



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Vermont AmeriCorps State 2024

ISSUE DATE: September 22, 2023

APPLICANTS CONFERENCE: October 5, 2023 at 10 AM EST

LETTER OF INTENT DUE BY: October 13, 2023

APPLICATION DUE BY: November 3, 2023 at 12 NOON EST

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES, AND ADDENDUMS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RFP WILL BE POSTED AT:

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

THE STATE WILL MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT INTERESTED PARTIES WITH UPDATED INFORMATION. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH APPLICANT TO PERIODICALLY CHECK THE ABOVE WEBPAGE FOR ANY AND ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES AND ADDENDUMS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RFP.

STATE CONTACT: PHIL KOLLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE: (802) 760-0042

EMAIL: PHILIP.KOLLING@VERMONT.GOV

SerVermont

Agency of Human Services

Office of the Secretary

280 State Drive

Waterbury VT, 05671

<https://servermont.vermont.gov>

2024-2025 SerVermont AmeriCorps State Request for Proposals

SCOPE AND BACKGROUND: Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), SerVermont, Agency of Human Services (hereinafter the “State”) is seeking to award grants to one or more eligible entities to operate AmeriCorps State programs in Vermont.

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 AmeriCorps 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.

GRANT PERIOD: Grants arising from this RFP will be for a period of one-year, with the option to apply for future years of funding pending the availability of federal funding. AmeriCorps Programs operating under awards resulting from this RFP may begin no earlier than September 1, 2024.

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT: All initial communications concerning this RFP are to be addressed in writing to the State Contact listed on the front page of this RFP.

APPLICANTS CONFERENCE: All applicants are required to attend an informational meeting remotely at the time and date indicated on the front page of this RFP. Potential applicants must send an email to the State Contact with Applicant’s organization and contact information and shall then be provided call-in details. Any applicant that is unable to attend this meeting may request alternate arrangements to meet with SerVermont staff.

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 2024-2025 AmeriCorps program year. AmeriCorps State funds are made available through the AmeriCorps, the federal agency that oversees national service, including AmeriCorps State and National. SerVermont administers an annual Request for Proposals (RFP) process in conjunction with the release of the AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funding Opportunity or Notice of Funding Available (NOFO/NOFA) and the AmeriCorps competition. SerVermont’s RFP is based on the AmeriCorps materials that govern 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 2024 NOFO, 2024 Application Instructions, 2024 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, 2024 Performance Measure Instructions, and other related documents. AmeriCorps’ national-level documents regarding the 2024 AmeriCorps competition supersede this RFP.

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SerVermont seeks to support a strong and balanced portfolio of AmeriCorps programs that; (1) addresses a wide range of AmeriCorps focus areas, including focus areas in 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; (4) is likely to operate with compliance and at a high level of performance, including fully utilizing the funding resources available in VT, and maximizing the number of service opportunities in VT.

AMERICORPS REGULATIONS, TERMS AND CONDITIONS, & APPLICATION MATERIALS: The AmeriCorps State and National FY 2024 NOFO and other materials can be found at the AmeriCorps website: <https://americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2024-ameri-corps-state-national-grants>

TYPES OF AWARDS: AmeriCorps programs receive funding from one of two sources, Competitive or Formula awards, and operate as either cost-reimbursement or fixed price grants. Fixed price grants are available only to previously funded programs with a track record of compliance. Programs submit one proposal to apply to any type of award. 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 federal appropriations and state allocations of federal dollars.

Competitive Award

Competitive funds are awarded directly by AmeriCorps. SerVermont selects applications to submit to AmeriCorps for review in competition with proposals from all single and multi-state applicants. AmeriCorps runs a Peer and Staff Review to make competitive funding determinations. Applications submitted to the competition that are not selected by AmeriCorps for Competitive funding are automatically considered for a Formula Award from SerVermont.

Formula Award

Formula funds are awarded directly by SerVermont. Formula funds are made available to SerVermont based on the federal allocation for AmeriCorps and state population. The amount of funds available to SerVermont depends on the allocation from AmeriCorps. 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 AmeriCorps competition.

SCOPE OF SERVICES: Successful applicants will be expected to operate the full AmeriCorps program as awarded in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations at both the federal and state level.

MINIMUM PROGRAM SIZE: AmeriCorps and SerVermont do not have a threshold for the minimum number of members or MSYs (Member Service Years) required of applications in this

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competition. However, proposed AmeriCorps programs should be large enough to make a significant difference in the community they serve and provide an intervention at scale. SerVermont strongly encourages applicants to design programs of at-least 15 MSY, or at least 20 members. The basic administrative costs, requirements, and administrative burden associated with operating an AmeriCorps program makes achieving an economy of scale necessary.

Only new applicants should request less-than 15 MSY or 20 members and should have potential to grow in future years to 15 MSY or 20 members. Potential applicants that cannot support at-least 15 MSY or 20 members are encouraged to collaborate with other organizations or applicants to achieve that threshold, and SerVermont encourages joint collaborative applications among organizations that have similar organizational missions, identified program goals, and community partner agencies.

