



**Vermont AmeriCorps State
PLANNING GRANT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Program Year 2019-2020

Letter of Intent Deadline:
May 24, 2019, 5:00 PM

Application Deadline:
June 14, 2019, 5:00 PM

SerVermont

Agency of Human Services

Office of the Secretary

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(802) 760-0042

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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 year 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 six AmeriCorps State programs through Formula and national Competitive grants. On average there are between 100 and 150 AmeriCorps members serving in SerVermont funded programs. In the currently funded program year SerVermont funded AmeriCorps Programs will support nearly 200 AmeriCorps State members. 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 formula funds to be awarded as Planning Grants to new AmeriCorps applicants through a state competition for the 2019-2020 grant cycle.

SerVermont anticipates at least \$20,000 to be available for planning grants. We will know how much is available in June 2019. Contact us for details. This RFP is not a guarantee of funding or a specific number of awards.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is released in conjunction with the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) 2019 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 on the CNCS website at:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2019/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2019>

SerVermont solicits planning grant proposal through this RFP and makes determinations on which proposals will be funded. Planning grants are funded with formula dollars which 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. Any eligible applicant seeking to apply for AmeriCorps State Planning Grant 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 2019 NOFO, 2019 Application Instructions, 2019 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, 2019 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents found on the CNCS website. CNCS' national-level documents regarding the 2019 AmeriCorps grant competition supersede this RFP.

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 must propose designing a program that will respond to **at least one** of the Focus Areas as outlined in the CNCS NOFO. Focus areas in which we seek to develop programming include: Disaster Services, Education, Veterans and Military Families, Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure, and Opioid Crisis.

SerVermont is interested in proposals which would develop programs that; (1) demonstrate high alignment with the CNCS Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) provide focused and effective solutions that address local community needs; (3) offer meaningful AmeriCorps member experiences; (4) align with existing State and local initiatives; (5) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results, and (6) are cost effective, generating high ratio of federal funds to local funds and/or bringing significant outside financial support to the initiative.

SerVermont seeks to support 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. Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges, are responsive to the CNCS NOFA and Application Instructions, and those that leverage outside funding sources will be most competitive.

PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING GRANT

AmeriCorps planning grants allow organizations and consortiums to begin developing their plans to host an AmeriCorps program. Planning grant activities involve work to establish a new program in Vermont. Organizations use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the subsequent grant cycle. Activities that may take place under the grant include creating partnerships, developing position descriptions, developing member training, supervision and monitoring policies and procedures, and developing budgets. Planning Grants DO NOT provide funding for staff time spent fundraising or supporting AmeriCorps members.

AWARD / PROJECT PERIOD

Programs funded through this RFP are funded for one-year projects only. The project start date is September 1, 2019 and grants last up-to one year, ending on or prior to August 31, 2020. The project start date may not occur prior to CNCS awarding the grant. Grantees may not incur costs prior to the start of the planning grant contract.

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; and Tribes.

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.

All applicants must be able to comply with the Agency of Human Services' customary grant provisions and attachments.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, GRANT PROVISIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS

The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2019 NOFA 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/2019/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2019>

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>

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>

2019-2020 GRANTS PROCESS

SerVermont uses a multi-step process that includes the submission of a Letter of Intent, technical assistance with concept development, and the submission of a full planning grant proposal that responds to the CNCS NOFO and Application Instructions.

The Letter of Intent allows applicants to express their interest in AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding, and briefly present the proposed program concept they plan to develop during the grant term. SerVermont staff will review all Letters of Intent and offer technical assistance to all interested applicants to ensure strong planning grant designs and final applications are submitted.

Full applications will be submitted via the eGrants system (www.egrants.cns.gov). It is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process as soon as possible.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process includes reviewing proposals against the basic selection criteria included in the AmeriCorps NOFA, 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 concept, organizational capacity to manage the grant and program, and budget adequacy. In order to maximize the impact of AmeriCorps resources in Vermont, SerVermont will fund planning grants that will develop programs which 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 applicant’s desire to host an AmeriCorps program in the future, the need for the program in the

community, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the stated need.

INTENT TO APPLY

Applicants are **required** to submit Letters of Intent for AmeriCorps Planning Grant funding via email to **both** Sharon Hearne (Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov) and Phil Kolling (Philip.kolling@vermont.gov) by **May 24, 2019 at 5:00 PM EST**. A completed Organizational Risk assessment (available from Sharon Hearne) should be attached to the email.

Letters of Intent must be no longer than two types pages (not including the Organizational Risk Assessment), may be in Microsoft Word or PDF format, and must include the following information:

Page 1: Cover Sheet

1. Legal Name of Applicant
2. Contact Person
3. Contact information including: address, phone, email and fax.
4. CNCS Focus Area that the program will address.

Page 2: Program Concept

General program concept the grant will plan, including what members may be doing, and what research supports the proposed approach.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In an effort to develop a diverse and competitive portfolio of proposals and programs, SerVermont will offer technical assistance to all planning grant applicants as they develop their proposals. Please contact SerVermont staff if you are interested in technical assistance:

Sharon Hearne, Program Officer Sharon.hearne@vermont.gov

Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov

Technical assistance regarding program design will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent from **May 24 to June 14**.

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

ACTION	DATE
AmeriCorps Planning Grant Request for Proposals released by SerVermont	January 31, 2019
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to all	January 31, 2019 to May 24, 2019
Letter of Intent to apply and organizational risk assessment due to SerVermont	May 24, 2019 5:00pm
Technical Assistance Available (ongoing) to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent	May 24 – June 14, 2019
Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont	June 14, 2019 5:00pm
SerVermont Review of Proposals	June 14 – June 21, 2019
Clarification to Applicants (if any)	June 24, 2019
Final Application due to SerVermont	June 25, 2019 noon
Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to CNCS for formula funding.	June 27, 2019 5:00pm