# Appendix 2.d. Review Criteria & Final Application Instructions - PLANNING GRANT Applicants

## Anticipated Key Dates and Submission Deadlines

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Formula Planning Grant Key Dates** |
| **Initial Application Materials release date** | September 22, 2023 |
| **Pre-Applications due to Volunteer Iowa** | January 19, 2024 |
| **Final Applications & Supporting Documents due to Volunteer Iowa** | March 8, 2024 |
| **Applicants Appear Before Volunteer Iowa Committee (as needed)** | April 30, 2024 |

## AmeriCorps Planning Grant Applicants- Additional Details/Adjustments to the Request for Applications (RFA)

**A.5. Estimated Available Funds**

Planning grants, which have no MSY, are limited to $100,000 in federal funding.

**A.6 Anticipated Key Dates and Submission Deadlines**

For the planning competition, these dates have been adjusted as noted in the chart above.

**B.2. Threshold Issues**

The minimum MSY threshold and cost per MSY limits does not apply to planning grants, as they do not engage any members and therefore have no MSY.

**C.3. Application Content**

The planning grant performance measure (see Attachments) must be followed exactly to complete that module in eGrants to allow for submission.

The Additional Documents for planning grants are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicable To Planning?** | **Document**  | **Description** |
| Yes - only first two sections | **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. Planning grantees complete ONLY the Contact Information for Representative Before Grant Review Committee and List of Proposed Member Service Locations sections.  |
| Yes | **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 without an existing AmeriCorps program): 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.). |
| No | **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.  |
| Yes | **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. |
| No | **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.  |
| Yes, if applicable | **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. |

**D.2. Volunteer Iowa Program Development Priorities**

In addition to the AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa funding priorities for operational grants (see RFA), priorities for this planning grant competition also include:

* Programs with an intentional focus on career pathways, which may include formal certifications, apprenticeships, college credit, and/or other targeted member professional development incorporated into the potential AmeriCorps program design.
* Programs that will replicate or expand upon successful, existing models in Iowa. Such proposals should indicate how the replication or expansion will build upon (and not compete with) existing Iowa programs.
* Programs with a focus on addressing local mental health and wellness needs.

**D.3. Performance Measures**

Planning grants do not have a traditional performance measure as the goal of all planning grants is to plan for an AmeriCorps program. See Attachment for guidance as to how to complete the performance measure module in eGrants.

**E.1. Review and Selection Process**

For the planning grant competition, reviewers will provide feedback to the Programs Committee and full Commission while still meeting formula application deadlines from the AmeriCorps agency. Review and approval of final awards to planning applicants may differ from the process described in the full RFA and will be determined by the Commission based on the requests received.

**F.1. Award Notices**

Typically, planning grants are awarded for an initial six-month period and then an assessment is made to determine whether the planning period will be extended for an additional six months. Planning grants may not exceed one year in length and may have a project period of less than one year, depending on progress made and the start date of any subsequent operational grant that is awarded.

## Review Criteria

This application criteria is for new applicants for FORMULA PLANNING GRANT funding. A planning grant is defined as: a proposal to plan for an AmeriCorps program from a new legal applicant or for a new project from an existing/recent legal applicant. Each applicant must describe their plans to develop a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant community problem. AmeriCorps urges applicants to submit high quality applications that carefully follow the guidance in the RFA and the following Application Instructions. The quality of an application will be an important factor in determining whether an organization will receive funding.

Applications should include a well-designed plan with clear and compelling justifications for receiving the requested funds. Reviewers will assess the quality of applications by using the selection criteria described below and will rate them accordingly. They will also consider the weights assigned to each criterion.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Categories/Subcategories** | **Percentage** |
| **Executive Summary** | **0** |
| **Program Design**  | **50** |
| * Need/Problem
 | 4 |
| * Theory of Change/Program Design
 | 24 |
| * Evidence Base
 | 10 |
| * Notice Priority
 | 0 |
| * Member Experience
 | 12 |
| **Organizational Capability**  | **25** |
| * Organizational Background and Staffing
 | 15 |
| * Compliance and Accountability
 | 6 |
| * Member Supervision
 | 4 |
| **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**  | **25** |
| **Evaluation Summary or Plan** | **0** |
| **Amendment Justification** | **0** |
| **Clarification Summary** | **0** |
| **Continuation Changes** | **0** |

**eGrants Final Application Instructions**

#### Starting a Final Application in eGrants

New applicants need to establish an eGrants account by accessing this link: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> and selecting “Don’t have an eGrants account? Create an account.” ***Note: Anyone within your organization who will be entering information in the application at any point during application preparation and submission in the eGrants system must have their own eGrants account.***

In eGrants, before Starting Section I you will need to:

* Start a new Grant Application
* Select a Program Area (AmeriCorps)
* Select a NOFA:
	+ For FY 2024 AmeriCorps State and Territory Commission (New and Cont), select Grant Application ID: Iowa FORMULA Applicants

Your final application in eGrants consists of the following components. Make sure to complete each section.

