



Spring 2024 AmeriCorps Planning Grants

Request for Proposals

Volunteer West Virginia announces a funding opportunity for organizations interested in planning a new AmeriCorps program. Successful applicants will work with Volunteer West Virginia from September 2024 - August 2025 to develop a new AmeriCorps program. Successful new AmeriCorps programs will begin in September of 2025. Eligible organizations can apply for planning grants of up to \$50,000.

Purpose of an AmeriCorps Planning Grant

The purpose of an AmeriCorps planning grant is to provide funding that allows an organization to devote the time and staff needed to develop a plan for a viable AmeriCorps program.

Is this a good fit for you?

- My organization has identified a community need that requires new resources to address.
- We want to use people power (at least 5 AmeriCorps members) to meet this need.
- We have some ideas about how to do this new project but need time and help to plan and figure out how best to use AmeriCorps members.

If the statements above apply to you, this could be a great opportunity for your organization.

Who We Are

Volunteer West Virginia, the state's Commission for National and Community Service, challenges West Virginians to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism. The Commission administers West Virginia's AmeriCorps service programs. We also administer additional programming to help meet the state's volunteer and community service needs.

Federal Agency Name: Corporation for National and Community Service

Assistance Listing Number: 94.006

Disclosure: Publication of this Notice of Funding Opportunity does not obligate Volunteer West Virginia to award any specific number of grants or to commit any particular amount of funding. The actual level, timing, and process of grant funding will be subject to the availability of annual federal appropriations.

Important Dates

- Planning Grant Training Webinar Monday, Feb. 5, 2024, 1pm- 2pm EST. Register in advance for this meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwuduuhqzouEtxlt8jjqEzYo5ApkBib-8m2>
- Step 1: Letters of Intent due electronically by March 7, 2024 via this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeInxhoEv3wsb2-VScHI6gKPEWCDHnt_QSA_K62CuUZxKWeTw/viewform?usp=sf_link
- Eligible organizations will be invited to schedule a consultation with Volunteer West Virginia between March 11 and March 15, 2024.
- Step 2: Eligible organizations will be invited to submit a pre-application by March 28, 2024.
- Selected organizations will submit a final application in eGrants by April 25, 2024.

More Information: Email AmeriCorps@wv.gov

PURPOSE OF AMERICORPS FUNDING

AmeriCorps brings people together to tackle some of 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 a cornerstone of our national culture. An organization that receives an AmeriCorps Planning Grant will work with Volunteer West Virginia to develop a viable AmeriCorps program that addresses identified community needs.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions/practices to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that they can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

AMERICORPS FOCUS AREAS

Economic Opportunity

Grants will provide support 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 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 support economically disadvantaged students' preparation for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

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 with the purpose of reducing obesity.

Environmental Stewardship

Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging climate and environmental circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive events: programs that conserve natural habitats; protect clean air and water; maintain public lands; support wildland fire mitigation and sustainable forest management; cultivate individual and community resilience; and provide reforestation services after floods or fires, such as nature based solutions.

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.

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, in particular engaging disadvantaged communities in the planning process.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

The following non-federal entities (all of which are defined in 2 CFR 200.1) are eligible to apply:

- Tribes
- Institutions of higher education
- Local governments
- Nonprofit organizations
- States

Entities must have a valid SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier to receive an award. See Application Content section for additional information.

Cost Reimbursement Grants

Applicants are required to match funds based on the chart below. The applicant’s match can be non-AmeriCorps cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must indicate whether the match is proposed or secured. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission. A first-time successful planning grant applicant is required to match at 24 percent. The chart below shows how this will increase over time.

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

Law requires that grantees that use other Federal funds as matching funds for an AmeriCorps grant to report those amounts and sources to AmeriCorps on a Federal Financial Report. Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout. Matching funds may be in cash or in-kind. Successful organizations will receive guidance on match requirements and tracking.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Estimated Available Funds

Volunteer West Virginia expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps grant competition. Volunteer West Virginia reserves the right to prioritize providing funding to existing awards over making new awards. The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations. Receiving a planning grant does not guarantee future AmeriCorps funding.

LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

Letter of Intent Content

Use this Notice to help you develop your Letter of Intent. Information cannot be saved in the letter of intent form. The Letter of Intent is due by March 7, 2024.

Organization Information

Legal Name

List organization's legal name.

Organization Official Address

List organization's address.

Organization Contact Person Information.

List contact person for this application.

EIN Number and SAM Registration

To receive federal grant funds from Volunteer West Virginia, organizations must:

- Have an Employer Identification Number (EIN), also referred to as a Tax Identification Number (TIN),
- Have an active SAM (System of Award Management) registration and UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) number. Volunteer West Virginia recommends complete your registration here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>, by February 5, 2024. Organizations without an UEI and active SAM registration will be ineligible to apply. For more information see the SAM.gov Get Started with Registration Page: <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

Focus area

Select the AmeriCorps focus area you would like to address with planning grant funding from Volunteer West Virginia.

1. Economic Opportunity
2. Education
3. Healthy Futures
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Veterans and Military Families
6. Disaster Services

SAM Registration

Certify that you understand that you must have an active SAMS registration by March 30, 2023, in order to receive funding through AmeriCorps (instructions for obtaining a SAM registration are on page 5).

Financial Capacity

Answer the following questions.

- Can your current financial system produce a general ledger?
- Does your current financial system allow you to provide back-up documentation for any expenses incurred? If not, can that change be made to your organization's policies and procedures?
- Can your organization meet the 24% match requirement?
- Do you have the capacity to track expenses by funding source? What does that look like?
- Do you have other grants? If so, what administrative rate do you use?

Project Need Description (1,500-character max.)

Briefly describe the need you have identified that you would like to address with AmeriCorps members. The need should be supported by data.

