



**AmeriCorps State and National
West Virginia Formula Grants FY 2019
Concept Paper Guidelines**

Concept Paper (new programs only) due via email by 5:00 p.m. Monday, April 1, 2019.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the 2019 West Virginia Formula AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity available at www.volunteerwv.org. Additional information and thorough statement of the intent of AmeriCorps funding is provided under that *Notice*. Additional resources on developing an AmeriCorps project, a Theory of Change and Logic Model, and more are available on our website at <https://volunteer.wv.gov/Grants/Pages/default.aspx>.

Description of Concept Paper Opportunity:

AmeriCorps Programs are funded to implement AmeriCorps State member projects in communities throughout West Virginia.

AmeriCorps is a public-private partnership between the federal and state government and local community-serving agencies. AmeriCorps is a good fit for an agency that is committed to improving civic service as part of its overall agency values system. AmeriCorps provides funding for an expansion of human resources of an organization through a service lens. Agencies and organizations that are solely seeking operational support for an existing organization may not be a good fit to operate an AmeriCorps program.

AmeriCorps members are paid a living allowance (in some cases), receive an Education Award at the end of a service term, and serve in positions that expand the human capacity of service organizations to solve pressing community-identified problems. AmeriCorps sponsors and communities benefit from sponsoring national service programs like AmeriCorps, and also offer support for the personal and professional development of people of all ages through the program.

What activities can AmeriCorps members do? AmeriCorps State members may conduct direct service such as mentoring, trail building, financial literacy training and more. AmeriCorps State members may also conduct capacity building services related to specific needs such as volunteer recruitment, volunteer management, developing outreach and education programs, and more. AmeriCorps State members, in most cases, are not involved in fundraising activities, nor may they be placed in positions that duplicate, supplant, or appear to duplicate employee positions. (So, they may not conduct administrative services, janitorial services, or other activities that support general administrative functions of an organization.)

A list of prohibited AmeriCorps member activities is found at: www.volunteerwv.org.

Volunteer West Virginia (the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service) is requesting proposals from new organizations who would like to sponsor a full AmeriCorps program to

address a compelling community-identified need. Proposals should include three elements, which are required.

- The proposed program must make significant improvements that address a compelling community need.
- The proposed program should benefit AmeriCorps member career and personal development.
- The proposal should include information on how AmeriCorps members will leverage additional volunteers in the community they are serving.

If selected for funding, applicants would begin operating an AmeriCorps program in the fall of 2019. Funding is continued in three-year cycles (with a new budget submitted for approval each year).

Submission of a concept paper allows a new organization to receive feedback on an idea prior to completing a full application for funding. New applicant organizations that submit eligible proposals will be provided with feedback prior to submission of the full application. Upon full application, all new and re-competing proposals will be ranked by external and staff reviewers and submitted to the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service for review and funding decisions. Due to limited funding available, resources may not be available to fund all worthy projects.

New applicant organizations submitting a Concept Paper who are not recommended for funding may be recommended for a one-year Planning Grant. Planning Grants allow potential applicants for AmeriCorps projects to support planning activities such as community needs assessment, recruitment plan development, theory of change development, evidence research and more.

Once full applications for funding are submitted, all new and re-competing applications are reviewed according to the commission's funding selection process, available on our website at [this link](#).

The following Non-Federal entities (as defined in 2 CFR §200.69) who have DUNS numbers and are registered in System for Award Management (SAM) are eligible to apply:

- Indian Tribes (2 CFR §200.54)
- Institutions of higher education (2 CFR §200.54)
- Local governments (2 CFR §200.64)
- Nonprofit organizations (2 CFR §200.70)
- States (2 CFR §200.90)

More information on submission of a full application is available in the 2019 West Virginia Formula AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity which is available at <https://volunteer.wv.gov/Grants/Pages/default.aspx>.

Submission Instructions:

Concept Papers will review the program's proposed intervention; outcomes and program design in addition to providing information about proposed member development plans. Finally, concept papers do not require a budget; however, the number and type of proposed AmeriCorps members and information about where the applicant will find additional cash and in-kind resources is requested. The document should be prepared as a Microsoft Word Document and emailed as a PDF via attachment to americorps@wv.gov by April 1, 2019. Concept papers may not exceed 6 single-spaced pages in 11 point font. If more than 6 pages are submitted, only the first 6 will be reviewed. Submissions should use the headings below and provide as much detail as possible about the proposed program design.

