

2024-2025 Iowa AmeriCorps State Request for Applications

**Issuing Agency Name:** Volunteer Iowa (Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service)

**Announcement Type:** Initial release, posted September 22, 2023

**Link to Application Materials:** [**Host an AmeriCorps State Program**](https://volunteer.iowa.gov/americorps/host-americorps-program-or-member/host-americorps-state-program)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Due Dates** | | |
| **Item** | **Competitive & Public Health** | **Formula** |
| **Pre-Applications due to Volunteer Iowa** | **Current grantees: October 6, 2023** | **Current grantees: October 6, 2023**  **New applicants: January 19, 2024** |
| **Final Applications and Supporting Documents due to Volunteer Iowa** | | **Competitive & Public Health continuation: November 17, 2023** | **Current grantees: January 26, 2024**  **New applicants: March 8, 2024** |

**Contact:** [americorps@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:americorps@volunteeriowa.org) or 1-800-308-5987.

The purpose of this document is to provide interested parties with information to enable them to prepare and submit a proposal for AmeriCorps State funding for the creation, expansion, or enhancement of programs that meet the requirements of the AmeriCorps national service program.

Disclosure: Publication of this Request for Applications (RFA) does not obligate Volunteer Iowa or the AmeriCorps federal agency to award any specific number of grants or to obligate any particular amount of funding. The actual level, timing, and process of grant funding will be subject to the availability of annual federal appropriations. This RFA is undergoing final review & approval; any updated versions will be posted to the Volunteer Iowa website.

**Table of Contents**

[A. Program Description 4](#_Toc113924050)

[A.1 What is AmeriCorps? 4](#_Toc113924051)

[A.2 About Volunteer Iowa & AmeriCorps 5](#_Toc113924052)

[A.3 What Do AmeriCorps State Grants Cover? 6](#_Toc113924053)

[A.4 Funding, Applicant, and Grant Types 6](#_Toc113924054)

[A.5 Estimated Available Funds 11](#_Toc113924055)

[A.6 Anticipated Key Dates & Submission Deadlines 11](#_Toc113924056)

[B. Eligibility Information 12](#_Toc113924057)

[B.1 Who Can Apply & Organizational Requirements 12](#_Toc113924058)

[B.2 Threshold issues 14](#_Toc113924059)

[C. Application Submission Information 14](#_Toc113924060)

[1. Application Materials 14](#_Toc113924061)

[2. Steps to Apply & Application Systems 15](#_Toc113924062)

[3. Application Content 16](#_Toc113924063)

[D. Program Design & Budget Information 21](#_Toc113924064)

[D.1 AmeriCorps Focus Areas & Funding Priorities 21](#_Toc113924065)

[D.2 Volunteer Iowa Program Development Priorities 24](#_Toc113924066)

[D.3 Performance Measures 27](#_Toc113924067)

[D.4 Grant Award Elements (Member Positions and Funding) 27](#_Toc113924068)

[D.5 Member Living Allowance & Segal Education Awards 28](#_Toc113924069)

[D.6 Matching Requirements 29](#_Toc113924070)

[D.7 Volunteer Iowa Fees & Other Budget Information 30](#_Toc113924071)

[D.8 Waivers for Program Design & Budget Requirements 31](#_Toc113924072)

[E. Review and Selection Process 33](#_Toc113924073)

[E.1 Volunteer Iowa Review and Selection Process 33](#_Toc113924074)

[E.2 AmeriCorps Agency Review & Selection Process 34](#_Toc113924075)

[E.3 Review and Selection Criteria 34](#_Toc113924076)

[F. Federal Financial Management & Grant Administration Requirements 34](#_Toc113924077)

[F.1. Award Notices 34](#_Toc113924078)

[F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements 34](#_Toc113924079)

[F.3. Use of Material 36](#_Toc113924080)

[F.4. Reporting 36](#_Toc113924081)

[G. Awarding Agency Contacts & Technical Assistance 37](#_Toc113924082)

[G.1 Volunteer Iowa 37](#_Toc113924083)

[G.2 AmeriCorps 37](#_Toc113924084)

[G.3 Other Programs, Services, and Initiatives Offered by Volunteer Iowa and Our Partners 38](#_Toc113924085)

[H. Appendices & Attachments 39](#_Toc113924086)

[H.1. List of Appendices 39](#_Toc113924087)

[H.2. List of Attachments 39](#_Toc113924088)

# Program Description

## What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps brings people together to tackle some of the country’s most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. In addition to meeting community needs, AmeriCorps programs support their participants/members in developing technical, life, and civic skills through program training, supervision, and professional development. AmeriCorps also builds the capacity of the community to meet its own needs by engaging citizens as volunteers who serve alongside the AmeriCorps members. The goals of the AmeriCorps program are: (1). Getting Things Done- by providing service to address community problems; (2). Strengthening Communities- by uniting individuals and institutions in a common effort; (3). Encouraging Responsibility- throughout members’ service experience and throughout their lives; and (4). Expanding Opportunity- by enhancing members’ educational opportunities, job experience, and life skills. There are three branches of AmeriCorps programs—AmeriCorps State & National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC. AmeriCorps State & National is the largest branch of AmeriCorps.

AmeriCorps State & National grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed service activities to strengthen communities. Programs design service activities for a team of members serving full- or part-time over the course of up to one year, or during the summer or another portion of the year. The interventions that members implement target high priority, critical needs in specific communities with the goal of measurably improving/changing the situation. The organizations that receive grants are responsible for recruiting, selecting, and supervising AmeriCorps members to serve in their programs. They must provide the members with position descriptions and service agreements in addition to documenting the eligibility of AmeriCorps members to serve and receive the education award. They help members acquire skills, training, education, and experience which they can carry into the workforce and future service to their communities. The grantee organizations also ensure members are clearly identified as AmeriCorps members. Iowa AmeriCorps State grantees receive training and technical assistance from Volunteer Iowa staff in order to build their internal capacity to successfully manage their AmeriCorps State program and members.

An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. AmeriCorps members also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations they serve. Members typically receive a living allowance and other benefits from the sponsor organization while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that they can apply to qualified student loans or use to pay for higher education expenses.

Note that AmeriCorps State is different in several key ways from AmeriCorps VISTA. AmeriCorps State members *may not* do the same range of capacity building, fundraising, and other indirect service activities that AmeriCorps VISTA members may do but are allowed to do direct service activities that AmeriCorps VISTA members cannot. Also, AmeriCorps State grantees have additional grant, financial, and member management requirements that do not apply to AmeriCorps VISTA program sponsors, as well as having a wider range of control over the design of their AmeriCorps program.

## About Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps grantmaking is accomplished through a partnership between the federal AmeriCorps agency and individual state service commissions that were created to develop and oversee AmeriCorps State projects in their states. The federal AmeriCorps Agency releases a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and supporting materials upon which Volunteer Iowa bases our Request for Applications.

### About Volunteer Iowa (Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service)

Volunteer Iowa (the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service) is part of a [network of state service commissions](http://www.statecommissions.org/) throughout the United States that exist to foster a bi-partisan state-level commitment to advancing service initiatives as well as developing, communicating, and promoting a statewide vision and ethic of service. Volunteer Iowa, its commissioners, staff, and partner agencies work with organizations and individuals on three main fronts, by:

1. helping agencies develop quality programs that use service as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa’s greatest areas of need;
2. helping engage Iowans in their communities by promoting service and expanding the volunteer base;
3. connecting individuals with appropriate service opportunities by building the volunteer infrastructure.

Volunteer Iowa has several very specific legal responsibilities related to AmeriCorps and National Service, in its role as the State of Iowa’s grantmaking partner for the federal AmeriCorps agency. These include:

* developing a State Service Plan that is updated every three years;
* providing training and technical assistance to local nonprofit organizations and other entities that want to plan and apply for funding to implement AmeriCorps State national service programs;
* pre-selecting programs to compete for funding under AmeriCorps State Competitive;
* selecting programs to be funded for AmeriCorps State Formula;
* providing training and technical assistance to national service programs in Iowa;
* evaluating, monitoring, and administering grant programs.

All Commission activities -- those related to the wider volunteer sector as well as to national service -- and our funding priorities flow from our State Service Plan. To learn more about the Commission, visit [www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org).

### About AmeriCorps, the Federal Agency (also known as the Corporation for National & Community Service, or CNCS)

The federal AmeriCorps agency was established in 1994. (In 2020, the federal agency rebranded itself from the Corporation for National and Community Service to AmeriCorps). Among the grant programs it manages are:

* Volunteer Generation Fund
* AmeriCorps Seniors, including Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and Senior Companion Program; and
* AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps State/National.

The federal agency mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

To accomplish these goals, AmeriCorps provides grants as well as training and technical assistance to volunteer organizations. It explores, develops, and models effective approaches for using volunteers to meet the nation's human needs and conducts and disseminates research that helps develop and cultivate knowledge that will enhance the overall effectiveness of national and community service programs.

For more information on AmeriCorps, visit [AmeriCorps.gov](https://americorps.gov/). To review the federal Notice of Funding Opportunity and supporting materials upon which Iowa’s competition is based, visit [FY 2024 AmeriCorps State and National Grants | AmeriCorps](https://www.americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2024-americorps-state-national-grants).

## What Do AmeriCorps State Grants Cover?

AmeriCorps grants may award two categories of resources to address the local need: member positions and funds to support AmeriCorps members during their service terms (operational grants) or funds to support planning activities to prepare for starting a new AmeriCorps program (planning grants).

Typically, AmeriCorps grants partially cover the expense of operating an AmeriCorps program, and local cash and in-kind resources are usually required to cover the full implementation of the program. AmeriCorps grants do not cover general organizational expenses.

Several different types of AmeriCorps grants are available to organizations. They differ related to what they fund (planning grants versus operational grants), how the budget and reimbursement process work (cost reimbursement versus fixed-amount grants), the funding source (competitive, formula, Public Health), and the size of the grant. See Funding, Applicant, and Grant Types and [Table 1. Summary of AmeriCorps Grant Types](#_Table_1:_Summary) for more detail.

## Funding, Applicant, and Grant Types

### Funding Type: Competitive, Formula, and Public Health AmeriCorps Funding

Some Iowa AmeriCorps State programs are funded from the portion of AmeriCorps funds that are provided to the state according to a population-based formula (Formula) while others are awarded from the portion of AmeriCorps funds that are awarded to states on a competitive basis (Competitive). The AmeriCorps agency conducts the final review and selection process for Competitive AmeriCorps State grants and Volunteer Iowa conducts the competitive review and selection process for Formula AmeriCorps State grants. Periodically, the AmeriCorps agency announces special funding competitions such as Public Health AmeriCorps, funded by the agency and other federal partners.