If you believe your application will be for less-than 15 MSY or 20 slots, you are encouraged to consult with SerVermont prior to submission of your application.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: Successful applicants will be expected to: 1) meet the performance measures outlined in their final AmeriCorps application, 2) enroll 100% of the Member Service Years awarded to them, 3) utilize 100% of the AmeriCorps dollars awarded to them, 4) meet the match listed in their budget, 5) operate the program in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, terms, conditions and regulations.

SerVermont and the Agency of Human Services may 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 on which proposals will be sent to compete in the national competition, which proposals will only be considered for formula funding, and how formula funds are awarded.

SerVermont is interested in funding proposals that; (1) align with the AmeriCorps Focus Areas outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO; (2) focus on AmeriCorps 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) recruit local residents to serve as AmeriCorps members; (7) support distressed communities; (8) leverage AmeriCorps resources towards results, and (9) are cost effective, generating high ratio of federal funds to local funds, bringing significant outside financial support to the initiative.

SerVermont staff and commissioners will review proposals. All applications that meet the eligibility requirements, follow the applications instructions, and have met submission deadlines will be reviewed. The review process includes reviewing applications against the basic selection criteria included in the AmeriCorps NOFO, ensuring innovation, and ensuring diversity across the portfolio in terms of geographic, demographic, and programmatic distribution. In evaluating

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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.

Proposals that demonstrate innovation and creative approaches to address pressing challenges, are based on strong evidence, are responsive to the AmeriCorps NOFO and Application Instructions, and leverage outside funding sources and/or request a low cost per MSY will be most competitive.

During review, suggestions for improving or clarifying applications will be compiled, and feedback will be provided to the applicant. Feedback and clarification will be provided to applicants by December 13, 2023.

SerVermont may decide to submit an application to AmeriCorps contingent upon certain changes or clarifications being made in the application. Applicants that have met the minimum criteria and submitted a responsive application will have an opportunity to clarify their proposals and respond to commission feedback for **resubmission by December 15, 2023**.

Once final applications are submitted to SerVermont, the final AmeriCorps State slate of applications will be submitted to the AmeriCorps competition by the January 4, 2024 deadline. SerVermont is not obligated to submit all applications that we receive to the AmeriCorps competition.

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS: The State shall have the authority to evaluate Responses and select the Applicant(s) as may be determined to be in the best interest of the State and consistent with the goals and performance requirements outlined in this RFP. The State of Vermont reserves the right to obtain clarification or additional information necessary to properly evaluate a proposal. Failure of applicant to respond to a request for additional information or clarification could result in rejection of that applicant's proposal. To secure a project that is deemed to be in the best interest of the State, the State reserves the right to accept or reject any and all applications, in whole or in part, with or without cause, and to waive technicalities in submissions. The State also reserves the right to make grant awards outside of the awarded grants where it is deemed in the best interest of the State.

PRESENTATION: An in-person or webinar presentation by the applicants may be required by the State if it will help the State's evaluation process. The State will factor information presented during presentations into the evaluation. Applicants will be responsible for all costs associated with providing the presentation.

METHOD OF AWARD: Awards will be made in the best interest of the State. The State may award one or more grants and reserves the right to make additional awards to other compliant applicants at any time if such award is deemed to be in the best interest of the State.

EVALUATION CRITERIA: Consideration shall be given to the applicant's project approach and methodology, qualifications and experience, ability to provide the services within the defined timeline, and/or success in operating similar projects, as applicable.

GRANT AWARD NEGOTIATION: Upon completion of the evaluation process, the State may select one or more applicants with which to negotiate a grant award, based on the evaluation findings and other criteria deemed relevant for ensuring that the decision made is in the best interest of the State. In the event State is not successful in negotiating a grant award with a selected applicant, the State reserves the option of negotiating with another applicant, or to end the proposal process entirely.

COST OF PREPARATION: Applicants shall be solely responsible for all expenses incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP and shall be responsible for all expenses associated with any presentations or demonstrations associated with this request and/or any proposals made.

CONTRACT TERMS: The selected applicant(s) will be expected to sign a contract with the State, including the Standard Contract Form and Attachment C as attached to this RFP for reference.

CONTENT AND FORMAT OF APPLICATIONS: Applications must be meet the criteria outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO, Application Instructions, and other materials that guide the federal competition. The application should be responsive to the AmeriCorps NOFO and other documents and provide reviewers with a clear and compelling understanding of the proposed program including the need in the community, a description of exactly what AmeriCorps members will be doing to address the need, and recent and relevant data at the national, state, and local level that support the described AmeriCorps intervention and role of AmeriCorps members in that intervention. Reviewers should be able to envision what AmeriCorps members will be doing day-to-day and understand the overall goals and outcomes of the program after reading the application. Applicants should not assume that reviewers are familiar with the proposed program or intervention even if applicants are re-competing or well known to the public.

Applications should propose activity under at least one of the Focus Areas as outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO. In addition, AmeriCorps has established Funding Priorities and seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in programs that address issues outlined in their funding priorities. Strong applications will propose activities that demonstrate high alignment with AmeriCorps 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, and AmeriCorps member activities should be explicitly stated in the application.

