AmeriCorps State and National New Direct Grantee Resource Guide

AmeriCorps State and National
Version 1
April 26, 2022

Table of Contents

Summary

This is a training tool designed to help AmeriCorps grantees manage their programs. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Part I: Introduction

Congratulations on being awarded an AmeriCorps grant from AmeriCorps State and National. Starting a new AmeriCorps program requires a significant amount of time and effort and a thorough understanding of program requirements and regulations that guide AmeriCorps. This document is intended to help you with the program start-up and management process by highlighting requirements and where to find them and helping you become familiar with the AmeriCorps Grant Terms and Conditions, Regulations, and your Notice of Grant Award. This document is intended for informational purposes only.

Overview of AmeriCorps State and National

AmeriCorps State and National programs recruit, train, and place AmeriCorps members in service locations to address unmet community needs. Multi-state programs and Native Nation programs (known collectively as "National Direct or Direct grantees ") are directly funded by the federal agency AmeriCorps.

Single-state AmeriCorps programs are funded through State Service Commissions, which receive competitive funding and formula allocations from AmeriCorps. According to the regulation in §2550.2 (I), a State Service Commission is a bipartisan or nonpartisan State entity, approved by AmeriCorps, consisting of 15–25 commissioners (appointed by the chief executive officer of the State), that is responsible for developing a comprehensive national service plan, assembling applications for funding and approved national service positions, and administering national and community service programs in the State.

Multi-state programs (National Direct grantees) are awarded funds through AmeriCorps State and National Competitive grant opportunities. Single-state programs (State Commission subgrantees) are awarded funds through AmeriCorps State and National Competitive or State Formula opportunities.

AmeriCorps Staff Roles

There are various staff you will work with at AmeriCorps as you implement and lead your program. The Office of Regional Operations staff serve as your primary point of contact. Your assigned Portfolio Manager will provide you with regular program technical assistance and agency communications. Below is an overview of all AmeriCorps departments that will support your program operations as a grantee.

While we will do all that we can to maintain staffing continuity with your program, assignments will change during your time as a grantee due to changes in AmeriCorps staffing or to evenly distribute workload among our staff, etc. Changes in AmeriCorps contacts should not cause you disruptions since all staff are committed to providing you with quality, timely assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions and concerns.

Office of Regional Operations

- Location: Headquartered in Washington, D.C. and eight regional offices:
  - Mid-Atlantic (Philadelphia, PA)
  - Midwest (Columbus, OH)
  - Mountain (Denver, CO)
  - North Central (Kansas City, MO)
  - Northeast (Concord, NH)
  - South Central (Austin, TX)
  - Southeast (Atlanta, GA)
  - West (Los Angeles, CA)
- Office Purpose: Responsible for providing support, technical assistance, and oversight to AmeriCorps State and National grantees; including: State Commission grants, National Direct grants, and Native Nations grants.
- Grantee Interaction: Primary point of contact, frequent direct communications with assigned Portfolio Manager
- Regional Office Key Staff:
  - Regional Administrator
  - Deputy Regional Administrator
  - Senior Portfolio Manager
  - Portfolio Manager
  - Associate Portfolio Manager
- Contact: Region Offices | AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps State and National

- Location: Washington, D.C.
- Office Purpose: Responsible for assessing, creating, and implementing governance policies and procedures, managing grant competitions, and providing AmeriCorps State and National specific training and support to the Office of Regional Operations staff.
- Grantee Interaction: Secondary point of contact (receives indirect grantee communication from Office of Regional Operations staff), monthly grantee calls and regular communications via ASNInformation@cns.gov.
- Key Staff:
  - Director
  - Deputy Director
  - Policy & Guidance Team
  - Program Impact Team
  - Grant Review Team
  - Training Team
- Contact: ASNInformation@cns.gov

Office of Grant Administration

- Location: Washington, D.C.
- Office Purpose: Responsible for facilitating competitive grant application review processes; conducting pre-award due diligence, issuing all awards and AmeriCorps State and National grants, ensuring AmeriCorps' compliance with governmentwide grantmaking requirements, and providing guidance and occasional training for grantee financial grants management activities (such as preparing Federal Financial Reports and closing out grants).

- Grantee Interaction: Limited direct interaction beyond participation in monthly grantee calls, sending occasional communications via AmeriCorpsOGA@cns.gov (this mailbox is not regularly monitored for incoming messages), and as requested by portfolio managers.
- Key Staff:
    o Director
    o Deputy Director
    o Grant Application Review Process Team
    o Award Team
    o Training Team
- Contact: Portfolio Manager, who will engage the Office of Grant Administration if needed.