AmeriCorps State Competitive programs are those funded at the national level after a successful state and federal review process in which they compete against other single-state programs as well as multi-state National Direct programs. All current Iowa AmeriCorps State grantees will be considered for submission to the national competition and therefore must meet competitive pre-application deadlines. Competitive AmeriCorps State programs are funded on a three-year basis in terms of program goals and objectives, but they develop one-year budgets and must re-apply every year for continued funding. Applicants not selected for competitive funding from AmeriCorps are automatically considered for funding at the state formula level.

AmeriCorps State Formula programs are funded from federal resources allocated to Volunteer Iowa from the AmeriCorps agency according to a formula based on state population. New applicants (those in the first three years of operation), applicants whose activities match Volunteer Iowa priorities but not AmeriCorps agency priorities, applicants whose proposals need more work, and those with limited experience managing federal grants or large programs are likely to be considered for formula funding, only. The formula competition also includes applicants that were included in the Volunteer Iowa competitive process but not selected for funding at the national competitive level. Formula programs are expected to be funded with a one or two-year project period, but with a one-year budget period, so they must re-apply every year. As a part of the pre-application review, Volunteer Iowa will notify formula applicants if they are eligible to submit an abbreviated continuation application for final funding.

Public Health AmeriCorps programs are a special funding opportunity that arose from a partnership between the AmeriCorps agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Public Health AmeriCorps programs receive funding from the AmeriCorps agency with no local match requirement due to the contributions of the CDC. In this competition, AmeriCorps anticipates making continuation funding for year two of the two-year grant awards for Public Health AmeriCorps, based on a one-year budget. Continuation awards are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

### Applicant Type: Single State and National Direct Applicants

Single-State Applicants: Under this Iowa AmeriCorps State Request for Applications, applications will be accepted only from single-state applicants, which are organizations seeking funding to operate a program wholly within the state of Iowa (with the exception of limited cross-border placements that may be allowed with permission from both Volunteer Iowa and the other state’s service commission- see more under [Eligible Applicants](#_Eligible_Applicants)). A single-state application from Iowa that is submitted by the applicant directly to the AmeriCorps agency rather than to Volunteer Iowa will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed. Each state service commission administers its own selection process and submits the applicants it selects for funding directly to AmeriCorps. The funds for successful applicants are awarded to Volunteer Iowa in prime grants and each Iowa AmeriCorps State Program is awarded out of the Commission’s prime grants.

National Direct Applicants: Entities that want to develop a multi-state program, that come from another state without a state service commission, or that that represent a federally recognized Indian Tribe are called National Direct applicants and should apply directly to the federal AmeriCorps agency as AmeriCorps National Direct grantees. See the Mandatory Supplemental Information for more detailed descriptions of National Direct and Single-State applicants. Multi-state AmeriCorps National Direct applicants that intend to place members in Iowa must consult with Volunteer Iowa regarding these intended placements. Volunteer Iowa participates in the National Direct consultation process coordinated by the America’s Service Commissions (ASC) and found at <https://www.statecommissions.org/national-direct-consultation>.0F[[1]](#footnote-2)

### **Applicant Type: New, Recompeting, and Continuation Applicants**

New Applicants are those that have not previously received an AmeriCorps State or National operational grant, are not currently managing an AmeriCorps State or National program, are a current AmeriCorps planning grantee requesting the first year of operational funding or are submitting an application for a program design or funding type for which they have not previously received AmeriCorps funding. Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps encourage organizations that have not received prior funding to apply*.*

New applicants are eligible to apply for both Cost Reimbursement and Fixed Amount grants but may be required to undergo additional financial screening before being awarded a Fixed Amount grant. Volunteer Iowa may award formula Full-Cost Fixed Amount funding to new applicants who demonstrate strong experience with grant management and solid financial management systems.

Recompeting Applicants*.* Current competitively funded grantees entering the final year of their three-year grant period and current formula grantees not deemed eligible for continuation funding must submit a new full application in a process known as recompetition. In addition to the basic application information, recompeting programs may be asked to describe program impact and accomplishments for the previous years of AmeriCorps funding received, including reporting on performance measures. Recompeting applicants may be asked to provide data regarding AmeriCorps member enrollment and retention rates for the same period. Finally, recompeting applicants may be required to submit an evaluation plan and/or summary report. Such applicants are advised that previous site visit reports, performance records, program progress reports, financial reports and eGrants member documentation, as well as member enrollment and retention rates, will be reviewed as part of the selection process.

Continuation Applicants*.* Current competitive AmeriCorps State grantees that are in years one or two of their three-year competitive grant are considered continuation applicants (current formula programs will also be considered for continuation funding based upon their responses in the required pre-application and will be notified if they are invited to submit a final application for formula continuation funding). Continuation applicants submit an abbreviated application in order to be considered for continued funding of their grant, following the requirements for continuation application content as outlined in the Continuation Final Application Instructions. Match replacement is no longer available to grantees. Continuation funding is not guaranteed and may be limited to a certain amount. Requests by existing continuation applicants for increases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the appropriate review criteria. If an expansion request is not awarded competitive funding it may be considered for the Volunteer Iowa state formula competition. The applicant will be instructed on how to submit a formula funding request, as needed.

### Grant Types: Cost Reimbursement and Fixed-Amount

“Grant Type” refers to the category of grant award provided. AmeriCorps grants may be either Cost Reimbursement or Fixed Amount types; the type of grant determines certain budget and financial management responsibilities of the grantee. AmeriCorps may award a Cost Reimbursement or a Fixed Amount operational grant to any successful applicant, but the availability of each grant type may be limited to certain applicants. See the [Eligible Applicants section](#_Eligible_Applicants) and the Mandatory Supplemental Information for more information, including definitions of AmeriCorps terminology. AmeriCorps will not provide multiple grants for the same project/member positions in one fiscal year.

Cost Reimbursement

Cost Reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a line-item budget and financial reports. For Cost Reimbursement Grantees, AmeriCorps funds a portion of program operating costs, member costs (if applicable), and administrative expenses; funding is not directly dependent upon recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps members. Whereas operational cost reimbursement grants allow grantees to enroll members and operate an AmeriCorps program, planning grants are a type of cost reimbursement grant that does not include any member funding. Planning grant activities may involve work to establish a new program in Iowa or to replicate a successful existing program model in unserved or underserved areas of the state. Organizations typically use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the subsequent grant cycle. Grant recipients also receive training and technical assistance from Volunteer Iowa to strengthen their AmeriCorps program design and to create implementation plans and systems for managing a compliant AmeriCorps program. 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 may not be used to support AmeriCorps members and costs associated with writing an AmeriCorps application may not be charged as direct costs to the grant.

Fixed Amount

Fixed Amount grants are operational grants that provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is typically substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. Organizations use their own or other resources to cover the remaining costs. Fixed Amount programs are not required to submit detailed budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. However, since AmeriCorps funding covers only a portion of the program costs, organizations must raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Fixed Amount Programs can access all AmeriCorps grant funds, provided they recruit (in the case of Education Award Program or “EAP”) or retain (in the case of full-cost Fixed Amount programs) the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Professional Corps programs applying for operational funding through a Fixed Amount Grant must submit a budget in support of their request for operational funds.

### Table 1: Summary of AmeriCorps Grant Types

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grant Type** | **Operational Grants** | | | **Planning Grants** |
| **Cost Reimbursement Grants** | **Full-Cost Fixed-Amount Grants** | **Other Fixed Amount Grants** |
| **Sub Type** | **Cost Reimbursement: Traditional Operational Grant** | **Full-Cost Fixed-Amount: Traditional** | **Fixed Amount: Education Award Only or Professional Corps** | **Planning Grant:**  **Traditional** |
| **Maximum Federal Funding Levels**1F**[[2]](#footnote-3)** | $25,000/MSY (competitive)  $27,000/MSY (formula)  $27,000 (Public Health) | $$25,000/MSY (competitive)  $27,000/MSY (formula) | $800/MSY (Ed Award)  $1,000/MSY  (Ed Award if >50% disadvantaged youth)  $1,000/MSY (professional) | $100,000 total |
| **Match Requirement** | Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter**.** | There are no specific match requirements for full-cost fixed amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the maximum cost per MSY. | There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the maximum cost per MSY. | Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs. |
| **Detailed Budget Submission?** | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| **Available Funding Stream** | Formula or Competitive & Public Health | Formula or Competitive | Formula or Competitive | Formula |
| **Thresholds for Number of Members/MSY** | Minimum 8 MSY; waiver available | Minimum 8 MSY (traditional); waiver available | Minimum 8 MSY; waiver available | No members |
| **Types of Member Slots Available** | All slot types | All slot types | All slot types | n/a |
| **Type of Budget Submitted** | Detailed Line-Item Budget | Simple Member Slot-Based Budget | Simple Member Slot-Based Budget | Detailed Line-Item Budget |
| **Mechanism for Accessing Funds** | Documentation of expenses incurred | Member enrollment & retention | Member enrollment (EAP) & retention | Documentation of expenses incurred |
| **Project & Budget Periods** | Formula: 1 or 2 year project period with 1 year budget periods; Competitive: 3 year project period with 1 year budget periods; Public Health: 2 year project period with 1 year budget periods. | Formula: 1 or 2 year project period with 1 year budget periods; Competitive: 3 year project period with 1 year budget periods | Formula: 1 or 2 year project period with 1 year budget periods; Competitive: 3 year project period with 1 year budget periods | Traditional: ~6 months initially with possible 6 month extension |
| **Special Requirements** | N/A | N/A | Yes, see Mandatory Supplemental Information. | Must be for a new project and cannot exceed one year grant period. |

## Estimated Available Funds

We expect a highly competitive grant competition for Competitive and Formula funding. Public Health funding is only available to existing grantees that plan to continue their AmeriCorps operations. The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations. Each year, AmeriCorps notifies Volunteer Iowa of the amount of Formula funding available; in recent years this was at least $2.3 million. Award amounts will vary, according to the scope of the projects. In many years, Volunteer Iowa does not have adequate funding to cover all requests. AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa reserve the right to prioritize providing funding to existing awards over making new awards and Volunteer Iowa may choose to cap the size of individual Formula grants.