SerVermont will not support applications that are unresponsive to the AmeriCorps NOFO, do not follow the AmeriCorps Application Instructions, and/or do not follow the SerVermont timeline and instructions.

COVER LETTER: The Cover Letter must be submitted via email to the State single point of contact. Letters of Intent must be no longer than three typed pages (not including the AmeriCorps Risk Assessment, if applicable), 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, and email.
5. AmeriCorps Focus Area that the program will address (if any).
6. AmeriCorps 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.
8. Estimate of the funding request the application will include.

Page 2-3: Program Concept

One to two pages describing the general concept of the program, what specific direct service activities members would be providing in the community, how those service activities solve a community problem or challenge, and what research supports the proposed approach to solving the problem or challenge.

A completed AmeriCorps Risk Assessment must be attached to the Letter of Intent email along with **ALL** supporting documents for the risk assessment for all “New” and “Recompeting” applicants. Continuation applications DO NOT need to complete the risk assessment. The AmeriCorps Risk Assessment is available on SerVermont’s website, or upon request can be emailed.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Applications must be received by the State by the due date specified on the front page of this RFP. Late applications will not be considered unless the process outlined in this RFP for submitting late applications.

The State may, for cause, issue an addendum to change the date and/or time when applications are due. If a change is made, the State will inform all applicants by posting at the webpage indicated on the front page of this RFP.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION IN AMERICORPS ONLINE SYSTEM: Applications are submitted through AmeriCorps’ online system, eGrants. Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop and save their proposal in a word processing program outside of AmeriCorps’ system, not within eGrants. SerVermont staff will be available to provide training and technical assistance with submitting through the online system upon request, and requests must be made well ahead of the deadline for submission.

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All applicants, including previously funded applicants, are **strongly encouraged** to create an account in eGrants 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. Applicants must ensure that the individual who submits their application has the signatory authority to do so. 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 enough time to address and resolve all technical issues prior to the deadline. Applications are due to SerVermont in the online system by **November 3, 2023, 12:00 Noon EST.**

NOTE: Due to unforeseen circumstances with the eGrants system early submission of applications is encouraged more than ever.

Applications submitted in the online system after the deadline will be presumed non-compliant and will not be reviewed or 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 themselves 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.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS: Other documents as outlined in the AmeriCorps NOFO and other materials must be delivered via email to the State single point of contact by the application deadline.

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

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proposals. Please contact SerVermont staff if you would like technical assistance. Technical assistance will be available on an appointment basis during business hours and as available by contacting: Phil Kolling, Executive Director philip.kolling@vermont.gov, (802) 760-0042

Between **September 25** and **October 13**, SerVermont will offer technical assistance regarding concept development and program design. Technical assistance regarding concept development will not be available after the letter of intent deadline (October 13).

Between **October 16** and **October 27**, SerVermont will offer technical assistance regarding program design and application will be available to organizations which have submitted letters of intent.

Between **October 30** and **November 3**, technical assistance will be provided related to submission of applications in AmeriCorps' eGrants system only.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS: SerVermont requires that all applicants follow AmeriCorps budget instructions, and cost per MSY guidelines. SerVermont encourages applicants to only propose as much match as the proposed program requires to operate.

Prior to submission of an application applicants should double check their budgets to ensure that the math used to calculate various line items is correct, and the total request in the budget narrative matches the dollar value listed in the Executive Summary. Additionally, applicants should double check that they have entered the required information in the Source of Funds section currently.

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. A link to Attachment C can be found on SerVermont's website.

GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE: NOTE: Single State Applicants **do not follow the deadlines listed in the AmeriCorps NOFO or respond directly to AmeriCorps regarding this application.** Single State Applicants follow the schedule below and communicate with SerVermont.

Application Action	Date
Notice of Funding released from AmeriCorps	August 2023
Request for Proposals released by SerVermont	September 22, 2023
Grant Information Meeting (via Teams, or phone)	October 5, 2023; 10-11 AM
Technical Assistance available to all by appointment (ongoing)	September 8- September 29, 2022
Letter of Intent to Apply and Organizational Risk Assessment and related documents due to SerVermont	October 13, 2023; 12:00 Noon EST
Technical Assistance available to organizations which submitted Letters of Intent by appointment (ongoing)	October 16 – October 27, 2023

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Application Action	Date
Technical Assistance Available regarding submission of applications in eGrants ONLY	October 30 – November 3, 2023
Final Applications due in e-Grants to SerVermont	November 3, 2023; 12:00 Noon EST
SerVermont Review of Proposals	November 6 – December 8, 2022
Clarification provided to Applicants by SerVermont	December 13, 2023
Clarification submission to SerVermont	December 15, 2023; 12:00 Noon EST
Deadline for SerVermont to submit applications to AmeriCorps for competition.	January 4, 2024; 5:00 PM
AmeriCorps Competitive funding decisions	Mid-April, 2024
Formula funding decisions made by SerVermont	Mid-May 2024
All AmeriCorps Grant Awards Complete	Mid-July 2024