Office of Monitoring

- Location: Washington, D.C.
- Office Purpose: Responsible for identifying and resolving noncompliance through the completion of standard monitoring activities of AmeriCorps grantees in order to increase their impact, strengthen their capacity to reduce risks, and promote a holistic approach to continuous improvement.
- Grantee Interaction: Grantees selected for monitoring activities will have direct contact with an assigned Monitoring Officer and/or Associate Monitoring Officer as well as a Corrective Action Planning Specialist.
- Key Staff:
    o Director
    o Deputy Director
    o Senior Monitoring Officers
    o Monitoring Officers
    o Corrective Action Planning (CAP) Specialists
    o Associate Monitoring Officers
    o Monitoring Support Assistants
    o Monitoring Analysts
    o Criminal History Check Program Manager
    o Office of Audit and Debt Resolution Team
- Contact: monitoring@cns.gov

Office of the National Service Trust

- Location: Washington, D.C.
- Office Purpose: The Office of the National Service Trust is responsible for resolving programmatic and member issues, maintaining member records and documentation, and managing risks associated with payments and managing Trust investments.
- Grantee Interaction: Direct contact with assigned Trust Officer
- Key Staff:
    o Director
    o Deputy Director
    o Trust Officers
    o Trust Accountants
- Contact: Trust@cns.gov

Designating Your Agency Contact

Once you have determined your internal communication structure for managing your grant, please ensure that the correct contacts for your program are updated in the eGrants system to receive all grantee communications from AmeriCorps State and National (ASNInformation@cns.gov). Please refer to the Populating the Contact Information Module in eGrants to update your contacts. (Information related to accessing eGrants is covered later in this document). It is important to make these updates so that your program receives pertinent communications from AmeriCorps.

Part II: Grant Award Process

Pre-Grant Award Requirements

The Office of Grant Administration will send you an email correspondence via eGrants regarding the completion and submission of the related forms and any e-courses for new grantees. Please be sure to complete these activities as soon as possible to avoid delays in receiving your award.

One particularly important requirement for new AmeriCorps grantees is establishing an account with the Department of Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). This will enable you to draw down funds on your award as PMS disburses grant funds on behalf of AmeriCorps. All programs must complete a quarterly report (a Federal Financial Report, called the SF-425) on the funds that you have received through the Payment Management System. This form is submitted online to Health and Human Services (HHS) via the HHS Payment Management System. Reports are due on April 30, July 30, October 30, and January 30 for the preceding quarter during the time that your grant is active. You must also submit a quarterly report within 120 days of the end of your period of performance as part of completing the financial reconciliation of your grant during the closeout process.

Pre-Award Costs

The Office of Management and Budget authorizes federal agencies to allow pre-award costs under certain circumstances (§ 200.458 Pre-award costs). Of note, only costs that would be allowable post-award would be allowable pre-award. All pre-award costs are incurred at the organization's own risk. AmeriCorps is under no obligation to reimburse for pre-award costs if the organization does not receive an award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs.

For AmeriCorps grantees, the agency may approve costs that support program start-up by allowing the grantee to establish an infrastructure to support members and volunteers and complete training and National Service Criminal History Checks before service begins. The agency never approves the following costs related to members: AmeriCorps State and National member living allowances, expenses, and member support costs. Additionally, approval of pre-award costs does not authorize a grantee or subgrantee to have AmeriCorps members begin their term of service. AmeriCorps members may only begin service after the agency has issued a grant award and after the start of the member enrollment period. Members may not count any hours served prior to the award being issued as part of their term of service.

Prospective grantees entering year one of a new grant may request approval for pre-award costs by submitting a written request to their Portfolio Manager. The Portfolio Manager will review the request and make a recommendation to the Office of Grant Administration. If approved,

the Office of Grant Administration will issue the formal approval to you, the grantee, via correspondence in eGrants.

Award Notification

Soon after you receive notification that your organization has been approved for a grant, your Portfolio Manager will contact you to inform you of any steps you must take before the grant can be awarded and/or before members may begin service. If your award has a special condition(s), make note of the special condition(s) and be sure to adhere to the resolution deadline and any consequences for non-compliance. Most likely, your Portfolio Manager will request to review your programmatic policy and procedure documents. These programmatic documents could include member position descriptions, member contracts, member timesheets, criminal history check procedures, memoranda of agreement, and other documents as appropriate.

The agency recommends you inform your service sites and other stakeholders of the start-up process timeframe, including the budget period start date and the member enrollment period start date. Additionally, programs cannot enroll members until the member enrollment period has begun, which happens on or after the start of the budget period.