## Anticipated Key Dates & Submission Deadlines

Application Submission Deadlines

See Table 2. Anticipated Key Dates for a list of pre-application and final application due dates organized by grant and funding type. Any required additional documents are due on the corresponding pre-application and final application deadline. Volunteer Iowa reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted to the [AmeriCorps State Grants page of the Volunteer Iowa website](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps-state)

### Table 2. Anticipated Key Dates for Iowa AmeriCorps State Applicants

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Competitive & PHA Continuation Key Dates** | **Formula Key Dates** |
| **Initial Application Materials release date** | September 22, 2023 | September 22, 2023 |
| **Pre-Applications due to Volunteer Iowa** | **Current grantees: October 6, 2023** | **Current grantees: October 6, 2023**  **New applicants: January 19, 2024** |
| **Notification to Applicants of Final Application Status** | Current grantees: October 13, 2023 | Current grantees: October 13, 2023  New applicants: January 26, 2024 |
| **Application Technical Assistance Period** | September-December 2023 | September 2023-March 2024 |
| **Final Applications & Supporting Documents due to Volunteer Iowa** | **Competitive & PHA continuation grantees: November 17, 2023** | **Current grantees: January 26, 2024**  **New applicants: March 8, 2024** |
| **Volunteer Iowa Clarification Period** | November 2023-early January 2024 | mid March-early April 2024 |
| **AmeriCorps Agency Clarification Period** | Per AmeriCorps federal agency timeline | n/a |
| **Applicants Appear Before Volunteer Iowa Committee (as needed)** | Competitive: April 30, 2024 (if needed)  PHA continuation: n/a | April 30, 2024 (anticipated) |
| **Funding Decisions Shared with Applicants** | Competitive: Mid April 2024 (anticipated)  PHA continuation: By July 2024 | Following May 2024 commission meeting |
| **Applicant Resolution Period** | After notification of funding decisions | After notification of funding decisions |
| **Earliest grant start date** | Competitive: August 1, 2024  PHA continuation: September 1, 2024 | August 1, 2024 |
| **Earliest member start date** | Competitive: August 1, 2024  PHA continuation: September 1, 2024 | August 15, 2024 |

### Late Applications

Applications received after the submission deadline published in the RFA may be presumed to be non-compliant. In order to overcome this presumption, the applicant must respond to Volunteer Iowa’s requests for explanation of the delay, such as the following:

* submit a written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstance(s) that caused the delay, including:
  + the timing and specific cause(s) of the delay
  + documentation of any requests for technical assistance that were sent to IowaGrants or the AmeriCorps grants management system hotline and the responses received
  + any other documentation or evidence that supports the justification;
* ensure that Volunteer Iowa receives the justification and any other evidence that substantiates the claimed extenuating circumstance(s) via email to [americorps@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:americorps@volunteeriowa.org) or in another format and by any deadline established by Volunteer Iowa staff.

Volunteer Iowa will determine whether or not to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the chair of the Grant Review Committee. Applicants that do not meet the application submission deadline, and do not submit a written explanation or justification or any other evidence to overcome the presumption of non-compliance within the requested timeframe, will not be reviewed or selected for award.

# Eligibility Information

## Who Can Apply & Organizational Requirements

### Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are organizations that propose to place AmeriCorps members in service within Iowa to meet critical needs in Iowa (single-state applicants).2F[[3]](#footnote-4) The following non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in 2 CFR. §200.1) are eligible to apply to Volunteer Iowa:

* Indian Tribes
* Institutions of higher education
* Local governments, including school districts
* Nonprofit organizations

### System for Award Management (SAM) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

All applicants **must** register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the [SAM Quick Guide for Grantees](https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0029897). SAM registration must be renewed annually. AmeriCorps suggests that applicants finalize a new registration or renew an existing one at least three weeks before the application deadline, to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. **Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and physical address on all grant applications to AmeriCorps, and the legal applicant’s name and physical address in their eGrants account and applications must match exactly the applicant’s SAM-registered information.** To update the address in eGrants go to My Account > Update Organization’s Contact Information. To update the legal name in eGrants, contact Volunteer Iowa.

Applicants must also include a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is generated as part of the SAM registration process, in their eGrants account and applications. AmeriCorps will not make awards to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier.

Applications must include an Employer Identification Number. The UEI and Employer Identification Number must be entered by the organization’s Grantee Administrator as an organization attribute, and this will apply the information to all applications for the organization.

If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time AmeriCorps is ready to make a federal award, AmeriCorps may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. The UEI field is available in eGrants under: My Account > Update Organization’s Attributes > Enter UEI in General Information section of page. Once entered into eGrants, the UEI will be visible on all of your organization’s applications.

### Other Requirements

Other requirements specified by the federal AmeriCorps Agency, related to criminal violations, prohibited activities, tax liabilities, and lobbying activities are detailed on page 11 of the federal Notice of Funding Opportunity. An additional requirement is that entities subject to Single Audits must have them posted timely in the Federal Audit Clearinghouse,

## Threshold issues

Applications should reflect that they meet the following threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying.

* Volunteer Iowa generally expects programs to engage a minimum of 8 full-time AmeriCorps members or the equivalent number of Member Service Years (MSYs)3F[[4]](#footnote-5), (such as 16 half-time, or 5 full-time and 12 quarter time). Applicants should see the Applicant Guide and Volunteer Iowa FAQs for more information about the program size threshold. Volunteer Iowa has a waiver form to request an exception to its 8 MSY minimum (see waiver section below and in the pre-application). The minimum number of MSY allowable with the waiver is 6 MSY for new programs. MSY minimum does not apply to planning grants, as they do not engage any members.
* All applicants must propose program designs that are either evidence-based or evidence-informed. Competitive applicants assessed as lower than the Preliminary evidence tier (i.e., Pre-Preliminary) must provide adequate responses to the Evidence Quality review criteria in order to be considered for funding.
* New applicant organizations must submit a copy of the most recent agency audit or financial review with their final application submission. Volunteer Iowa will review the audit and may request additional pre-award information to make sure the applicant demonstrates the financial capacity to manage the proposed grant.
* Professional Corps applicants and/or applicants determined to be a Professional Corps by AmeriCorps must demonstrate that the community in which they will place AmeriCorps members serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals.
* If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must describe how the program will meet these requirements.

# Application Submission Information

## Application Materials

This Request for Applications (RFA) and any RFA Appendices or Attachments should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, which are incorporated by reference. These and related documentssuch as the AmeriCorps Mandatory Supplemental Information, Volunteer Iowa Pre-Application Instructions, Review Criteria and Final Application Instructions, the AmeriCorps Performance Measure Instructions, and the Applicant Guide and FAQs can be found on the [AmeriCorps State Grants page](https://volunteer.iowa.gov/americorps/host-americorps-program-or-member/host-americorps-state-program) of the Volunteer Iowa website, on the AmeriCorps website, and the full Regulations are available online at [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov).

This RFA also builds upon the AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity for AmeriCorps State and National and Public Health AmeriCorps programs by outlining expectations for Iowa-only single-state AmeriCorps applicants, who must apply through Volunteer Iowa. While this RFA is based on and incorporates those AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity by reference, Iowa-only applicants must use this RFA to identify the state-specific deadlines, additional required documents, and state-specific instructions they must follow in order to submit their proposal to Volunteer Iowa.

### Table 3: Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topics | Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations |
| Member Service Activities | §2520.20 - §2520.55 |
| Prohibited Activities | §2520.65 |
| Tutoring Programs | §2522.900-2522.950 |
| Matching Funds | §2521.35-2521.90 |
| Member Benefits | §2522.240-2522.250 |
| Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY) | §2522.485 |
| Performance Measures | §2522.500-2522.650 |
| Evaluation | §2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740 |
| Selection Criteria and Selection Process | §2522.400-2522.475 |

If there is any inconsistency between the AmeriCorps regulations, the *RFA,* and the Application Instructions, the order of precedence is as follows:

* + - 1. AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550 take precedence over the
      2. Volunteer Iowa Request for Applications (based on the AmeriCorps Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity/Notice of Federal Funding Availability), which takes precedence over the
      3. Volunteer Iowa Review Criteria and Final Application Instructions (based on the AmeriCorps NOFO and Application Instructions)

## Steps to Apply & Application Systems

### Application Steps

In order to be considered for selection, applicants must submit a complete application in response to this RFA; an application consists of both a pre-application and a final application. The eGrants system is the official web-based application system for the AmeriCorps agency and SurveyMonkey and IowaGrants are the official electronic application systems for Volunteer Iowa. Proposals that do not meet the established deadlines or application requirements may be declined through the online system and may not be considered.

1. Submit a mandatory pre-application in SurveyMonkey (recompete/continuation applicants) or by email (new applicants), by the deadline corresponding to your applicant category (new, recompeting, continuation) and funding type (competitive, formula, Public Health).
2. Obtain a Universal Entity Identifier and register (or update) your organization with the System for Award Management.
3. Establish an [eGrants](https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/newaccount.jsp) and an [IowaGrants](https://www.iowagrants.gov/index.do) account for each individual who will be working on the application in those systems (see more in [Electronic Application Systems](#_Electronic_Application_Systems) below).
4. If invited to submit a final application, write a high-quality proposal that is responsive to this Request for Applications.
5. Submit the final application in eGrants and submit copies of the final application and required additional documents in IowaGrants by the deadline corresponding to your applicant category (new, recompete, continuation) and funding type (competitive, formula, public health).
6. Respond to Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps Agency clarification requests and make necessary updates to your submitted application.
7. As applicable, appear before the Volunteer Iowa Grant Review Committee to respond to questions about your application.

### Electronic Application Systems

Pre-applications will be submitted to Volunteer Iowa via email or within the online SurveyMonkey system. Final applications must be submitted to Volunteer Iowa electronically via eGrants AND IowaGrants. Note: Anyone within your organization who will be entering application information in the in the eGrants or IowaGrants systems at any point must have their own respective account(s).