Tips for crafting a strong narrative:

Be sure to consider your application from the readers perspective. Have you clearly outlined what you want to accomplish? Have you included enough information about why AmeriCorps is the solution you want to use and how AmeriCorps members will spend each day? What sets your proposed program apart from other programs with similar focus? Be sure to include distinguishing characteristics in your description.

Organization capability is also a critical component. Operating an AmeriCorps project can be daunting. Be sure to include enough information about the function of your organization so that the reader can determine whether you are likely to be successful in implementing a compliant program.

Concept Paper Format

A. Applicant Information

***Include the following information on a cover sheet using your organization letterhead.**

- A. Applicant Organization: Name, FEIN, DUNS Number
- B. Applicant Organization: City, State, Zip, and Phone number.
- C. Authorized Representative: Name, Email, Phone.
- D. Person Submitting the Concept Paper: Name, Email, Phone.
- E. AmeriCorps Program Concept Proposed:
 - a. Number of Positions Total
 - b. Number of Full Time & Number of Part Time Positions Needed
 - c. Cash Match Resources, Source of Cash Funds, and whether they are proposed or secured funds.

B. Proposed Program Description

***Prepare a narrative which describes the following about your proposal.**

1. Problem/Need

- Describe the problem you would like to solve. Tell us how the problem was identified, how prevalent or severe it is, what statistics or research exists to support your information, and why it matters to your community. The problem should be identified as a collaborative community conversation, and not be in the sole interest of one specific organization.

2. Theory of Change

Describe how you will address the problem you identified above and why you think this strategy will work. For Concept Paper Submission, a logic model and performance measures are not required. These elements will be required for full applications. For more information on how to craft a high-quality Theory of Change, please visit www.volunteerwv.org. Include the following information:

- The proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and the roles of leveraged volunteers.
- How this intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified you want.
- How the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that AmeriCorps members will implement or deliver, including:
 - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention).

- The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week.)
- The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level).
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served.) Identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

3. Evidence Base – Not Required for Concept Paper

While this section is not required for a concept paper, if your organization is invited to submit a full application, you will need to provide evidence that the proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes you identified in the theory of change. This will include a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge. This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports.

5. Member Experience

Describe how AmeriCorps members in your program will receive training, support and skills that enable future success. Consider including the following information in this section:

- How members will receive high quality training and support to provide effective service.
- How members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.
- How supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.
- How AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- How AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.
- How AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term.
- A clear description of how the program will recruit AmeriCorps members.
- Any additional services, resources, community support or other value-added resources available for AmeriCorps members that would distinguish your program from another program (these types of services might include housing allowances, a housing complex offered specifically to AmeriCorps, discounts at area businesses, etc.)
- Other distinguishing characteristics of the AmeriCorps experience you are proposing.

C. Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing

- Clearly describe how the organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- Clearly describe how the organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants.
- Clearly describes how the organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing this proposal.

- Describe your organizations planned supervision and financial reporting structure as it relates to this proposal. Who will supervise AmeriCorps members? How will the supervisor be trained? Who will provide oversight for the program? How will the financial and programmatic reporting be managed?
- Describe your available and proposed resources for cash and inkind matching.
- Explain how your organization has enough cash on hand to operate a reimbursement-based program. (Expect to cover all expenses included member payments for two months prior to receiving reimbursement.)

As documentation of community support and commitment to the proposed program; please procure and send as attachment letter(s) from the applicant's most significant community partner(s). The letter(s) should include how the partner has been involved in the development of the program proposal, what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant's AmeriCorps members, and why the partner thinks this AmeriCorps program will be a good investment in solving the proposed problem in your community. Each applicant may submit up to three letters from community partners that show a clear and substantial commitment to the proposed program. **Submission of letters is optional**; however, for new programs letters can be submitted with Concept Papers to support the need for your proposed project in the community. **To be considered with the Concept Papers, submit letters by April 1, 2019 to americorps@wv.gov**