Member Enrollment Period[1]

A program's member enrollment period is the time during which members funded from a given grant year's resources may begin service and is usually one year in length. The Notice of Grant Award and eGrants both provide these dates. New programs often assume that members who are enrolled during that period must complete service by the end date of the member enrollment period, but this is not the case. The length of time members have to complete service is determined by their term of service. In most cases, members have a maximum of one year to complete service. Your program design should establish whether you set a member enrollment deadline within the member enrollment period or whether you allow enrollment to occur throughout the entire period (commonly referred to as "rolling enrollment").

Part III: Support

AmeriCorps is a large national network and will provide resources to support you in the start-up and ongoing implementation of your program. Below is a summary of these resources, with particular emphasis on the ones that you will use most in the start-up phase of your program.

Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) for New AmeriCorps Direct Programs

The agency's support plan for new programs is tailored to the unique needs of each program. The following TTA resources are available to you as you plan for the first year of your program.

---

[1] A member's term of service may be extended if a member is suspended and the program completed and approved a change of status in My AmeriCorps.

- **Portfolio Manager Check-in Calls**: Portfolio Managers schedule regular check-in calls with grantees. The purpose of these calls is to receive updates on the program and provide technical assistance aimed at supporting the program's success.

- **ASN Monthly Grantee Calls**: ASN hosts a monthly grantee call for staff from State Service Commissions, National Direct/Direct, and Native Nation programs. The purpose of the call is to provide grantees with updates from agency leaders and to respond to grantee questions.

- **Online Resources**: The agency website, AmeriCorps.gov, offers a variety of resources for grantees, including policy guidance, process guides, and templates. To locate these resources, navigate to the website homepage, click on Grantees & Sponsors, and navigate to State & National Direct Grantees. From there, scroll down to the "Resources for Direct Grantees" section and use the dropdown toolbar to identify a resource area.

- **The AmeriCorps State and National Grantee Symposium**: This annual conference offers opportunities to network with other national service programs, receive training on key topics, and receive updates on AmeriCorps policies. The Symposium is usually held in the fall and has previously been held in-person in Washington, D.C. or virtually.

Part IV: Governing Authorities and Guidance

Please spend a significant amount of time during the start-up phase becoming familiar with the rules and regulations of your AmeriCorps grant as well as applicable state and federal requirements. This point cannot be over-emphasized. As a recipient of taxpayer-funded awards, you have the responsibility to know the rules and regulations that govern the use of these funds since improper use may result in your reimbursement of all or some of the funds and other possible actions. One recommendation is to thoroughly review your Notice of Grant Award with everyone in your organization who will be involved with your grant because it is the binding agreement between you and AmeriCorps. It also includes links to applicable Terms and Conditions and other guidance related to your specific award.

AmeriCorps State and National Specific Rules

In order to run an effective program, grantees must know the rules of AmeriCorps State and National, which can be difficult to navigate even for organizations that have prior federal grant experience.

AmeriCorps State and National requirements are found in our statute, regulations, and Terms and Conditions.

- The **statute** that authorizes federal funding for AmeriCorps State and National is the National and Community Service Act of 1990. Congress has amended this Act several times since its original passage in 1990, including through the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, and most recently through the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009.

- The **regulations** are AmeriCorps State and National's interpretations of the statute and set out the agency's purpose and powers, and the circumstances of applying the Statute. Regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps State and National regulations can be found in Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations. AmeriCorps begins with Chapter 7, section 1200 and AmeriCorps

State and National begins with Chapter 25, section 2520.10. All federal grantees also must follow the Uniform Administrative Requirements outlined in [2 CFR 200](#). Citations for regulations are written like this: 45 C.F.R. §2522.230 or abbreviated as §2522.230.

- **AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions** are additional grant requirements that have two versions: General (all AmeriCorps) and Program-Specific (AmeriCorps State and National). New Terms and Conditions are issued each year, and citations are written like this: [AC I. B.2].

- **Notice of Funding Opportunity (Notice) and Application Instructions** for which your grant was awarded contains important information. You will find it a helpful reference at many times.

- **Notice of Grant Award (NGA)**: this is the contract between grantees and AmeriCorps for the specific grant award. All Terms and Conditions of direct grantees must be passed on to subrecipients.

- **AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps State and National Policies** provide supplemental and recent guidance relevant to AmeriCorps grants.

Other Requirements

- **State Laws**: AmeriCorps grantees must become aware of the laws of all of the states in which their members serve. For example, you should find out about the state laws pertaining to taxes, workers compensation, background checks, etc. If you need assistance accessing this information, State Service Commissions can be a helpful resource. Contact information for the Commissions can be found on the [State Service Commissions page](#) on the AmeriCorps website.

- **Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance**: the [Uniform Guidance](#) outlines administrative requirements and cost principles for federal grant recipients. It also includes requirements for federal agencies related to grants and cooperative agreements. Fixed-price grants, including Education Award Programs (EAPs), are not required to follow the cost principles in the Uniform Guidance.