IowaGrants: This web-based system is used by Volunteer Iowa for the submission and review of grant applications and for the management of awarded AmeriCorps grants. IowaGrants is used for submission of the final application, including the supporting documents. All applicants must create an IowaGrants account, if they do not already have one, selecting the “AmeriCorps” program area. Directions to register for an IowaGrants account are available on [Basecamp](https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/1Wqgt19oAuhjMrThkh77wxLC).

eGrants: Applicants must submit applications electronically via [eGrants, AmeriCorps' web-based application system](https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp). AmeriCorps recommends that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application at least three weeks before the deadline. Individuals may establish an eGrants account by accessing the [eGrants website](https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp) and selecting “Don’t have an eGrants account? Create an account.”

Applicants should draft the application as a Word document, then copy and paste the text into the appropriate eGrants field no later than 10 days before the deadline. The applicant’s authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must use their own eGrants account to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body’s authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant’s office.

Applicants should contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at (800) 942-2677 or via [eGrants Questions](https://questions.americorps.gov/app/ask) if they have a problem when they create an account, prepare, or submit the application. [AmeriCorps Hotline hours](https://questions.americorps.gov/app/ask) are posted. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization’s name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the AmeriCorps Hotline to submit via eGrants. Ask for and document the ticket reference number for all technical assistance calls to the Hotline.

## Application Content

The pre-application and final application stage each have specific required content and additional documents. Applications lacking key information or that are substantially incomplete will be rejected by Volunteer Iowa. Applicants should carefully review the Review Criteria for their applicant and funding type as well as the Pre-Application Instructions and Final Applications Instructions, including the Final Application Submission Checklist, to ensure that all required items are submitted for each round. Consider submitting the application in advance of the deadline, to allow additional time to submit any documentation determined to be missing. Volunteer Iowa may provide additional technical assistance at the final application phase to ensure applicants successfully submit in the eGrants and IowaGrants systems.

### Pre-Application Content and Page Limits

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competitive** | **Formula** |
| Competitive pre-applications must include the following elements: submitted in SurveyMonkey:   * Cover sheet * Program updates * Waiver & certification requests | Formula pre-applications must include the following elements submitted via email:   * Cover page * Readiness & eligibility assessment * Logic model & program design narrative * Organizational chart & organizational capacity narrative * Budget * Waiver & certification requests |

Page limits do not apply to competitive pre-application survey responses but do apply to formula pre-application worksheets. See the Formula Pre-Application Instructions for detailed requirements, including applicable page limits.

### Final Application Content and Page Limits

For detailed requirements related to the final application content, see the RFA Criteria for the appropriate funding and applicant type, as well as the Final Application Instructions.

eGrants:

All final applications must include the following elements submitted in eGrants:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **eGrants Application Content** | **eGrants Page Limits** |
| * Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Automatically generated when applicants complete the data elements in the eGrants system. | The facesheet and required application narratives must not exceed **10 double-spaced pages** for competitive and Public Health AmeriCorps, as the pages print out from eGrants. |
| * Required Narrative Sections:   + Executive Summary   + Program Design   + Organizational Capability   + Cost-Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy |
| * Additional Narrative Sections:   + Evaluation Summary/Plan   + Clarification Summary   + Continuation Changes | These additional narrative sections do not count towards the page limits (except that continuation applicants have a **six page limit for continuation changes narratives**). |
| * Logic Model | The Logic Model may not exceed **eight pages** when printed with the application from the “Review” tab in eGrants. |
| * Applicant Info * Application Info * Performance Measures * Program Information, Documents, and Funding & Demographics * Budget * Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications4F[[5]](#footnote-6) | These additional components of the application do not count towards the page limits. |

Please note that the length of the application as a word processing document may differ from the length of the document printed out from eGrants. The character limits in eGrants do not align with page limits set in the Notice. AmeriCorps strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the “Review and Submit” tab in eGrants prior to submission in order to confirm that the application does not exceed the page limit. AmeriCorps will not consider the results of any alternative printing methods when determining if an application complies with the page limit. Reviewers will also not consider material that is over the page limit, even if eGrants allows applicants to enter and submit additional text.

IowaGrants:

All final applications also include the following elements submitted in IowaGrants:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **IowaGrants Application Content** | **IowaGrants Page Limits** |
| * General Information * Minority Impact Statement * Copies of the Submitted eGrants Application * Final Application Additional Documents * Application Signature (appears after you click “Submit”) | There are no additional page limits for items in IowaGrants (except for those already noted for the eGrants materials). |

### Additional Documents Requirements

The following additional documents are required as part of the final application in IowaGrants.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicable To** | **Document** | **Description** |
| All Applicants, including Continuations | **1. Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form** | Complete this form to provide information that Volunteer Iowa will use as part of its state level recommendations and review. Indicate your alignment with the Commission’s State Service Plan and/or with state legislative priorities, share how you will support Commission initiatives, and set goals related to member experience. |
| All New & Recompeting Applicants | **2. Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)** | Submit the OFMS via survey link on AmeriCorps [Manage Your Grant webpage](https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/manage-your-grant). Upload pdf of confirmation email of submission to IowaGrants. |
| **3. Copy of Most Recent Agency Audit or Financial Review** | (Required only for new applicants): For agencies whose audit is posted online (such as the State of Iowa), a copy of the link to the audit is acceptable. For smaller agencies that do not have an audit, a financial review that shows the following is acceptable in lieu of an audit: documentation that grant funds are tracked/segregated from other funds; documentation that grant funds are tracked/segregated by grant year/award; appropriate documentation of expenditures is kept (receipts, timesheets, etc.). |
| New & Recompeting Applicants, As Applicable | **4. Evaluation briefs, reports, studies to support the Evidence Base.** | Refer to the Evidence Base section of the RFA Criteria and the Mandatory Supplemental Information found [here](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Famericorps.gov%2Ffunding-opportunity%2Ffy-2023-americorps-state-national-grants&data=05%7C01%7CJBastressTahmasebi%40cns.gov%7C8496d3dbef3c4e93011808da6b0eb55b%7Cd2f850a78dce4fb3a79c6867f9514312%7C0%7C0%7C637940008187772260%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0StrZJJfwWyU0maH1TB6tsR5ebGDdEY35db7CNeBWrs%3D&reserved=0) for detailed instructions by evidence tier. If multiple evaluation briefs/reports/studies are submitted by the applicant, the most recent (as measured by the date of completion or publication) will be reviewed first, and any documents submitted beyond the allowable number will not be reviewed. |
| **5. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate supporting documentation** | Applicants that include a federally approved indirect cost rate amount in their budget must submit the current approved indirect cost rate agreement documentation into IowaGrants and enter the current approved indirect cost rate into eGrants at the same time they submit their application. See Attachments for eGrants Indirect Cost Rate (IDCR) User Instructions. |
| Recompete Applicants Only | **6. Evaluation plan.** | Recompete applicants who have previously received three or more years of competitive funding for the same project being proposed must submit an evaluation plan. Please use the evaluation plan template available as an Attachment. Evaluation plans are not scored and will not be reviewed until after funding decisions are made. |
| **7. Evaluation report.** | Recompete applicants who have previously received six or more years of competitive funding for the same project being proposed must submit an evaluation report, preferably in Microsoft Word. The evaluation report should include a title page with the AmeriCorps grant number for the project that was evaluated, the name of the project, and the date of completion of the report. If any of this required information is missing, the applicant may not receive credit for meeting their evaluation requirements. |
| Specified Applicants/ Applicant Types | **8. SAM registration renewal date documentation** | (Required for applicants whose page is private): A screenshot or copy of the page confirming the renewal date. |
| **9. Tribal organization eligibility documentation.** | Entities applying on behalf of a Federally Recognized Tribe (New and recompeting) must submit eligibility documentation to demonstrate that they represent the Tribe. See Eligible Applicantssection. |
| **10. Labor union concurrence.** | If a program applicant proposes or to place AmeriCorps members at sites (within the grantee organization itself or at partner host sites) where they will be engaged in the same or substantially similar work as employees represented by a local labor organization, then the applicant must submit: (a)The written concurrence of the local labor organization representing those employees. Written concurrence can be in the form of a letter or e-mail from the local union leadership. (b) A written description of how it will ensure that: AmeriCorps members will not be placed in positions that were recently occupied by paid staff and no AmeriCorps member will be placed into a position for which a recently resigned or discharged employee has recall rights as a result of a collective bargaining agreement, from which a recently resigned or discharged employee was removed as a result of a reduction in force, or from which a recently resigned/discharged employee is on leave or strike. |
| **11. Federal debt delinquency explanation** | Any applicant that checks Yes to the question on federal debt delinquency must submit a complete explanation at the same time they submit their application. This may be uploaded as an “other” document in IowaGrants. |

Additional documents must be uploaded to IowaGrants following the naming conventions outlined below (unless another submission format is specified for an individual document).

* Individually saved files that are clearly labeled with the legal applicant name, document name, and the AMERICORPS grant management system ID number (i.e. 24ACXXXXXX).
* If possible, each file should also include a header or label within the body of each additional document to include the legal applicant name, document name, and AmeriCorps application ID number.
* To ensure that all required additional documents are considered, please provide each document as a separate single file, labeled appropriately. Please do not send multiple documents in one combined file, and do not send a single document in multiple files.

Failure to submit the required additional documents by the deadline may have a negative effect on the assessment of the application and/or on the determination of the application’s eligibility to advance for review. Applicants may also consult the Application Submission Checklists posted to the [AmeriCorps State Grants page of the Volunteer Iowa website](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps-state) to confirm the additional documents to be submitted by their final application submission deadline. Do not submit any items that are not requested in this Notice and Guidance. AmeriCorps will not review or return them.

### Application Certifications & Transparency in Grantmaking

Applications shall be electronically signed by an authorized representative of the applicant organization. The authorized representative is an individual, named by the applicant organization, who is authorized to act for the applicant and to assume the obligations imposed by the Federal laws, regulations, requirements, and conditions that apply to grant applications or grant awards. AmeriCorps preference is that the final application in eGrants be submitted by someone other than the AmeriCorps program director. By submission of an application, the applicant certifies that:

* No attempt has been made or will be made by the applicant to induce any other applicant to submit or not to submit an application for the purpose of restricting competition;
* Applicant is not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transaction by any federal or state department or agency.

Such certifications should not discourage collaboration among organizations in designing AmeriCorps programs.

