs, of the Budget Worksheet by entering the "Total Amount," "CNCS Share," and "Grantee Share" for Parts A-I, as follows:

A. **Personnel Expenses**: Under "Position/Title Description," list each staff position separately and provide a brief five or six-word position description, salary, and percentage of FTE devoted to this award. Each staff person's role must be described in the application narrative, and each person mentioned in the narrative must be listed in the budget as either CNCS or Grantee share. Exclude the value of direct community service performed by volunteers.

B. **Personnel Fringe Benefits:** Under "Purpose/Description," identify the types of fringe benefits to be covered and the costs of benefit(s) for each staff position. Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Workers' Compensation, retirement, SUTA, health and life insurance, IRA, and 401K. You may provide a calculation for total benefits as a percentage of the salaries to which they apply or list each benefit as a separate item. If a fringe amount is over 30%, list it separately. Holidays, leave, and other similar vacation benefits are not included in the fringe benefit rates but are absorbed into the personnel expenses (salary) budget line item.

C. 1**. Staff Travel:** Describe the purpose for which program staff will travel. Provide a calculation to include costs for airfare, transportation, lodging, per diem, and other travel-related expenses multiplied by the number of trips/staff. Identify the current standard reimbursement rate(s) of the organization for mileage (not to exceed the federal mileage rate), daily per diem, and similar supporting information. Only domestic travel is allowable.

- Include costs for at least one staff person to attend required training during the program year: one two-day training. Assume the training will be held in Harrisburg, PA. Include costs for applicable travel, meals, and lodging.

- Include costs for at least one staff member to attend the National Service Regional Training Conference. Assume the conference will be held out of state. Include costs for applicable travel, meals, and lodging.

- Please itemize costs. For example: Two staff will attend the National Service Regional Training Conference. 2 staff x $750 airfare + $50 ground transportation + (two-day) x $200 lodging + $50 per diem = $2,000.

2. Member Travel N/A FOR PLANNING GRANTS

D. **Equipment:** Equipment is defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year AND an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit (including accessories, attachments, and modifications). Enter items meeting this definition in this section; otherwise, enter in E. Supplies below. Purchases of equipment are limited to 10% of the total Corporation funds requested. If applicable, show the unit cost and number of units requested. Provide a brief justification for the purchase of the equipment under Item/Purpose.

E. **Supplies:** Include the amount of funds to purchase consumable supplies and materials, including equipment that does not meet the definition above. Individually list any single item costing $1,000 or more.

F. **Contractual and Consultant Services:** Include costs for consultants related to the project's operations, except evaluation consultants, who will be listed in Section G and H below. There is no maximum daily rate.

G. 1. **Staff Training** Include registration costs of $250/person for at least one staff member to attend the National Service Regional Training Conference. Include the costs associated with training staff on project requirements and training to enhance the skills staff need for effective project implementation, i.e., project or financial management, team building, etc. If using a consultant(s) for training, indicate the estimated daily rate. There is no maximum daily rate.

2. **Member Training**: N/A FOR PLANNING GRANTS

H. **Evaluation:** N/A FOR PLANNING GRANTS

I. **Other Program Operating Costs** Allowable costs in this budget category should include when applicable:

1. Criminal history background checks for all employees or other individuals who receive a salary or similar payment from the grant (federal or non-federal share). Include the cost for these checks for staff.

2. Office space rental for projects operating without an approved indirect cost rate agreement that covers office space. If space is budgeted and shared with other projects or activities, the costs must be equitably pro-rated and allocated between the activities or projects.

3. Utilities, telephone, Internet, and similar expenses that are specifically used for AmeriCorps project staff and are not part of the organization's indirect cost/admin cost allocation pool. If such expenses are budgeted and shared with other projects or activities, the costs must be equitably pro-rated and allocated between the activities or projects.

Section II. Member Costs N/A FOR PLANNING GRANTS

Section III. Administrative/Indirect Costs (optional)

Definitions

Administrative costs are general or centralized expenses of the overall administration of an organization that receives Corporation 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 and are further described in the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance.

Options for Calculating Administrative/Indirect Costs (choose either A, B OR C below)

PennSERVE is not electing to retain a share of the federal funds available to programs for administrative costs. PennSERVE reserves the right to elect to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available to programs for administrative costs up to 2% in future funding years.

Applicants choose one of three methods to calculate allowable administrative costs – a CNCS-fixed percentage rate method or a federally approved indirect cost rate method or a de minimis method. Regardless of the option chosen, the CNCS share of administrative costs is limited to 5% of the total CNCS funds actually expended under this grant. Do not create additional lines in this category.