Part V: Program Start-up Considerations

As you read the Governing Authorities and Policies, you will see that there are many required policies and procedures that you will need to develop and manage. This section will highlight some of the systems or aspects of program management you will develop during the start-up period. These examples are not the only aspects of program management you will need to consider and develop during start-up. Please discuss others with your AmeriCorps Portfolio Manager.

Financial Management Systems

Under AmeriCorps regulations, grantees must maintain financial management systems that provide accurate, complete, and current disclosure of AmeriCorps grant finances.[2]

---

[2] Financial reporting requirements are reduced for EAPs and other fixed price grants

Components of a financial management system include:

- adequate practices that address regulatory requirements
- written policies and procedures
- documentation of expenses
- cash management systems
- an efficient accounting system
- budget controls
- time and activity documentation
- documentation of matching requirements and in-kind contributions
- timely, complete, and accurate reporting
- internal controls.

The following are several important financial management facts for new grantees:

- Each AmeriCorps grant must be tracked separately from other grants and programs.
- Staff identified on the AmeriCorps grant budget –whether paid with AmeriCorps funds or match (called "Grantee Share" in the eGrants budget)—must have a timekeeping system that documents the actual amount of time spent on each AmeriCorps grant and on other activities[3].
  - o If a subgrantee is found to be out of compliance with grant requirements, AmeriCorps will hold the prime grantee liable. Please note that there are a number of for profit and nonprofit companies that offer training on federal grants management. Such courses would be especially helpful for grantee organizations that have no or minimal experience with federal grants management. While these trainings do not focus on the specifics of managing finances for an AmeriCorps program, they provide general guidance on federal requirements and setting up sound accounting practices. It is the grantee's responsibility to ensure that adequate financial systems and well-trained staff are in place to manage AmeriCorps resources.

Policies and Procedures

During the start-up period, you should develop and document policies and procedures that outline how your program will be managed. A well-written and comprehensive set of policies and procedures will help your program run more efficiently and effectively, while simultaneously ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. Some policies are required by mandated grant requirements, but you will want to create other policies as well that are tailored to your program and your organization.

Required Policies: Before you enroll members, create policies compliant with AmeriCorps requirements. Refer to the regulations and grant Terms and Conditions for guidance on developing your policies[4]. Ask your Portfolio Manager for assistance. Your program policies and

---

[3] Staff timesheet requirements follow the OMB Uniform Guidance and do not apply for EAPs or other fixed-price grantees.
[4] Citations for requirements for the above-mentioned policies can be found at
https://www.americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/directs-territories-tribes

program oversight must ensure compliance with grant requirements, including, but not limited to:

- non-discrimination
- prohibited activities[5]
- reasonable accommodation
- drug-free workplace
- grievance procedures
- National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC)
- AmeriCorps member safety safeguards
- site selection criteria and process
- recordkeeping
- member eligibility documentation
- member information confidentiality.

Program-Specific Policies: Your organization should develop your program-specific policies to best meet your operating needs. Policies should be well documented, universally applied to all members, and consistent with your existing organizational policies. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- member vacation and sick leave
- member selection and evaluation
- member termination steps, including Compelling Personal Circumstances
- member code of conduct standards
- attendance requirements
- dress codes or uniform requirements
- promoting AmeriCorps identity
- training or certification requirements
- teleservice (when applicable).

Developed policies will serve as the basis for your site and member agreements, which are discussed later in this guide. Include these policies in any program manual or member handbook. Throughout the program duration, the agency recommends to continue developing and refining policies and procedures.

Program Manual: The agency recommends to create a program policies and procedures manual accessible to anyone affiliated with your program. Your Portfolio Manager can provide you with suggestions for the content of your manual as well as samples from existing AmeriCorps programs.

Site Management

Effective site management is a critical component of a successful program. During the program start-up period, dedicate ample time to putting site management systems in place. Key elements include:

- communicating regularly with service sites
- communicating expectations
- providing training and technical assistance

---

[5] See 45 C.F.R. §2522.65 and Supervision and Support in the Terms and Conditions.

- holding them accountable through monitoring and oversight
- ensuring all sites are committed to achieving shared program goals.

Site Agreements: Site agreements (also called a contract or memorandum of understanding) outline the terms of each site's participation in your AmeriCorps program. Written site agreements are part of your site management. Ensuring sites are aware of all applicable grant requirements is required, but the agreement content is not written by AmeriCorps. Organizations find it useful to:

- outline expectations
- outline responsibilities
- outline compliance requirements
- clarify program and fiscal management tasks handled by the sites
- describe the number of members serving
- specify organizational match requirements
- include member position descriptions
- include program-specific policies
- include deadlines for member enrollment
- include reporting requirements
- include the AmeriCorps Regulations and Terms and Conditions.