Submission of a final application will constitute acceptance of terms, conditions, criteria, and requirements set forth in this RFA and operate as a waiver of any and all objections to the contents of the RFA. Results of the review process or changes in federal or state law may require additions or changes to final grant agreement requirements

All applications, including supporting materials, become the property of Volunteer Iowa and shall not be returned to the applicant. All applications shall be placed in the public domain and are available upon request for inspection by interested parties at the conclusion of the selection process. No payments shall be made to cover costs incurred by any applicant in preparation for the submission of this Request for Grant Applications (RFA) or any other associated costs. Current grantees should note that AmeriCorps funds may not be used to cover expenses incurred in preparation of a response to this RFA.

# Program Design & Budget Information

## AmeriCorps Focus Areas & Funding Priorities

### AmeriCorps Agency Focus Areas

All AmeriCorps programs are categorized under a focus area(s) based on the performance measures they develop. Each year the AmeriCorps agency identifies funding priorities, which may include specific activities within a focus area or may relate to other aspects of the program, such as the community served or the member supports provided. [The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act](https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/YYYY_MM_DD_National_Community_Service_Act_Of_1990_as_Amended_by_the_Serve_America_Act_ASN.pdf), emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. In order to carry out Congress’s intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, and to achieve the goals laid out in AmeriCorps’ [Strategic Plan (2022-2026)](https://americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/strategic-plan), AmeriCorps has the following Focus Areas:

Disaster Services

Helping individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of disasters and increase community resiliency.

Economic Opportunity

Improving the economic well-being and security of underserved individuals.

Education

Improving educational outcomes for underserved people, especially children. AmeriCorps is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes.

Environmental Stewardship

Supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in underserved households and communities.

Healthy Futures

Supporting health needs within communities, including mitigating the impacts of public health crises, access to care, aging in place, public health, and addressing childhood obesity, especially in underserved communities.

Veterans and Military Families

Improving the quality of life of veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors.

### AmeriCorps Funding Priorities for Competitive Applicants

AmeriCorps released its [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](https://americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/strategic-plan) which defines the agency’s goals and objectives, and strategies to both meet and exceed the agency’s mission to improve lives and strengthen communities. Over the next 5 years, AmeriCorps will execute the following goals to better position the agency to respond to national and local needs and help the communities it serves prosper:

1. Partner with communities to alleviate poverty and advance racial equity
2. Enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers
3. Unite Americans by bringing them together in service
4. Effectively steward federal resources
5. Make AmeriCorps one of the best and most equitable places to work in the federal government

AmeriCorps will invest in existing and new partnerships with non-profit, faith-based, and Tribal organizations, and State Service Commissions, to get things done for America. The agency will prioritize investment in the most critical issues of our time — public health, climate and the environment, and education and economic opportunity — within AmeriCorps’ Focus Areas (Appendix 1) and will increase our efforts to ensure AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps Senior volunteers, and community-based volunteers reflect the communities where they serve. AmeriCorps will target investments toward communities where the need is greatest, particularly those with populations that face racial inequality and poverty. These steps will enable more Americans than ever to strengthen the communities that need it most across the nation through their service.

AmeriCorps’ priorities for this funding opportunity are:

* Organizations leading service in communities with concentrated poverty, rural communities, tribal communities, and those organizations serving historically underrepresented and underserved individuals, including but not limited to communities of color, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, people with arrest and/or conviction records, and religious minorities;
* Evidence-based interventions on the [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/evidence-exchange) that are assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence. Please note that many of these interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in improving outcomes for individuals living in underserved communities and that the agency has committed resources to supporting grantees seeking to replicate and evaluate these interventions in similar communities;
* Veterans and Military Families, Caregivers, and Survivors – a program model that improves the quality of life of veterans and improves the well-being of military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors,
* Faith-based organizations;
* Programs that provide additional benefits to AmeriCorps members aimed at enhancing member experience and bolstering member recruitment and retention such as paying more than the minimum living allowance, transportation, housing, food, etc.;
* Programs that create workforce pathways for AmeriCorps members, including deliberate training, certifications, and hiring preferences or support;
* Environmental Stewardship, including supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in underserved households and communities;
* Community-based programs that enhance and expand services to second chance youth and/or engage those youth as AmeriCorps members;
* Programs that support civic bridgebuilding programs and projects to reduce polarization and community divisions; and providing training in civic bridgebuilding skills and techniques to AmeriCorps members;
* Programs focused on implementing or expanding access to high-quality early learning and those that prepare AmeriCorps members to enter early learning careers.

To receive priority consideration, applicants must show that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high-quality program design. Proposing programs that receive priority consideration does not guarantee funding.

### AmeriCorps Agency Funding Priorities for Public Health AmeriCorps Applicants

Public Health AmeriCorps is investing significant resources through the American Rescue Plan Act to enable the recruitment, training, and development of a new generation of public health leaders who are ready to respond to the public health needs of the nation by providing public health service in communities. “Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals.” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021.)

Only current Public Health AmeriCorps grantees, also known as PHA continuation applicants, are eligible. Eligible applicants are those organizations that have current Public Health AmeriCorps awards that will be in Year 2 in FY 2024. Public Health AmeriCorps has two main goals:

* Help meet public health needs of local communities by providing needed capacity and support in state and local public health settings and advancing more equitable health outcomes for communities who are currently or historically underserved.
* Provide pathways to good, quality public health-related careers by providing exposure through onsite experience, training, and more, with a focus on recruiting AmeriCorps members who reflect the communities in which they will serve.

AmeriCorps members will serve primarily in state, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments or in service to public health departments. It is strongly recommended that AmeriCorps members serve in at least teams of two. AmeriCorps has found that placing at least two members at a service site location provides economies of scale and aids in retention of members.

To support the development of public health skills, Public Health AmeriCorps members will be required to complete a 16.1 hour no-cost online training provided through the CDC TRAIN platform during their service term. In addition to the mentorship and hands-on experience provided by grantees and/or host sites, AmeriCorps members will have access to additional optional professional development opportunities provided by AmeriCorps and its partners to foster interest in a public health career.

## Volunteer Iowa Program Development Priorities

Volunteer Iowa program development priorities, outlined below, add to, or complement the AmeriCorps federal agency priorities. Applicants will complete the Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form to demonstrate how they address any state commission objectives and to request certification under any state priority areas.

**Priorities Based on the Volunteer Iowa State Service Plan**

Every three years Volunteer Iowa drafts this blueprint for maximizing civic engagement and service in Iowa. This plan identifies priority areas for new program development, summarized below. The full plan is posted at <https://volunteer.iowa.gov/about/publications>.

Programs that are part of or utilize a comprehensive community strategy. In particular, Volunteer Iowa will seek to fund programs that use the principles of collective impact to work together with other stakeholders to address a common problem.

Programs or strategies that engage underrepresented populations and those that provide a high return on investment**.** Volunteer Iowa seeks to increase equity and inclusion across our portfolio of programs and services, so it is of particular interest to the commission that AmeriCorps State programs recruit members from their own communities and representative of the communities being served. Volunteer Iowa seeks national service programs that are diversified and better connected with those who areunderrepresented as volunteers or whose service provides maximum valueincluding: Iowans age 55+, disconnected youth (those at-risk for or currently out of school or unemployed), students, Iowans with disabilities, veterans, and minority and rural populations. Programs that recruit opportunity youth (as defined inthe Mandatory Supplemental Information) as AmeriCorps members are also eligible for a higher level of funding from AmeriCorps.

Programs in geographic areas that are underserved or have the highest need.Volunteer Iowa will prioritize programs that aim to make members available to unserved/underserved areas, particularly through multi-focus intermediary models.

Programs that address disparities in rural communities or with minorities. As Volunteer Iowa pursues better equity and inclusion in our program, that includes prioritizing programming that addresses inequities in Iowa communities. Volunteer Iowa seeks to fund programs that address disparities in wellbeing for minority communities, such as in the areas of school discipline, foster care, juvenile justice, corrections, and similar systems. Volunteer Iowa also seeks programming that serves rural communities, especially those with a demonstrated lack of access to resources. Programs serving underserved communities and/or demonstrating need may be funded at the formula level may qualify for a cost per MSY waiver to provide a higher amount of federal funding per AmeriCorps member (see Volunteer Iowa Waivers in the pre-application).

Governor’s priority areas. Volunteer Iowa will prioritize programs that support Governor-identified priorities including: improving water quality, building capacity and sustainability towards programming addressing food insecurity, improving access to affordable housing, disaster mitigation and response, engaging youth with targeted jobs like teaching nursing or Future Ready Iowa identified careers, starting with K-12 through college developing career pathways, childcare and enrichment, education efforts targeting areas to get kids back on track from lost classroom time, and health programming addressing rural EMS and public health.

Participation in the Iowa AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team (Iowa A-DRT). Volunteer Iowa plays a lead role in coordinating unaffiliated volunteers in times of disaster and is the only state service commission holding a cooperative agreement with FEMA for the deployment of AmeriCorps members to federally declared disaster areas. Priority is placed on funding programs that sign up for the Iowa AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team, to allow their members to be activated for special service assignments involving disaster service, even if this is not a primary program focus. Disaster deployments can range from sandbagging and levee patrol to volunteer management and victim case management.

Certification as a [Service Enterprise](https://www.pointsoflight.org/service-enterprise-program/). Volunteer Iowa is a leader in certifying organizations as Service Enterprises for their comprehensive integration of volunteers into their work. Priority is placed on funding organizations that are certified as a Service Enterprise.

Certification through [Iowa MENTOR (the Iowa Mentoring Partnership).](https://www.iowamentoring.org/) Volunteer Iowa houses the Iowa MENTOR, which provides training and support to certified programs that follow research-based effective practices that are likely to lead to positive outcomes for youth in the program. Iowa AmeriCorps State programs that engage in youth mentoring activities will be expected to pursue certification through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership, as appropriate.

**Priorities Based on Iowa Code**

The Iowa Legislature has defined several areas of service activity as state priorities that have been incorporated into Iowa law. In some years, state funding is available for applicants whose AmeriCorps program meets the requirements of established state service corps; the state funds can be used as match to the AmeriCorps federal funds.

Green Corps. A program that involves youth, or AmeriCorps members of any age, in major transformative projects emphasizing energy efficiency, historic preservation, neighborhood development, and storm water reduction and management. Program details are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 10. Use the following link to view the related Code: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/chapters?agency=817>.

Summer Youth Corps. A program that involves disadvantaged youth (ages 16-25) in meaningful service opportunities that enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and fulfill unmet community needs. Program details are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 9. Use the following link to view the related Code: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/chapters?agency=817>.