A. CNCS-Fixed Percentage Method

Five Percent Fixed Administrative Costs Option

The CNCS-fixed percentage rate method allows you to charge administrative costs up to a cap without a federally approved indirect cost rate and without documentation supporting the allocation. If you choose the CNCS-fixed percentage rate method (Section IIIA in eGrants), you may charge, for administrative costs, a fixed 5% of the total of the CNCS funds expended. In order to charge this fixed 5%, the grantee match for administrative costs may not exceed 10% of all direct cost expenditures.

1. To determine the maximum CNCS share for Section III: Multiply the sum of the CNCS funding shares of Sections I and II by 0.0526. This is the maximum amount you can request as Corporation share. The factor 0.0526 is used to calculate the 5% maximum amount

Appendix B: Budget Checklist

Below is a checklist to help you make certain that you submit an accurate budget narrative that meets AmeriCorps requirements.

In Compliance?	Section I. Program Operating Costs
Yes __ No __	Costs charged under the Personnel line item directly relate to the operation of the AmeriCorps planning grant?
Yes __ No __	Staff indirectly involved in the management or operation of the applicant organization is funded through the administrative cost section (Section III.) of the budget? Examples of administrative costs include central management and support functions.
Yes __ No __	Staff fundraising expenses are not charged to the grant? You may not charge AmeriCorps staff members' time and related expenses for fundraising to the federal or grantee share of the grant. Expenses incurred to raise funds must be paid out of the funds raised. Development officers and fundraising staff are not allowable expenses.
Yes __ No __	All positions in the budget are fully described in the narrative?
Yes __ No __	The types of fringe benefits to be covered and the costs of benefit(s) for each staff position are described? Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Workers' Compensation, retirement, SUTA, health and life insurance, IRA, and 401K. You may provide a calculation for total benefits as a percentage of the salaries to which they apply or list each benefit as a separate item. If the fringe amount is over 30%, please list separately.
Yes __ No __	Holidays, leave, and other similar vacation benefits are not included in the fringe benefit rates but are absorbed into the personnel expenses (salary) budget line item?
Yes __ No __	The purpose for all staff travel is clearly identified?
Yes __ No __	You have budgeted funds for staff travel to PennSERVE sponsored meetings in the budget narrative?
Yes __ No __	Funds for the purchase of equipment (does not include general use office equipment) are limited to 10% of the total grant amount?
Yes __ No __	All single equipment items over $5000 per unit are specifically listed?
Yes __ No __	Justification/explanation of equipment items is included in the budget narrative?
Yes __ No __	All single supply items over $1000 per unit are specifically listed?
Yes __ No __	You only charged to the federal share of the budget member service gear, with the exception of safety equipment, that includes the AmeriCorps logo?
Yes __ No __	Are all consultant services budgeted below the maximum federal daily rate of $750/day? Is the daily rate noted in all sections of the budget narrative where consultants are proposed?
Yes __ No __	Does the budget reflect adequate budgeted costs for project evaluation?
Yes __ No __	Have you provided budgeted costs for criminal history checks of all grant-funded staff?
Yes __ No __	Are all items in the budget narrative itemized and the purpose of the funds justified?

In Compliance?	Section II. Member Costs – No items budgeted in this section for planning grants.

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In Compliance?	Section III. Administrative/Indirect Costs
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option A – Corporation fixed percentage method and the maximum federal share of administrative costs does not exceed 5% of the total federal funds budgeted? To determine the federal administrative share, multiply all other budgeted federal funds by .0526.
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option A – Corporation fixed percentage method and the maximum grantee share is at 10% or less of total budgeted funds?
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option B – federally approved indirect cost rate method and documentation on file? Administrative costs budgeted include the following: (1) indirect costs such as legal staff, central management and support functions; (2) costs for financial, accounting, audit, internal evaluations, and contracting functions; (3) costs for insurance that protects the entity that operates the project; and (4) the portion of the salaries and benefits of the director and any other project administrative staff not attributable to the time spent in direct support of a specific project.
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option B – The maximum grantee share is at 10% or less of total budgeted funds, less the 5% CNCS share?
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option B-the type of rate, the IDC rate percentage, the rate claimed and the base to which the rate is applied has been specified?
Yes ___ No ___	Applicant has chosen Option C – a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs has been budgeted?

In Compliance?	Match
Yes ___ No ___	Is the overall match being met at the required level, based on the year of funding?
Yes ___ No ___	For all matching funds, proposed vs secured, the source(s) [private, state, local, and/or federal], the type of contribution (cash or in-kind), and the amount of match, are clearly identified in the narrative and in the Source of Funds field in eGrants?
Yes ___ No ___	The amount of match is for the entire amount in the budget narrative. (The total amount of match equals the amount in the budget?)

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