Visit the "Manage Members" section of the "Resources for Direct Grantees" section of the AmeriCorps website to view a Service Site Agreement Outline.

Training and Technical Assistance

Grantees are responsible to provide orientation, training, and technical assistance to anyone associated with the program, including parent organization staff and operating site staff, on the tasks that are required of them. Many programs find it helpful to spend part of the start-up period developing a staff training plan that consists of:

- one-on-one technical assistance
- check-in calls
- group conference calls
- cross-site mentoring
- training calls
- site visits.

Training should include information on the AmeriCorps Regulations and Terms and Conditions. Your Portfolio Manager and other program directors are good resources for information on the topics that might be useful to include in your training plan.

Member Management

As national service participants, AmeriCorps members will have different needs and expectations than your organization's employees, interns, or volunteers. Consequently, during the start-up period you will need to prepare systems and tools to manage your members. Member management includes the development of:

- member service agreements
- member position descriptions
- a recruitment plan

- strategies for retention
- quality member training
- member management system
- member living allowance distribution process
- member benefits – if applicable (e.g. health care, child care, housing, transportation)

Be sure to consult the grant requirements and talk with your Portfolio Manager about member files, living allowance distribution, and choosing a health care provider because there are several requirements related to these aspects of the program.

Member Benefits: AmeriCorps statutes and regulations require all programs to provide specific benefits[6] to AmeriCorps members during their year of service. The following is an overview of the required benefits:

1. **Eligibility to receive a living allowance and health care**. It is mandatory that full-time members receive a living allowance and health care. These benefits are optional for other member types. Note that the living allowance may change from year to year. Always refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to be sure of the correct living allowance amount.
    A. A living allowance is what an AmeriCorps member receives while serving to pay for personal expenses. It is not a wage and should not be paid on an hourly basis. Grantees should pay the living allowance in regular increments (such as weekly or biweekly, it's up to the grantee to decide). Payments should not fluctuate based on the number of hours served in a particular time period. Payments must stop when the member's service stops. Programs must also withhold **federal income tax** from member living allowances and comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements.
        i. The maximum living allowance for each AmeriCorps member position and the minimum amount that a full-time member must receive are identified each year in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
        ii. Education Award Program Fixed Amount awards (EAPs) may provide a living allowance or other in-service benefits to their members but are not required to do so. Full-time Fixed Amount grantees must provide a living allowance to their members.
2. **Child care** for full-time members and less-than-full-time members who serve in a full-time capacity are eligible for child care provided through the [AmeriCorps Child Care Benefits Program](#).
3. **Loan deferment and payment of accrued interest** during the term of service for qualified loans.
4. Members get **training and experience** throughout their term of service. See below for program training expectations.
5. **Liability insurance, FICA, and workers compensation** is provided to members at the expense of the program (if required).
6. Members are eligible for an **Eli Segal AmeriCorps Education Award** upon successful completion of a term of service. It can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. See below for additional information of the Segal Award.

Member Service Agreements: Before starting service, each member must sign a member service agreement. The agreement is an important contract to ensure members understand what is

---

[6] 45 CFR § 2522.240 and 2522.250

expected of them and is required to be signed before their service. The following should be included per AmeriCorps State and National's specific Terms and Conditions:

1. member position description
2. the minimum number of service hours (as required by statute) and other requirements (as developed by the grantee) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award
3. the amount of the education award being offered for successful completion of the terms of service in which the individual is enrolling
4. standards of conduct, as developed by the grantee or subgrantee
5. the list of prohibited activities, including those specified in the regulations at 45 § CFR 2520.65
6. the text of 45 CFR §§ 2540.100(e)–(f), which relates to Non-duplication and Nondisplacement
7. the text of 45 CFR §§ 2520.40–.45, which relates to fundraising by members
8. requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.)
9. civil rights requirements, complaint procedures, and rights of beneficiaries
10. suspension and termination rules
11. the specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause
12. grievance procedures
13. other requirements established by the grantee.

Visit the "Manage Members" section of the "Resources" section of the AmeriCorps.gov State and National Direct grantees' webpage to view a member service agreement template.

Member Recruitment, Eligibility, and Selection: Programs are responsible for developing and implementing recruitment and selection processes to find the right AmeriCorps members for their program design. AmeriCorps members can come from the local community that is being served, the state where the program operates, or other parts of the country.

Programs consider the qualifications needed for each available member position and identify applicants who meet those requirements. Once a grantee has interviewed and selected members, they are responsible for training members to successfully deliver impactful service.