Reading Corps: A program that engages members in data-based, problem-solving models of literacy instruction to use in tutoring students from prekindergarten to third grade who are not proficient in reading or who are at risk of becoming not proficient in reading. Program details are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 11. Use the following link to view the related Code: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/chapters?agency=817>.

Refugee Rebuild, Integrate, Serve, Empower (Refugee RISE) AmeriCorps program: A program to increase community integration and engagement for diverse refugee communities in urban and rural areas across the state. Program details are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 12. Use the following link to view the related Code: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/chapters?agency=817>.

Iowa National Service Corps: All programs awarded under this competition will be considered Iowa National Service Corps programs according to Iowa Code 15H.9. Details about the Iowa National service Corps are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 14, which is posted at: https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/chapters?agency=817. As allowed by AMERICORPS, Volunteer Iowa may also use funds designated for Iowa AmeriCorps State positions to award Iowa National Service Corps positions outside of this grant competition (such as commission fellowships).

## Performance Measures

For Competitive and Formula AmeriCorps programs, all applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary intervention. This may be a National Performance Measure or an applicant-determined measure. Volunteer Iowa values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures; accordingly Volunteer Iowa typically limits the number of measures to be included in the final application. For details about performance measure requirements and selection rules from the AmeriCorps agency, please refer to the National Performance Measures Instructions found as an attachment on the [Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps State Grants page](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps-state).

## Grant Award Elements (Member Positions and Funding)

AmeriCorps State grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants. AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions (noted both as Member Service Years and member slots) and associated funding. The funds awarded by AmeriCorps are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded. AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses. AmeriCorps Grants provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects and programs. Typically, grant recipients must contribute additional resources to support the project.

### Member Service Year & Member Service Terms/Slots

A single Member Service Year (MSY) is at least 1700 hours which a person serving full-time completes within 12 months (52 weeks). One AmeriCorps Member Service Year (MSY) is equivalent to a full-time term of AmeriCorps service, but the awarded MSYs can also be split into smaller increments that align with other member slot types. There are seven options for AmeriCorps members’ terms of service (slot types), all of which must be completed within 12 months or less. The duration of the service terms is determined by the program, based on the amount and type of activity that needs to be done.

### Table 4: Service Terms with Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Term** | **Member Service Year (MSY) Equivalent** | **Minimum # of Hours** | **Minimum Living Allowance** | **Maximum Total Living Allowance** |
| **Full-time (FT)** | 1.0 | 1,700 | $18,700 | $37,400 |
| **Three Quarter-time (TQT)** | 0.7 | 1,200 | n/a | $26,180 |
| **Half-time (HT)** | 0.5 | 900 | n/a | $18,700 |
| **Reduced Half-time (RHT)** | 0.3809524 | 675 | n/a | $14,212 |
| **Quarter-time (QT)** | 0.26455027 | 450 | n/a | $9,724 |
| **Minimum-time (MT)** | 0.21164022 | 300 | n/a | $7,854 |
| **Abbreviated-time (AT)** | 0.05627705 | 100 | n/a | $2,244 |

### Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

For operational grants, AmeriCorps funding levels are defined on a cost per Member Service Year basis. The AmeriCorps/CNCS cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is determined by dividing the AmeriCorps share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. It does not include childcare or the value of the education award a member may earn. The maximum amount an applicant may request from AmeriCorps per MSY is determined on an annual basis. New and recompeting Commission subgrantees/applicants will be held to the maximum cost per MSY for their grant type. Cost per MSY limits do not apply to planning grants, since they do not engage members; instead planning grants may request no more than $100,000 in federal funding.

### Table 5: Detail on Maximum Award by Grant Type

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding Type** | **Grant Type** | **Maximum Award** |
| Competitive | Cost Reimbursement or Full Cost Fixed Amount Program | $25,000/MSY |
| Competitive | Public Health AmeriCorps Program – Continuation Only | $27,000/MSY |
| Formula | Cost Reimbursement or Full-Cost Fixed Amount Program | $27,0005F[[6]](#footnote-7)/MSY |
| Formula | Planning Grants | Up to $100,000 |
| Competitive | Professional Corps Fixed Amount | $1,0006F[[7]](#footnote-8)/MSY |
| Competitive & Formula | Education Award Program Fixed Amount | $800 or $10007F[[8]](#footnote-9)/MSY |

## Member Living Allowance & Segal Education Awards

### Member Living Allowance

AmeriCorps programs must provide a living allowance to eligible members.8F[[9]](#footnote-10) A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage. Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service, however nearly all Iowa AmeriCorps programs offer their less than full-time members a living allowance that is pro-rated to the amounts required for full-time members. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the maximum limits in [Table 4: Service Terms with Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance](#_Table_4:_Service). See the Applicant Guide for average living allowance amounts of AmeriCorps programs in recent years (noting that the minimum and maximum amounts for this competition have increased from prior years).

For Cost Reimbursement grants, the living allowance amount must be included in the proposed budget as either AmeriCorps or grantee share. While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance to members that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements. Fixed Amount grant applicants should indicate that amount in the Allowance Rate field of the proposed budget.

### Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service will be eligible for an Education Award from the National Service Trust. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant for the fiscal year the AmeriCorps grant is awarded, therefore the exact Education Award amounts for members who will serve in programs funded under this competition are not currently available. AmeriCorps will provide the updated Education Award amounts by the time of grant award. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service to use the Education Award or members age 55 or older at the time of enrollment into AmeriCorps may transfer their award to an eligible child, grandchild, or foster child.

## Matching Requirements

### Fixed Amount Grants

There is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount grants. AmeriCorps does not provide all the funds necessary to operate the program; therefore, organizations should raise the additional revenue required to operate the program. New applicants are eligible to apply for Full Cost Fixed Amount competitive grants but additional screening may be required.

### Competitive & Formula Cost Reimbursement Grants

Applicants are required to match, with cash or in-kind contributions, a minimum percentage of the project’s total Operating Costs (Section I) plus Member Costs (Section II) plus Administrative Costs (Section III) based on the percentages in Table 6 below. Grantees have the flexibility to meet the overall match requirements in any of the three budget sections, as long as the minimum match of 24% for the first three years, and the increasing minimums in years thereafter, are maintained.The applicant’s match can be non-AmeriCorps cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must indicate whether the match is proposed or secured. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission. The acceptable sources of matching funds are federal, state, local, and/or private sector funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements.

While AmeriCorps permits the use of non-AmeriCorps federal funds as match for the grantee share of the budget, applicants should discuss their intention of using federal funds to match an AmeriCorps grant with the other agency prior to submitting their application to ensure they can meet the requirements and purpose of both grants. Law requires that grantees that use other Federal funds as matching funds for an AmeriCorps grant to report those amounts and sources to AmeriCorps on a Federal Financial Report (FFR). 4F9F[[10]](#footnote-11) Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout.

### Table 6. Minimum Match Requirements for Cost Reimbursement Grants

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AmeriCorps Funding Year** | 1, 2, 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10+ |
| **Grantee Share Requirements** | 24% | 26% | 30% | 34% | 38% | 42% | 46% | 50% |

### Public Health AmeriCorps

There is no cost share or matching requirement for Public Health AmeriCorps, per the Interagency Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which has provided the funding for this program.

## Volunteer Iowa Fees and Other Budget Information

### Volunteer Iowa Fees

Volunteer Iowa charges fees to Iowa AmeriCorps State programs as noted below. Detailed instructions about how to include these fees in the budget are included in the Final Application Instructions.

State Member Management System Costs: Applicants are required to budget $18/member for costs of participation in the state’s member management and timekeeping systems. This is a required budget item and should be labeled as a separate line item entitled, “State Member Management System Costs”. Applicants who wish to use another member management and timekeeping system may be allowed to do so, with Volunteer Iowa approval and at additional cost to account for increased Volunteer Iowa staff time required to conduct required monitoring in a separate system. Applicants who anticipate seeking approval for an alternate system should budget $36/member, in addition to any system cost. Programs will be invoiced on annually for this fee.

State Support Fee: Volunteer Iowa will charge programs a State Support to cover the cost of commission staff time spent providing necessary technical assistance to programs. For 2024-2025 Volunteer Iowa will be assessing a fee based upon the staff time needed to support the grantee. For existing grantees, the fee level will be based on four categories selected from the most recent risk and monitoring level assessment: cost disallowances (from the program/grant management section), number of slots awarded (from the member management section), audit findings or questioned costs (from the financial risk section) and timeliness of fiscal reporting (from the financial management section). Each applicant will need to budget for a base fee based on their number of MSY and then an additional amount based on their assessed fee level tier. All new applicants for operational grants will be considered to be at the high fee level. Fixed Amount and Planning Grant programs will be assessed at a fee of 2% of the budget as noted below. Programs will be invoiced on annually for this fee.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding** | **Base Fee** | **Tiered Fee** | | | **Total Fee** |
| **Low Fee Level** | **Moderate Fee Level** | **High Fee Level** |
| Competitive | $300/MSY | 0% of base fee | 25% of base fee | 50% of base fee | Base + Tiered Fee |
| Formula | $375/MSY | 0% of base fee | 25% of base fee | 50% of base fee | Base + Tiered Fee |
| Fixed Amount | 2% of the total grant amount. This is not included in the program budget. | | | | |
| Planning grants | 2% of the total of section I and section II of the budget. | | | | |

Other Fees: Programs may also be charged a fee for new staff to participate in additional Volunteer Iowa training, for specific planning grant consultation, and/or for members to participate in statewide trainings/events. These will be invoiced to programs as needed.

### Indirect Costs

Application budgets may include indirect costs. Applicants choose one of three methods to calculate allowable administrative costs – an AmeriCorps -fixed percentage rate method, a federally approved indirect cost rate method, or a *de minimis* method. States, local governments, and Indian Tribes may use previously approved indirect cost allocation plans. All methods must be applied consistently across all Federal awards. Regardless of the option chosen, the AmeriCorps shareof administrative costs is limited to 5 percent of the total AmeriCorps funds actually expended under the grant.

Applicants that have a Federal negotiated indirect cost rate or that will be using the 10 percent *de minimis* rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants. The instructions for how to enter the organization’s indirect cost rate are posted as an Attachment. Applicants should not submit documentation addressing the indirect cost rate agreement via email.

### Pre-Award Costs

Limited pre-award costs, where authorized, are allowed after receiving written approval from Volunteer Iowa (the commission gets such approval through AmeriCorps). No members may start, nor may member costs be incurred before award of the grant and execution of the grant agreement.

