



Vermont AmeriCorps State REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Program Year 2015-2016

Letter of Intent Deadline:
November 7, 2014, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
November 26, 2014, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

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servermont.vermont.gov

ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont is the Vermont State Commission on National and Community Service and is responsible for administering the federally funded AmeriCorps State program. AmeriCorps State funds are made available through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that oversees National Service, including AmeriCorps.

Formerly the Vermont Commission on National and Community Service, SerVermont was established by Executive Order 05-98 on November 30, 1993 by Governor Howard Dean. The Governor appoints up to 25 individuals to serve three years terms as members of SerVermont's Commission. SerVermont's mission is to promote, support, and recognize volunteerism and community service throughout Vermont.

SerVermont currently funds, monitors, and supports four AmeriCorps State programs through Formula and national Competitive grants. On average there are between 100 and 150 AmeriCorps members serving in SerVermont funded programs. 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 background serving in Vermont at over 500 locations.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SerVermont announces the availability of AmeriCorps State funds to be awarded to new or re-competing AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for the 2015-2016 grant cycle. SerVermont employs an annual Request for Proposals (RFP) process in conjunction with the release of the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and Application Instructions. SerVermont's RFP is based on the CNCS materials related to this competition, which can be found at:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2015>

SerVermont solicits grant proposal through this RFP and makes determinations on which proposals will be entered into the national AmeriCorps State competition. The national competition run by CNCS awards dollars that are part of a national pool of funding for AmeriCorps State, commonly referred to as Competitive Funding. After the national competition results are released, SerVermont then determines which proposals will be considered for Formula funding. Formula dollars are made available to every state and are awarded directly from State Service Commissions to grantees through processes developed by each state. Formula funding is awarded independently from the national AmeriCorps State competition. SerVermont currently awards up to \$600,000 Formula dollars per AmeriCorps program year. 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 2015 NOFO, Application Instructions, 2015 NOFO Glossary, 2015 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents found on the CNCS website. CNCS' national-level documents regarding the 2015 AmeriCorps grant competition supersede this RFP. SerVermont will not support applications that are unresponsive to the CNCS AmeriCorps NOFO and/or do not follow the CNCS Application Instructions.

AmeriCorps State grants support a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. Applications should respond to at least one of the Focus Areas as outlined in the CNCS NOFO. Focus areas are: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environment, Veterans and Military Families, Governor and Mayor Initiatives, Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper, and Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.

SerVermont is interested in proposals that; (1) demonstrate high alignment with the CNCS Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) provide effective solutions that address local community needs; (3) offer meaningful AmeriCorps member experiences; (4) align with existing State and local initiatives; and (5) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results. SerVermont seeks to support a strong AmeriCorps portfolio 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" (definition found in 2015 Notice Glossary) , veterans, and individuals living in poverty. Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges and are responsive to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions will be most competitive.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, GRANT PROVISIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS

The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2015 NOFO and Application Instructions can be found at the CNCS website on the "Funding Opportunities" page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2015>

Applicants should familiarize themselves with AmeriCorps Programming by visiting the CNCS website. More information on how AmeriCorps State and National Programs work 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>

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended by the Serve America Act can be found at this link:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/Service Act 09 11 13.pdf>

AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR Chapter XXV (2012) can be found at this link:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/AmeriCorps Regulations 9 11 13.pdf>

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.

MINIMUM PROGRAM SIZE

Applicants should apply for a minimum of 15 Member Service Years (MSYs), composed of either 15 full time members, the equivalent number of less than full-time members, or a combination of full and less than full-time members. SerVermont does not support AmeriCorps Programs of less than 15 MSY. Potential applicants that cannot support 15 MSY equivalents 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. SerVermont encourages joint collaborative applications among organizations that have similar organizational missions, identified program goals, and community partner agencies.

2015-2016 GRANTS PROCESS

SerVermont solicits proposals annually, and makes determinations as to which proposals will be considered to compete in the national competition, and which proposals will be considered for Formula funding. SerVermont uses a multi-step process that includes the submission of a Letter of Intent, technical assistance with concept development, review and feedback from

SerVermont Commissioners, and the submission of a full proposal that responds to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions.

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

The first Commission review (December 10, 2014) is held after SerVermont staff and commissioners have reviewed all 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 17, 2014.

After commissioner review, applicants will have an opportunity to clarify their proposals and respond to commission feedback for final submission. 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.

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 8, 2015**. Funding is contingent upon timely full year federal appropriations. Applications which are not submitted to the national competition or are not selected for Competitive funding will be considered for “Formula funds” at the state level. 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. Please refer to the full timeline within this RFP for all deadlines.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process includes reviewing proposals 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, and budget adequacy. Applicants should not

assume that reviewers are familiar with the proposed program, even if applicants are re-competing.

In order to maximize the impact of AmeriCorps resources in Vermont, SerVermont will fund programs that can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems using **evidence-based** or **evidence-informed approach** (e.g. performance measure data, quality of research, theory of change).

The proposal should provide reviewers with a clear and compelling understanding of the program, the need in the community, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the described AmeriCorps intervention and roles of AmeriCorps members in that intervention. Reviewers should be able to envision what AmeriCorps members will be doing on a daily basis in program delivery and what the overall goals and outcomes are for the program.

INTENT TO APPLY

Applicants are **required** to submit Letters of Intent for AmeriCorps funding via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@state.vt.us) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@state.vt.us) by **November 7, 2014 at 5:00 PM EST**. A completed Organizational Risk assessment (available from SerVermont: servermont.vermont.gov) should be attached to the email.

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
6. Potential number of AmeriCorps members

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept, including what members would be doing, 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 is strongly encouraged. The

sessions will be on **October 20, 10-11am EST**; and **October 23, 2-3pm EST**. To register for either session please email Philip.kolling@state.vt.us or call at 828-6409, specifying which session you would like to attend, your name, organization, contact phone number and email. *If you are unable to attend either session, alternative arrangements can be made.*

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In an effort to develop a diverse and competitive portfolio of proposals and programs, SerVermont will offer technical assistance to all applicants as they develop their proposals. Two technical assistance “office hour” sessions will be held via GoToMeeting on **November 13, 1-2 pm EST** and **November 17, 10-11am EST**. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in attending either or both sessions. Between **October 23** and **November 21**, technical assistance is available on an on-going basis during business hours by contacting:

Sharon Hearne, Program Officer Sharon.hearne@state.vt.us, 828-6464

Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@state.vt.us, 828-6409

Technical assistance regarding proposal development will not be available three business days prior to the application deadline (November 24, 25, 26). **November 24** through **November 26**, technical assistance will be provided related to submission of applications in eGrants only.

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

ACTION	DATE
Notice of Funding released from CNCS and SerVermont.	Oct 15, 2014
Grant Information Meetings (via Go To Meeting, phone, or in person)	Oct 20, 2014: 10-11am Oct 23, 2014: 2-3pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing)	Oct 23, 2014 to November 21, 2014
Letter of Intent to apply and organizational risk assessment due to SerVermont	November 7, 2014 5:00pm
Technical Assistance Sessions	November 13, 1-2 pm November 17, 10-11am
Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont	November 26, 2014 5:00pm
SerVermont Review of Proposals	November 26 – December 10, 2014
Commissioner Approval of Proposals	December 10, 2014
Clarification to Applicants	December 17, 2014

Final Application due to SerVermont	January 16, 2015 5:00pm
Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to CNCS for competition.	January 21, 2015 5:00pm
CNCS Competitive Decisions (estimated)	May 8, 2015
Formula Decisions made by SerVermont	Late May