Many programs view recruitment as ongoing and are continually marketing to seek out new members. Programs additionally use the start-up period to prepare for recruitment, including gaining an understanding of requirements:

- member eligibility requirements[7]
- AmeriCorps nondiscrimination policy[8]
- considerations for faith-based and community organizations for member selection
- prohibitions against volunteer and employee duplication or displacement[9]
- age and educational attainment requirements
- U.S. citizenship and lawful permanent resistant requirements

Only U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents are eligible to serve in AmeriCorps. The citizenship and lawful permanent resident requirement for service is stricter than U.S. work

---

[7] See the AmeriCorps Regulations § 2522.200
[8] See the AmeriCorps Regulations § 2540.210 and the AmeriCorps Provision Attachment "The Civil Rights and Non-Harassment Policy"
[9] See the AmeriCorps Regulations § 2540.100

eligibility, and use of the standard I-9 form to check for member eligibility is not sufficient. Please review AmeriCorps Regulations § 2522.200.

As well as building out recruitment policy and procedure decisions:

- determine whether your program will recruit nationally and/or locally for members
- clarify who will be responsible for recruiting members either at grantee or site level or shared
- develop clearly defined service tasks and responsibilities for position descriptions[10]
- incorporate performance measure elements in positions descriptions and recruitment
- verify position descriptions do not include any prohibited activities
- ensure activities are within the scope of the awarded grant application
- develop a screening tool to help you assess each applicant's level of commitment, experience, skills, and ability to serve as a member for the required period of time
- learn and develop AmeriCorps National Service Criminal History Check requirements policies and leverage resources and documents provided by AmeriCorps to comply with the requirements.[11]

All programs must post a description of their program on the web-based My AmeriCorps Recruitment and Placement System. Begin using the MyAmeriCorps recruitment tools for posting positions and accepting applications as soon as your grant has been awarded. Visit the "Recruit Members" of the Resources section of the AmeriCorps.gov State and National Direct grantees' webpage for recruitment resources including: how to access the myAmeriCorps Portal, creating a listing in eGrants, service opportunity listing templates, and service opportunity listing requirements.

Visit the National Service Criminal History Checks page on the AmeriCorps website for further information on these important requirements. The National Service Criminal History Check must be conducted, reviewed, and an eligibility determination made by the grantee based on the results of the check in order for the member to begin their service.

Member Enrollment: Once members have been selected, grantees must enroll them in the myAmeriCorps Portal. (Information related to accessing the Portal is covered later in this document). AmeriCorps expects member enrollments to be recorded in the MyAmeriCorps Portal no later than eight (8) days after the member's start date. The agency will assess compliance with this requirement through Grantee Progress Reports and other oversight actions. Individuals that are not fully enrolled in the My AmeriCorps Portal are not AmeriCorps members.

Visit "Enroll Members" of the Resources section of the AmeriCorps.gov State and National Direct grantees' webpage to view the member enrollment form, member enrollment policies and guidance, and a step-by-step guide for enrolling members.

Member Timekeeping: Terms and Conditions for AmeriCorps State and National grants require grantees to ensure that time and attendance recordkeeping is conducted by the AmeriCorps

---

[10] Allowable activities are those that correspond to the program's outlined objectives and are compliant with AmeriCorps Regulations § 2520.25, § 2520.40- 2520.45, § 2520.50, §2520.65, §2540.100, and Section IV of the AmeriCorps Grant Terms and Conditions.
[11] See the AmeriCorps Regulations § 2522.205, § 2522.206, and § 2522.207 and § 2540.200 - § 2540.207, and see helpful information available Managing AmeriCorps Grants page referenced in Part 7.

member's supervisor. Time and attendance are used to document member eligibility for in-service and post-service benefits.

- Requirements are slightly different for Professional Corps grantees (see Terms and Conditions)
- Timesheets can be either hard copy or electronic (see 2 CFR 200.430)

Member Orientation and Training: Once members begin service, grantees prepare members through orientation and training. Grant requirements[12] specify required topics that must be covered during orientation. Remember to document training occurrences and attendance.

In addition to the required topics, including prohibited activities, consider the following topics:

- introduction to national service and AmeriCorps
- overview of the community being served
- program rules, regulations, and expectations
- walkthrough of the member agreement
- overview of applicable member benefits (living allowance, health insurance, child care, etc.)
- information about benefits through the National Service Trust (education award, forbearance, interest payments)
- program service activities
- member evaluation
- site-specific information (schedule, dress code, professionalism, workspace logistics, the local community, etc.).

National Service Trust: As defined by §2525.10, the National Service Trust is an account in the Treasury of the United States from which AmeriCorps makes payments of Eli Segal Education Awards, pays interest that accrues on qualified student loans for AmeriCorps participants during terms of service in approved national service positions, and makes other payments authorized by Congress.