## Waivers for Program Design & Budget Requirements

Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps offer a number of waivers to program requirements and eligibility criteria. Programs complete and submit any waiver requests as part of their pre-application. Volunteer Iowa may also award waivers at its discretion or may choose to accept waiver requests at a later point in the application process.

### Member Service Year (MSY) Minimum Waiver

Volunteer Iowa has established the 8 MSY minimum because of the administrative requirements of the program (both on the local sponsor and the commission) and because of the team-building and member development elements of the program. This minimum balances the administrative burden with the benefits to the members, the community and the program. However, in compelling situations, the commission may grant approval for smaller programs. Programs should explain reasoning for the waiver and how they will build capacity to manage a larger (at least 8 MSY) program in the future.

### Volunteer Generation Waiver

Volunteer Iowa expects all Iowa AmeriCorps State programs to engage members in recruiting and/or managing community volunteers unless there is a significant and compelling justification as to why this is not a feasible part of the AmeriCorps program design. Programs need a waiver only if no volunteers will be engaged (a waiver is not required only if certain members will not generate volunteers, such as summer-only members or members at certain sites). Applicants should keep in mind that members can engage with volunteers in ways that fall outside of the assigned primary service activity, but that still fit with the member focus. For example, AmeriCorps members could plan a volunteer event for MLK Day or another National/State Day of Service or could help volunteers participate in a special project.

### Alternative Match Schedule

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations.5F10F[[11]](#footnote-12) To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined by AmeriCorps and detailed in the Pre-Application Instructions.

### Match Waiver

The AmeriCorps agency may waive match requirements for individual programs if they determine that a waiver would be equitable because of a lack of available financial resources at the local level. Applicants wishing to submit a match waiver specific to their program should follow the guidance in the Pre-Application Instructions. Applicants must demonstrate that their financial need is unique or unusual. Such requests must be approved by Volunteer Iowa before they will be submitted to AmeriCorps for consideration.

# Review and Selection Process

## Volunteer Iowa Review and Selection Process

The review and selection process is intended to produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and strategic considerations described in this RFA. A summary of the stages of the review and selection process follows. For a full description of the Volunteer Iowa Grant Application and Review Policies, see the Applicant Guide and FAQs. Volunteer Iowa policies allow the commission board to make adjustments to the review process as needed based on extenuating circumstances.

### Volunteer Iowa Initial Staff Review, Clarification, and Technical Assistance

Volunteer Iowa staff will conduct an initial review to determine if an application meets the eligibility requirements published in this RFA and advances to the next stage of the review process. Staff may also ask clarifying questions and give suggestions for improvement, at both the pre-application and final application stages. Applicants being forwarded to a national competition (such as for Competitive or Special funding opportunities) are often provided technical assistance from an external consultant to improve their chances of securing competitive AmeriCorps funding. All applicants are eligible for technical assistance from Volunteer Iowa staff. Based on staff review, applicants will have an opportunity to make changes to their grant applications before the final application is submitted to the Grant Review Committee.

### Grant Review Committee

The Grant Review Committee score the applications according to the RFA Criteria and provide comments and feedback. Typically, Grant Review Committee reviewers do not score all components of the application; instead they score only certain components in a way that mirrors the national competition or fits with their training and expertise. The Grant Review Committee may invite applicants to provide presentations or respond to questions from the committee. The Grant Review Committee will determine a consensus rank order for the applications. The rank order will be provided to the Programs & Development Committee of the Commission.

### Pre-Award Financial Review & Past Performance Assessment

Volunteer Iowa staff will evaluate the strategic risks and opportunities posed by each applicant and will assess returning applicants’ past performance in program, member, and financial management. This information is shared with the Programs & Development Committee.

### Programs & Development Committee

The Programs & Development Committee will consider the information from the Grant Review Committee, as well as staff feedback and recommendations. The Programs & Development Committee will also consider other factors as appropriate for funding, consider the amount of funding available, and other relevant data. The Programs & Development Committee will make a recommendation on funding of applications to the full Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service board.

**Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (Volunteer Iowa) Board**

The full Commission board authorizes submission of applications to the national competition and approves final funding levels for formula applicants, which all become part of Iowa’s prime AmeriCorps grants. Volunteer Iowa reserves the right to prioritize existing awards over new applicants and to award applications in an amount or type other than requested and will document the rationale for doing so.

## AmeriCorps Agency Review & Selection Process

For a full description of the AmeriCorps agency review and selection process, see the appropriate [AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity](https://americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2023-americorps-state-national-grants).

## Review and Selection Criteria

The Review Criteria and Final Application Instruction Appendices outline the requirements that staff and peer reviewers will consider. Commission policies outline other strategic factors that are taken into consideration by the Commission Board.

### Re-focusing of Funding

Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps reserve the right to re-focus program dollars under this RFA in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

# Federal Financial Management & Grant Administration Requirements

## Award Notices

Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps will make awards following the grant selection announcement. Please see [Table 2. Anticipated Key Dates for Iowa AmeriCorps State Applicants](#_Table_2._Anticipated) for the funding notification dates, contingent on the availability and timeliness of congressional appropriations. All applicants, successful or not, will be notified of funding decisions via email. Notification of an award is not an authorization to begin activities. The fully executed Volunteer Iowa grant agreement is the authorizing document. An awardee may not expend Federal funds until the start of the Period of Performance identified in the Volunteer Iowa grant agreement unless it has received a written pre-award cost approval from AmeriCorps.

## Administrative and National Policy Requirements

### Uniform Guidance

All awards under this RFA are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), in [2 CFR Parts 200](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=379c69c6a453c93b76142986a4ce5ad4&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5) and [2205](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=f7425ef67312ab84da9e76ed5d79dff7&node=pt2.1.2205&rgn=div5).

### Requests for Improper Payment Information

AmeriCorps may request documentation from recipients in order to monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the [Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019](https://paymentaccuracy.gov/). Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on manual hold, reimbursement only status, or other remedies as appropriate.

### AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this RFA will be subject to the FY 2024 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2024 Program-Specific Terms and Conditions for the particular program (when applicable). These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. Current versions of the AmeriCorps General and Program-Specific Terms and Conditions for each of its programs are available on the [AmeriCorps Manage Your Grant webpage](https://cnsgov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/jbastresstahmasebi_cns_gov/Documents/2023%20GARP/1st%20round%20of%20internal%20feedback/AmeriCorps%20Manage%20Your%20Grant%20webpage).

### National Service Criminal History Check Requirements11F[[12]](#footnote-13)

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a specific screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. We encourage grantees to minimize barriers to service without putting their program beneficiaries at genuine risk.

* In general, award recipients and subrecipients must conduct an NSCHC for AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers, and staff funded under, or whose salary is reflected as match on, the award.
* AmeriCorps strongly encourages applicants to review the regulations and additional guidance to fully understand how to comply with the requirements. See the [NSCHC regulations and guidance](https://www.americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check). AmeriCorps also strongly encourages award recipients to utilize the two AmeriCorps-approved vendors to conduct the required NSCHCs.
* Failure to conduct a compliant NSCHC may result in significant disallowed costs.
* The cost of conducting NSCHC is an allowable expense under the award and the individual subject to the NSCHC may not be required to cover the cost without being reimbursed.

An NSCHC consists of a check of the:

1. National Sex Offender Public website through [NSOPW.gov](https://www.nsopw.gov/) (nationwide check);
2. State criminal history record repository or agency-designated alternative for the individual's State of residence *and* State of service; and
3. Fingerprint-based check of the FBI criminal history record database through the State criminal history record repository or agency-approved vendor.

All checks must be conducted, reviewed, and an eligibility determination made before the individual begins work or service.

An individual is not eligible to serve or work in a position subject to the NSCHC requirements if:

* the individual refuses to consent to a criminal history check;
* makes a false statement in connection with a criminal history check;
* is registered, or is required to be registered, on a state sex offender registry or the National Sex Offender Registry; or
* has been convicted of murder.

Volunteer Iowa requires most new grantees to utilize the two vendors AmeriCorps has engaged to conduct the required NSCHCs.

### Official Guidance

AmeriCorps: All AmeriCorps active Guidance is available on the [agency’s Guidance webpage](https://www.americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/official-guidance). The contents of these documents do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way unless incorporated into a contract or grant agreement. These documents are intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Volunteer Iowa: Volunteer Iowa provides AmeriCorps State grantee resources at [Current AmeriCorps Grantee Resources | Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (volunteeriowa.org)](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps/current-americorps-grantee-resources).

### Governing Documents

The AmeriCorps regulations and the Terms and Conditions are incorporated into the Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps grant agreement. The grant agreement also incorporates the approved application and budget. Other documents incorporated by reference into the grant agreement include audit requirements, this Volunteer Iowa RFA and the Final Application Instructions, and the Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manual (copies of recent Program Manuals are posted at <https://volunteeriowa.org/americorps/current-americorps-grantee-resources>). A copy of the most recent grant agreement template is available upon request.

## Use of Material

To ensure that materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to recipients and non-recipients, AmeriCorps reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so ([2 CFR §200.315](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=74a79d9a3a38ee2ca26d377daeacebb7&mc=true&n=pt2.1.200&r=PART&ty=HTML#se2.1.200_1315)).

## Reporting

Recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time. Volunteer Iowa uses the IowaGrants system to collect most program reports. A full list of required reports will be included in the grant agreement issued by Volunteer Iowa (draft agreements are available upon request).

Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide start forms; initial, mid-year, November, and final progress reports; semi-annual financial reports; and an internal or external evaluation report as required by the AmeriCorps regulations12F[[13]](#footnote-14) and the Volunteer Iowa grant agreement and program manual. Additional final financial and progress reports are due after the end of the agreement.

Fixed Amount grantees are also required to provide start forms; initial, mid-year, November, and final progress reports; semi-annual financial reports; and an internal or external evaluation report.

All grantees will be required to submit periodic expense and financial status reports, closeouts, and other requested reports as described in the Iowa AmeriCorps State grant agreement and Program Manual. Recipients and subrecipients must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report at <https://FSRS.gov> as required. See [2 CFR Part 170](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=d3b45261ecbe5e9992ede00f23fd8d3b&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl) for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

Once the grant is awarded, recipients will be expected to have data collection and data management policies, processes, and practices that provide assurance that they are reporting high quality performance measure data. At a minimum, grantees should have policies, processes, and practices which address the following five aspects of data quality:

* The data measures what it intends to measure;
* The data reported is complete;
* The grantee collects data in a consistent manner;
* The grantee takes steps to correct data errors;
* The grantee actively reviews data for accuracy prior to submission.