LETTER OF INTENT REVIEW

Letters of intent will be reviewed for compliance by Volunteer West Virginia staff. Eligible organizations will be invited to submit a pre-application.

Initial Letter of Intent Compliance and Eligibility Review

A Letter of Intent is compliant if the applicant:

- Is an eligible organization
 - Has a valid SAM Registration
 - Submitted the Letter of Intent by the submission deadline
 - Submitted a complete Letter of Intent
 - Has demonstrated sufficient financial controls in the financial capacity section
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PRE-APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The following instructions are provided for your information so that you are aware of what will be required if your organization is invited to continue with the application process.

You do **NOT** have to submit this information with your Letter of Intent.

Pre-Application Content

If your organization is determined to be eligible through the letter of intent process, you will be invited to submit a pre-application. Further instructions will be provided to eligible organizations. Use this notice to help you understand what will be required if you are eligible to submit a pre-application.

The following items will be required if you are invited to submit a pre-application:

- Application in Word doc
- Budget worksheet (to be provided to eligible organizations)
- Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

SAM Registration

AmeriCorps funding from Volunteer West Virginia is federal funding. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Volunteer West Virginia requires that applicants have submitted their request for SAM registration at the time of Letter of Intent submission. **Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and address on all grant applications to Volunteer West Virginia.**

Volunteer West Virginia will not make awards to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and UEI number. If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time Volunteer West Virginia is ready to make a federal award, Volunteer West Virginia may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award.

Pre-Application Criteria

The criteria listed below must be addressed in your Word doc application. The application should not exceed 5 pages.

A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)

Please fill in the blanks 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)]. The CNCS 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.

B. Program Design (50 percent)

1. Need (25 points):

- Describe the need you plan to address with your AmeriCorps program and provide evidence that the need is pressing with relevant data.

2. Intervention (35 points)

- How do you expect that AmeriCorps members could help address the identified need? List specific tasks and potential activities AmeriCorps members could provide.
- Is your idea to address this need inspired by an existing program? If so, please describe the other program. If not, describe the research you would do during the planning grant year to ensure your program would be successful. Consider travel to training or to observe other programs. Include these expenses in your budget.
- Explain how AmeriCorps members would be addressing an unmet need and would not be duplicating or displacing any current staff, volunteers, or other services. Explain how this program would create new services or support your community in a new way.
- Explain how you would involve potential partners or AmeriCorps member sites in this program.

C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)

- Does your organization have the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan the proposed program? You can include staff who will be working on the planning grant in the budget.
- Would you hire additional staff with planning grant funding to ensure the success of your potential new program? We recommend using planning grant funds to support sufficient staff for the project.
- Does your organization have prior experience in the proposed area of programming?
- Does your organization have sufficient administrative and fiscal staff capacity to administer a federal grant award?

1. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (15 percent)

These criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative is required.

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.

PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW

Review and Selection Process

Volunteer West Virginia will engage External and Staff Reviewers with relevant knowledge and expertise to assess and provide input on the eligible pre-applications. The review and selection processes are intended to produce a diversified set of high-quality projects that represent the priorities and strategic considerations described in this Notice.

Initial Pre-Application Compliance and Eligibility Review

Volunteer West Virginia will conduct an initial Eligibility Review to determine if a pre-application meets the compliance requirements published in this Notice and advances to the next stage of the review process.

An application is compliant if the applicant:

- is an eligible organization.
- has a valid DUNS number and will have a current SAMS registration by March 30, 2023.
- submitted an application by the submission deadline.
- submitted a complete application.

Reviewing for eligibility is intended to ensure that only those applications that are eligible for award are further reviewed. However, determinations of eligibility can take place at any point during the application review and selection process. Applicants that are determined to be ineligible will not receive an award.

Review

External Reviewers and Volunteer West Virginia staff will review and assess for the evidence criteria above. Volunteer West Virginia will recruit and select reviewers with demonstrated relevant expertise. All External Reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment

Volunteer West Virginia will assess an applicant's ability to manage federal funds by evaluating any evident risks. This evaluation is in addition to assessment of the applicant's eligibility and the quality of its application based on the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions.

In evaluating risks, Volunteer West Virginia may consider some of the following criteria:

- federal debt delinquency
- suspension and debarment
- reports and findings from audits and/or financial reports
- IRS Tax Form 990

Selection for Funding

The review and selection process is designed to identify how well eligible pre-applications are aligned with the review criteria and build a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations: CNCS Funding Priorities and meaningful representation of geographic diversity, rural communities, and faith-based organizations. In selecting applicants to receive awards under this Notice, Volunteer West Virginia will endeavor to include a diverse portfolio of applications based on staff recommendations and strategic considerations.

Applicant Clarification

Volunteer West Virginia may ask an applicant for clarifying information. Volunteer West Virginia staff will use this additional information to make funding recommendations. A request for clarification does not guarantee an award. Applicants may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked for clarifying information. An

applicant's failure to respond to a request for clarification adequately and in a timely manner may result in the removal of its application from consideration.

Volunteer West Virginia reserves the right to adjust or make changes to the review process, if unforeseen challenges or urgent circumstances make it impossible, impracticable, or inefficient to conduct the review process as planned. Any such adjustments or changes will not affect the selection criteria that will be used to assess applications.

TRANSPARENCY IN GRANTMAKING

Volunteer West Virginia is committed to transparency in grant-making. Submitted program narratives for successful applications will be available upon request.

TRAINING

Recipients of planning grants will work closely with consultants and staff from Volunteer West Virginia to ensure the development of a program that can meet AmeriCorps requirements.

REPORTING

Recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time.

CONTACT

For more information, email AmeriCorps@wv.gov. Please do not call the Volunteer West Virginia office.