After successfully completing a term of service, AmeriCorps members who are enrolled in the National Service Trust are eligible to receive an education award. Members use their education award to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. The education award for each service year is tied to the value of the Pell Grant. The amount of the Pell Grant upon which AmeriCorps education awards will be based may change each year; thus, the amount of an AmeriCorps education award may also change annually. To determine the amount of an AmeriCorps education award, AmeriCorps will use the amount of the Pell Grant as of October 1 (the first day of the federal fiscal year) in the fiscal year in which the national service position is approved. Please check the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the education award amount for the current grant year. It is extremely important for programs to indicate the amount of the education award that members will receive for successful completion for a term of service in the members' agreements and reinforce this topic during member orientation. Members can access the award in full or in part, and they may take up to seven years after the term of service has ended to claim the award.

You can access information about the award amount, eligibility, limitations, a list of colleges and universities that match the education award, forbearance, interest repayment, tax implications,

---

[12] Sec. 2522.100.g.2

and other important information, including frequently asked questions on the Segal Education Award page of the AmeriCorps website.

The online MyAmeriCorps Portal allows members to request Education Award payments and other benefits, such as Forbearance on student loans and Interest Accrual payments. In addition to other functions, this automated system lets members view the status of requests for education award payments, provides up to date information on education award balances, and allows users to update contact information, view and print tax statements and forms, and access customized letters certifying a term of service with an AmeriCorps program. Members can access MyAmeriCorps directly via the MyAmeriCorps log-in page. Note: program staff usage and access to MyAmeriCorps will be covered in a later section in this guide.

During program start-up, grantees should become familiar with the rules and regulations related to the National Service Trust.

Performance Measurement and Data Collection

Demonstrating the impact of your program through performance measurement is crucial to your success as a grantee. Grantee Progress Reports (GPRs) will be submitted to AmeriCorps annually (Annual GPR) and at the conclusion of the grant (Final GPR). In the interim, collecting and aggregating data on an ongoing basis from sites will help set you up for success. During the start-up period, spend time developing data collection tools that will demonstrate program impact. Contact your Portfolio Manager if you have questions about performance measurement and data collection.

AmeriCorps Electronic Data Management Systems (eGrants and MyAmeriCorps)

The eGrants system: As an AmeriCorps grantee you will use this web-based system of record for:

- grant applications
- grant amendments
- financial reporting
- program reporting
- member recruitment and management.

Grantees and applicants should have a unique login account for each necessary staff member. eGrants account information should not be shared among staff. The grantee administrator user role has the responsibility of determining who at your organization has access. You can access eGrants via egrants.cns.gov.

If you need assistance with eGrants, visit the AmeriCorps.gov Contact Us webpage. Please notify your Portfolio Manager of any outstanding Hotline tickets as they can escalate tickets on your behalf. Be sure to include the Hotline ticket number in your communications.

MyAmeriCorps (Member Portal): As part of eGrants, MyAmeriCorps (Member Portal for grantees) houses the member recruitment and management functionalities for program. All programs are required to list their positions within the MyAmeriCorps portal, but it is at the discretion of the program to leverage MyAmeriCorps as their primary applicant platform. Additionally, members use MyAmeriCorps to access their education award and other National Service Trust benefits. Program staff users access MyAmeriCorps via the "Portal Home" link available after logging into

eGrants. Please see the previous National Service Trust section for guidance on how members access MyAmeriCorps.

Part VI: Program Implementation

Once you have enrolled members, you have entered the program implementation stage. You can begin to use the systems and tools you developed during the program start-up period. The following sub-sections provide tips for moving forward.

Ongoing Member Training, Support, and Retention

Throughout the service year, grantees should continue to implement a training plan for members and ensure that members are getting adequate supervision and support from their sites. A program that has developed a comprehensive training and support plan is likely to have satisfied members. Core components of an AmeriCorps training and member support plan include:

- providing regular in-service trainings on relevant topics
- offering teambuilding and connection to a peer support network
- recognizing and celebrating members throughout their terms
- ensuring that members are getting quality supervision
- offering frequent opportunities to reflect on service and build a service mindset
- providing "Life After AmeriCorps" trainings
- conducting required performance evaluations.

Monitoring

As stewards of public funding, grantees need to ensure that their subgrantees and service locations are aware of their contractual requirements and are in compliance with all of the rules, regulations, and provisions governing AmeriCorps funds and programs.

Providing sufficient oversight of operating sites and host sites is also in the best interest of programs because AmeriCorps holds the grantee responsible for infractions at the subgrantee or service location level.

To achieve quality oversight, program staff must create adequate systems, tools, and protocols for monitoring sites that are fully implemented and available in writing. An adequate monitoring strategy features an array of oversight activities with grantees/sites, including:

- document review
- compliance reviews
- program quality and performance reviews
- special audits or surveys
- one-on-one technical assistance to resolve any issues
- special efforts to ensure that prohibited activities are not violated.