Failure to submit accurate, complete, and timely required reports may affect the recipient’s ability to secure future AmeriCorps funding.

# Awarding Agency Contacts & Technical Assistance

## Volunteer Iowa

The Volunteer Iowa RFA and supporting materials are available on the [AmeriCorps State Grants page of the Volunteer Iowa website](https://volunteer.iowa.gov/americorps/host-americorps-program-or-member/host-americorps-state-program). Questions can be submitted via email to:

Email:americorps@volunteeriowa.org

Phone: 1.800.308.5987

The [AmeriCorps State Grants page of the Volunteer Iowa website](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps-state) also lists a schedule of technical assistance webinars and recordings.

Volunteer Iowa recognizes that many applicants have existing relationships with commission staff and that application-related questions may arise through other staff interactions, but all applicants are strongly encouraged to direct formal questions about the application process to AmeriCorps@volunteeriowa.org, as Volunteer will not be held responsible for oral responses to applicants. Every attempt will be made to provide timely answers, provided that they are submitted within a reasonable time before relevant due dates.

New applicants, or current grantees considering new projects, are encouraged to contact the Volunteer Iowa (see Awarding Agency Contacts section) as early as possible in the competition to set up a phone consultation meeting to discuss their ideas. Volunteer Iowa prioritizes working with all applicants to craft quality proposals. The earlier applicants communicate and/or submit applications, the more opportunities for TA.

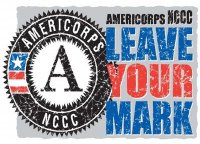
## AmeriCorps

Questions regarding multi-state or Indian Tribe applications must be submitted directly to AmeriCorps. For more information, call (202)606-7508 or email americorpsgrants@cns.gov. AmeriCorps also offers [live text chat](http://www.americorps.gov/contact). For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, call the AmeriCorps Hotline at (800) 942-2677. [AmeriCorps Hotline hours](https://questions.americorps.gov/app/ask) are also posted. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization’s name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying.

AmeriCorps will host technical assistance calls to answer questions about the funding opportunity and eGrants. AmeriCorps strongly encourages all applicants to participate in these sessions. Information for these technical assistance calls is available on the [AmeriCorps’ Funding Opportunities website](https://www.americorps.gov/partner/funding-opportunities).

Also, see the corresponding AmeriCorps NOFO for important notices, including the Public Burden Statement and Privacy Act Statement.

## Other Programs, Services, and Initiatives Offered by Volunteer Iowa and Our Partners

AmeriCorps NCCC: Organizations may apply to host a team of AmeriCorps NCCC members to provide intensive, short term service on projects in the areas of disaster services, environment, infrastructure improvement, energy conservation and urban and rural development. Projects are normally six to eight weeks in duration but will vary depending on the requirements of the project. Organizations must be capable of utilizing at least one full team of eight to twelve members effectively.

P940#y1AmeriCorps VISTA: Organizations can also apply to become a host site in an existing AmeriCorps VISTA project or they can directly sponsor their own VISTA project. [Volunteer Iowa has its own intermediary AmeriCorps VISTA program](https://www.volunteeriowa.org/vista) and accepts applications for host sites on a rolling basis. In general, AmeriCorps VISTA focuses on anti-poverty, community empowerment, and sustainable solutions by having members provide capacity building services at their host organizations. AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsors generally must be able to support three or more full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members serving for one-year on an anti-poverty project.

Other AmeriCorps State & National opportunities: Organizations wishing to place AmeriCorps members in multiple states should apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service for an AmeriCorps National grant. Some AmeriCorps State and National grantees act as intermediary organizations and accept applications from organizations wishing to serve as host sites for one or more AmeriCorps member positions. Volunteer Iowa can help agencies connect with existing intermediary programs.

Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP): IMP certifies local youth mentoring programs and provides these high-quality programs with training opportunities, recognition awards, advocacy initiatives, and statewide marketing and media campaigns. Volunteer Iowa also coordinates the Future Ready Iowa virtual mentoring program.

RSVP (formerly Retired and Senior Volunteer Program): RSVP collaborates with organizations in addressing identified priority community needs, through the mobilization and management of adult volunteers aged 55 and over. RSVP volunteers provide support that enhances the organization. Host organizations must have positions that match program priorities and must be able to provide supervision of the volunteers.

Service Enterprise Initiative: By achieving the Service Enterprise certification and level of excellence, organizations are uniquely positioned to leverage the time and skills of volunteers and expand program operations and revenues, which also allows the nonprofit or government agency to realize greater programmatic impact and operational effectiveness. Volunteer Iowa facilitates the process for additional organizations to become certified and gives funding preference to those certified.

Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF): Volunteer Iowa provides VGF grants to organizations in Iowa to develop or expand the state’s volunteer infrastructure, including development and enhancement of Iowa’s network of volunteer centers, in order to mobilize volunteers in areas consistent with our state service plan. The program is designed to increase the number of people who serve in meaningful roles as volunteers dedicated to addressing important needs in communities across America.

VolunteerIowa.org: The Volunteer Iowa website provides an online system, Get Connected, for volunteers and organizations across Iowa to use to connect with one another. Organizations can post volunteer opportunities and quickly reach out and recruit people who are interested in helping them.

Volunteer Recognition: The commission coordinates Iowa’s two most prestigious volunteer recognition programs, the Governor’s Volunteer Awards, an easy and low-cost way for Iowa organizations to honor their volunteers and the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame, the highest state-level honor volunteers can receive. Nominations are accepted on an annual cycle. In conjunction with the Iowa Nonprofit Summit, the commission helps coordinate the selection of the Iowa Nonprofit Award winners. The Employer Volunteer initiative recognizes employer support for volunteerism, and various social media recognition opportunities are open to participation by the field.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contact the AmeriCorps NCCC North Central Region campus for more information about AmeriCorps NCCC  Tel: 319-472-9664 E-mail: [NCCCNorthCentral@cns.gov](mailto:NCCCNorthCentral@cns.gov) | Contact the Corporation for National & Community Service Regional Office for information about becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsor  Cell Phone: 202-489-8585  Email: [ia@cns.gov](mailto:ia@cns.gov) | Contact Volunteer Iowa for more information about all other opportunities  Ph: 1.800.308.5987  Email:[info@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:info@volunteeriowa.org) |

# Appendices & Attachments

## List of Appendices

1. Pre-Applications
   1. Pre-Application Instructions & Survey for RECOMPETING & CONTINUATION Applicants
   2. Pre-Application Instructions & Worksheet for NEW Applicants
   3. Pre-Application Instructions & Worksheet for PLANNING Applicants
   4. Volunteer Iowa Maximum Slot Request Limit Policy and Procedures
2. Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions
   1. Competitive Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions
   2. Continuation Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions
   3. Formula Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions
   4. PLANNING Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions
3. AmeriCorps State and National Mandatory Supplemental Information
4. AmeriCorps State and National Performance Measure Instructions

## List of Attachments

* 1. Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form
  2. Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey
  3. eGrants Indirect Cost Rate User Instructions
  4. AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Plan Template
  5. Logic Model Template
  6. Application eGrants Narrative Template
  7. eGrants Performance Measure Module Instructions for Operational Grants
  8. eGrants Performance Measure Module Instructions for Planning Grants
  9. Detailed Budget Instructions for Cost Reimbursement
  10. Cost Reimbursement Budget Worksheet
  11. Detailed Budget Instructions for Fixed Cost
  12. Fixed Cost Budget Worksheet
  13. Budget Checklist
  14. Volunteer Iowa Fee Calculation Guide
  15. Final Application Checklist
  16. Detailed Budget Instructions for Planning Grants
  17. Planning Grant Budget Worksheet
  18. Applicant Guide & FAQs

1. Although National Direct applicants do not have to apply to Commissions, there are substantial requirements to coordinate with the Commissions for states in which national service programs will operate. See the *Coordination among State Commission & National Direct Applicants* section of the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for information on these important requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See [Table 4: Detail on Maximum Award by Grant Type](#_Table_4:_Detail) for detailed information on funding levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Volunteer Iowa has signed memorandums of understanding with the neighboring states of Illinois, Missouri, and Nebraska allowing members of Iowa programs to be placed or to provide service at sites in these states that are within 40 miles of the Iowa border. This agreement allows Iowa programs to effectively serve community or regional needs that span state borders. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See a definition and more information about Member Service Years (MSYs) under the [Member Service Year & Member Service Terms/Slots](#_Member_Service_Year) section. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/ECERTS.HTM> and <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/EASSUR.HTM> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Volunteer Iowa reserves the right to award applications at a lower cost per MSY than the maximum for individual applicants. The maximum that can be awarded for any individual formula program is $27,000 per MSY. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. AmeriCorps requires Professional Corps programs to cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non AmeriCorps resources. AmeriCorps will only consider operating funds of up to $1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate significant organizational financial need. AmeriCorps reserves the right to 1) treat an applicant that meets the statutory requirements of a Professional Corps as such, whether or not they submitted their application as a professional corps program; and 2) determine whether an applicant has demonstrated inability to effectively operate in the absence of AmeriCorps operating funds. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Per 42 U.S.C. 12581a, the Corporation may provide the operational support under this section for a program in an amount that is not more than $800 per individual enrolled in an approved national service position, or not more than $1,000 per such individual if at least 50 percent of the persons enrolled in the program are disadvantaged youth. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements: (a) Programs existing prior to September 21, 1993 are not required to offer a living allowance. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement, but not the maximum requirement. (b) EAP Grantees are not required to provide a living allowance, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Table above. (c) Professional Corps Grantees must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above. Professional Corps member salaries and benefits including childcare are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve and are not included in the budget request to AmeriCorps (Federal share). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. §12571(e)). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. 45 Code of Federal Regulations CFR 2521.60(b) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See [45 CFR 2540.200– 2540.207](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=f100236ee7664894ea5b7d2b7bc80564&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45cfr2540_main_02.tpl) and [National Service Criminal History Check Resources](https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check) for complete information and FAQs. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. [45 CFR §§2522.500-2522.540 and §§2522.700-2522.740](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/part-2522/subpart-E) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)