I. Applicant Info

II. Application Info

1. Narratives
2. Logic Model
3. Performance Measures
4. Program Information

VII. Documents

VIII. Budget

IX. Funding/Demographics

X. Review

XI. Authorize, and Submit

#### Applicant Info

Information entered in the Applicant Info, Application Info, and Budget sections will populate the SF 424 Facesheet.

* Select **New in order to request a new planning grant.**

Enter or update the requested information in the fields that appear. The contact person needs to be the person who can answer questions about the application. The authorized representative must have their own eGrants account because they need to be the person who will submit (and must meet the requirements listed in the RFA). You must include “AmeriCorps” (for operational grants) or “AmeriCorps Planning” (for planning grants) in the Project Title.

#### Application Info

In the Application Info Section enter:

* Areas affected by your proposed program. Please include the two-letter abbreviation with both letters capitalized for each state where you plan to operate. Separate each two-letter state abbreviation with a comma. For city or county information, please follow each one with the two-letter capitalized state abbreviation.
* Requested project period start and end dates. The length of the project period is specified in the *RFA*.
* The Application is Subject to Review by State Executive Order 12372 Process: This is pre-filled as “No, this is not applicable.”
* Indicate Yes or No if you are delinquent on any federal debt. If yes, provide an explanation.
* State Application Identifier: Enter N/A.

#### Narratives

The narrative section of the application is your opportunity to convince reviewers that your project meets the selection criteria as outlined in the *RFA*. Below are some general recommendations to help you present your project in a way the reviewers will find compelling and persuasive.

* **Lead from your program strengths and be explicit.** Do not make the mistake of trying to stretch your proposed program description to fit each funding priority and special consideration articulated in the regulations or the *RFA.*
* **Be clear and succinct.** Do not use jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. Describe clearly what you intend to do and how your project responds to the selection criteria.
* **Avoid circular reasoning.** The problem you describe should not be defined as the lack of the solution you are proposing.
* **Explain how.** Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
* **Don’t make assumptions.** Even if you have received funding from AMERICORPS in the past, do not assume your reviewers know anything about you, your proposed program, your partners, or your beneficiaries. Avoid overuse of acronyms.
* **Use an impartial proofreader.** Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the project narrative.
* **Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order presented in the instructions.** Use headings to differentiate narrative sections by criterion.

Reviewers will assess your application against the selection criteria. Each application must clearly describe a project that will effectively deploy AmeriCorps members to solve a significant community problem. To best respond to the criteria, we suggest that you include a brief discussion of each bullet if it pertains to your application.

##### a. Executive Summary (0 percent of AMERICORPS scoring)

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from the template below.

*The [Name of the organization] proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program serving in [the location(s) the AmeriCorps program will serve] that will address the AmeriCorps focus area(s) of [AmeriCorps Focus Area(s)]. The AmeriCorps investment will be matched with $[total amount of projected match]; $[amount of local, state, tribal, and federal funds] in public funding and $[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding. No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.*

*\*Volunteer Iowa tip- Write this section last, after all sections are complete.*

##### b. Rationale and Approach/Program Design (50 percent of AMERICORPS scoring)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application’s response to the criteria below. In assessing Rationale and Approach/ Program Design, reviewers will examine the degree to which the applicant demonstrates how AmeriCorps members and the proposed intervention are particularly well-suited to addressing the identified community problem. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value. Please ensure the Theory of Change and Logic Model incorporate the funding priorities listed above, for example supporting communities historically excluded and/or underserved from government services, addressing structural and institutional inequities, or increasing opportunity in order to achieve sustainable change in communities.

###### Need/Problem (4 points)

* Describe the need or problem you plan to address with your AmeriCorps program.
* Provide evidence that the problem is prevalent and severe in communities where the program plans to serve and has been documented with relevant data. This should include discussing the community need as it relates to the [CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html).
* Briefly describe any current activities in which your organization engages to address the community need.