Your Portfolio Manager will provide you with a copy of the AmeriCorps monitoring tool at the start of your grant year. Many grantees find it helpful to model their own monitoring tool on the agency's tool. Be prepared to review your monitoring strategy with your Portfolio Manager. You can also find a copy of the AmeriCorps monitoring tool ('Overview of Uniform Monitoring

Package') at https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/monitoring, under the "Resources" section.

AmeriCorps monitors grantees using standard protocols. These may include remote monitoring activities or on-site visits focused on one or more of the following areas:

- Financial and Operation Fitness
- Programmatic Compliance
- Subrecipient Oversight
- National Service Criminal History Checks
- Prohibited Activities.

AmeriCorps staff also monitor your grant performance by reviewing your progress and financial reports. In addition, the AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts and supervises independent and objective audits, evaluations, and investigations of AmeriCorps' programs and operations. The OIG is available to assist AmeriCorps grantees that become aware of suspected criminal activity in connection with the AmeriCorps program. Grantees should immediately contact the OIG when they first suspect that a criminal violation has occurred. The OIG may be reached by email at hotline@americorpsoig.gov or by telephone at (800) 452-8210.

The Office of Audit and Debt Resolution (OADR) is a unit within the Office of Monitoring. OADR manages audit resolution of OIG audits and single audits, establishes debts in instances of non-compliance which result in disallowed grant costs, and helps grantees establish indirect cost rates when AmeriCorps is the cognizant agency for indirect costs. If your organization is required to have a single audit, OADR staff may contact you for audit resolution purposes. You can also contact OADR if you would like more information about establishing an indirect cost rate (indirectcostrate@cns.gov). More information on the requirements for having a single audit can be found here: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-F. (See especially 2 CFR §200.501, Audit Requirements).

Reporting

Programmatic Reporting: All AmeriCorps National grantees must submit one progress report per year and a final progress report at the end of the grant. These reports are called Grantee Progress Reports (GPRs), and they are submitted in eGrants. See the Reporting Requirements section of the AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions for information on due dates for the reporting periods. AmeriCorps will provide guidance on how to complete the GPR prior to its due date. Your Portfolio Manager will review your progress reports and provide feedback.

Financial Reporting: Reporting requirements vary by grant type and are outlined in the Program-Specific Terms and Conditions for the specific grant award. For assistance with Federal Financial Reports, please contact your Portfolio Manager.

Grantees must set their own submission deadlines for their subgrantee financial and programmatic reports that will enable you to provide timely and accurate information to AmeriCorps. The agency suggests including reporting deadlines on your organizational calendar.

State Service Commission Collaboration

Collaboration with State Service Commissions (described previously) is an important and required part of managing a multi-state AmeriCorps program. A list of all State Service

Commissions and their contacts can be accessed on the [State Service Commissions page](#) of the AmeriCorps website. All non-Native Nation multi-state programs are expected to communicate and coordinate with State Service Commissions in the states where they operate, including:

- prior to submitting an AmeriCorps application, consult with the State Service Commission of each state in which programming will operate
- after the grant is awarded, provide State Service Commission with updated plans and local programmatic contacts
- ensure your local program(s) are on the State Service Commission's listserv
- remind your local program to keep the State Service Commission informed
- participate in the State Service Commission's appropriate training and other events.

State Service Commissions can also provide new National Direct grantees with:

- valuable information about state laws
- access to local AmeriCorps partnership contacts
- offer you program development assistance
- provide members with networking opportunities
- invitations to Days of Service special events
- invitations to recognition ceremonies.

Days of Service and Other Initiatives

Annually AmeriCorps encourages programs to participate in AmeriCorps initiatives, including Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, and AmeriCorps Week. These initiatives give programs the opportunity to:

- address unmet community needs
- collaborate with other AmeriCorps programs
- build corps member morale and teamwork
- promote volunteerism and service in local communities
- highlight the difference AmeriCorps members make across the nation.

Refer to the [AmeriCorps website](#) for more Days of Service information and resources.

Grant Continuation: Application Required

You are required to apply each year to continue receiving funding. Second- and third-year applications are referred to as continuation applications. Continuation applications are less involved than the process of writing a new application; however, it is equally as important to devote sufficient time to complete all the required elements. The agency will post the Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions for future grant competitions on the [Funding Opportunities page](#) on the AmeriCorps website.

Closing

We hope that this document helps you develop an infrastructure to support a strong, effective AmeriCorps program. We are excited that you are joining our network of AmeriCorps programs. We wish you much success during your first year with AmeriCorps and beyond!