



Vermont AmeriCorps State REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Program Year 2018-2019

Letter of Intent Deadline:
October 13, 2017, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
November 17, 2017, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

Agency of Human Services

Office of the Secretary

280 State Drive

Waterbury VT, 05671

(802) 760-0042

servermont.vermont.gov

ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont is Vermont's State Service Commission, and is housed in the Agency of Human Services' Central Office. 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 umbrella project, 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 09-98 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 (802) 585-9382 and/or Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov

AMERICORPS IN VERMONT

On average, there are between 200 and 250 AmeriCorps State members serving in SerVermont funded programs over the course of a program year. 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 seven AmeriCorps State programs through Formula and national Competitive grants. SerVermont funded AmeriCorps Programs will support nearly 250 AmeriCorps State members in the current program year. 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 opportunity to apply for AmeriCorps State funds to new or re-competing AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for the 2018-2019 AmeriCorps program year. AmeriCorps State funds are made available through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that oversees national service, including AmeriCorps. SerVermont administers an annual Request for Proposals (RFP) process in conjunction with the release of the CNCS 2018 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of

Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and CNCS AmeriCorps competition. SerVermont’s RFP is based on the CNCS materials related to this competition.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to recruit, train, and manage AmeriCorps member who address unmet community needs while in service. 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 2018 NOFO, 2018 Application Instructions, 2018 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, 2018 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents. CNCS’ national-level documents regarding the 2018 AmeriCorps competition supersede this RFP.

SerVermont seeks to supports 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 2018 NOFO and Application Instructions can be found at the CNCS website on the “Funding Opportunities” page:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2018/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2018>

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-ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants>

Information on managing AmeriCorps grants can be found on the CNCS website on the “Managing AmeriCorps Grants” page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>

A downloadable copy of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended by the Serve America Act and a downloadable copy of the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR Chapter XXV (2012) can be found at this link: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/legislation>

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. The actual level of funding available is subject to the availability of annual appropriations.

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 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.

SerVermont and the Agency of Human Services utilize performance based financial reimbursements in our grant agreements to ensure that programs operate at full capacity.

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 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 meeting (December 2017) 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 8, 2017.

After commissioner review, applicants will have an opportunity to clarify their proposals and respond to commission feedback for **final submission on January 5, 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 17, 2018 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, 2018**. 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. 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.

SerVermont reserves the right to prioritize providing funding to existing awards over making new awards.

APPLICATION

SerVermont uses a multi-step application 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 through CNCS' online grants management system.

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 daily 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. Because of high interest and limited funding availability, SerVermont does not anticipate being able to fund all applicants.

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 13, 2017 at 5:00 PM EST**. A completed Organizational Risk Assessment, available on SerVermont's website <https://servermont.vermont.gov/funding-opportunities>, 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 Member Service Years (MSY) the application will request.

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept, including what direct services members would be providing, and what research supports this approach.

GRANT INFORMATION SESSIONS

SerVermont will host two Grant Information Sessions via GoToMeeting webinar / conference call. These sessions are not mandatory; however, attendance by all interested applicants is strongly encouraged. The sessions will be on **August 31, 10-11am EST**; and **September 7, 2-3pm EST**. To register for either session please email Philip.kolling@vermont.gov or call at (802) 760-0042, 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.*

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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 18, 1-2 pm EST** and **October 2, 1-2pm EST**. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in attending either or both sessions. Between **September 8** and **October 13**, 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, 585-9382, or, Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov, 760-0042

Technical assistance regarding concept development will not be available after the letter of intent deadline (October 13). Technical assistance regarding program design and application will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent from **October 16** to **November 10**. **November 13** through **November 17**, technical assistance will be provided related to submission of applications in CNCS’ online system only.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION IN CNCS ONLINE SYSTEM

Applications are submitted through CNCS’ online system. For this competition CNCS will be using a new system for the first time, called Grants and Member Management (GMM). Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop their proposal in a word processing program outside of CNCS’ system, not within the CNCS online grants management system. SerVermont staff will be available to provide training and technical assistance with submitting through the online system.

All applicants, including previously funded applicants, are **strongly encouraged** to create an account in the new GMM system as soon as possible, and familiarize themselves with the system’s rules of behavior. NOTE: All individual system users must establish their own unique account and no account may be shared by multiple individuals. SerVermont **strongly recommends** beginning an application in the online system no later than 10 days before the due date to SerVermont. SerVermont **strongly recommends** submitting applications in the system as early as possible prior to the due date, and allowing sufficient time to address any resolve all technical issues prior to the deadline. Applications are due to SerVermont in the online system by **November 17, 2017, 5pm EST**.

Applications submitted in the online system after the deadline will be presumed non-compliant, and will not be considered for funding. In order to overcome this presumption, the applicant must provide a written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstance(s) of the delay including, 1) the timing and specific cause(s) of the delay, 2) a National Service

Hotline ticket number, 3) the information provided to the applicant by the National Service Hotline, 4) any other documentation or evidence that supports the justification, 5) ensure that SerVermont receives the justification and any other evidence that substantiates the claimed extenuating circumstance via email no later than one business day after the application deadline(s) stated in this RFP. NOTE: An applicant's failure to provide enough time to submit their application via the online system by the deadline is **NOT** an extenuating circumstance, and applicants should not expect that SerVermont staff and/or National Service Hotline staff will be available or able to assist with submission on the day of the deadline. SerVermont is not obligated to consider any applications submitted after the deadline, and reserves the right to determine whether to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis. Applicants that do not submit a justification or any other evidence to overcome the presumption of non-compliance within the published timeframe will not be reviewed or selected for award.

SerVermont will not consider an advance request to submit a late application. Applicants are encouraged to continue working on their application until it is submitted. If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please carefully review and follow the guidance listed above, and submit your application as soon as possible.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

SerVermont requires that all applicants include the 2% commission withholding for administrative costs. These funds are used to support AmeriCorps member trainings, provide training and technical assistance opportunities to AmeriCorps program staff, and provide all AmeriCorps State programs with access to AmeriCorps member and grant management software.

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:

<https://servermont.vermont.gov/funding-opportunities>

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

NOTE: Single State Applicants do not follow the deadlines listed in the CNCS NOFO, or respond directly to CNCS regarding this application. Single State Applicants follow the schedule below and communicate with SerVermont.

ACTION	DATE
Notice of Funding released from CNCS	August 23, 2017
Request for Proposals released by SerVermont	August 25, 2017
Grant Information Meetings (via Go To Meeting, or phone)	August 31, 2017: 10-11am September 7, 2017: 2-3pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to all	September 8- October 13, 2017
Open Technical Assistance Sessions	September 18, 2017: 1-2 pm October 2, 2017: 1-2 pm
Letter of Intent to Apply and Organizational Risk Assessment due to SerVermont	October 13, 2017 5:00pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent	October 16 – November 10, 2017
Technical Assistance Available regarding submission of applications in eGrants ONLY	November 13 – November 17, 2017
Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont	November 17, 2017 5:00pm
SerVermont Review of Proposals	November 20 – December 1, 2017
Commissioner Approval of Proposals	December 1, 2017
Clarification to Applicants	December 8, 2017
Final Application due to SerVermont	January 5, 2018 5:00pm
Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to CNCS for competition.	January 17, 2018 5:00pm
CNCS Competitive funding decisions	May 15, 2018
Formula funding decisions made by SerVermont	Late May 2018