###### Theory of Change/Program Design (24 points)

While the planning grant will help to determine specifics of the program, applicants should include as much information as possible about the potential AmeriCorps program in the Theory of Change/Program Design Narratives. During the planning grant period you may identify different activities for AmeriCorps members or refine your plans but we would like to know as much detail as you have available at this time. Please address each section in the narrative, either listing the details you already have or stating how you will use the planning grant period to develop these areas of the proposal.

* + Describe the activities in which you propose to engage AmeriCorps members and how these activities are responsive to the identified community need(s).
		1. Each AmeriCorps program must have a primary intervention for which there will be an associated program performance measure (output and outcome) for which results will need to be tracked and reported.
		2. Articulate, as clearly as you are able at this time, the details of the proposed intervention, including the design, dosage, target population, roles AmeriCorps members, and (if applicable) roles of leveraged volunteers.
		3. Describe the outcome(s) you are seeking to achieve through your intervention and how the outcome(s) represent meaningful progress in addressing the identified community problem.
		4. Explain why this intervention is likely to achieve your desired outcome(s).
	+ Explain why AmeriCorps members are a highly effective means to address the identified community need (as opposed to other human resources, such as paid employees, community volunteers, etc.). Include your organization’s commitment to utilizing national service as a strategy to further your mission.
	+ Explain how AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts and help develop additional capacity to address the stated problem (and will not be duplicating or displacing any current staff, volunteers, or other services that your organization already provides related to this need).

Similarly as for the Program Design narratives, planning grant applicants should include as much information as available at this time in the Logic Model. Include any off the following information, as available:

* A summary of the community problem, including the role current or historical inequities faced by underserved communities may play in contributing to the problem.
* As much detail as you have at this time about the inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the proposed intervention, including but not limited to:
	+ Locations or sites in which members will provide services
	+ Context in which the intervention is delivered (e.g., the setting where the intervention is delivered)
	+ Number of AmeriCorps members who will deliver the intervention
* The core activities that define the proposed intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
	+ The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
	+ The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
	+ The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)
* The measurable outputs that will result from delivering the proposed intervention (i.e., number of beneficiaries served, types and number of activities conducted, equity gaps closed). If applicable, identify which [National Performance Measures](https://americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2024-americorps-state-national-grants) may be used by a future operational grant as output indicators
* Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that will occur as a result of the proposed intervention. If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures may be used by a future operational be used as outcome indicators.
* For any items you have not defined at this time, please indicate “TBD” within the logic model.

Note: The Logic Model is a visual representation of the applicant’s Theory of Change. Programs that are awarded grant funding may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the Logic Model but are not required to measure all components of their Theory of Change. Applicants proposing multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention. Logic Model content that exceeds eight pages will not be reviewed.

###### Evidence Base (10 points)

The applicant should describe their plans to engage in consultation to develop the national service program model, in particular any planned consultation with:

* potential program participants,
* representatives of the community to be served,
* other community-based agencies with a demonstrated record of experience in providing services, local government leaders in the areas to be served, and
* any labor organizations that represent employees engaged in the same or substantially similar work as that proposed to be carried out by AmeriCorps members.

###### Notice Priority (0 points)

* Note if the proposed program fits within one or more of the AmeriCorps or Volunteer Iowa funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section and more fully described in the Mandatory Supplemental Information or Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form.
* Note if the proposed program will address the following AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa priorities:
	+ The program will involve participants in projects that build an ethic of civic responsibility and opportunities for reflection on such experiences.
	+ The program will inform members about and connect them to AmeriCorps and the larger national service network.
* Note if the proposed program will address the planning grant-specific priorities from D.2.
* No additional detail is needed here beyond stating if and which priorities the proposed program will address. The rest of the application will speak to this in more depth.

###### Member Experience (12 points)

* Describe your plans for providing AmeriCorps members opportunities to develop as leaders and gain skills during their term of service that will be valued by future employers (e.g., workforce pathways, increasing levels of responsibility and leadership roles for members).
	+ Include training and professional development offered by the program
* Describe any potential member incentives member may be offered.
* Describe your experience recruiting employees, AmeriCorps members, and/or community volunteers for your organization. Explain your plans to recruit a diverse and inclusive group of AmeriCorps members from geographic or demographic communities in which the program operates.
* Details how AmeriCorps members will be provided a high quality orientation to the community they will serve in that is from an asset based frame and guided and informed by the community.

##### c. Organizational Capability (25 percent of AMERICORPS scoring)

Describe your organization’s ability to successfully manage the planning grant and utilize the funds and time period to plan an AmeriCorps program, including but not limited to the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value. Reviewers will consider the quality of the application’s response and will assess the extent to which the applicant demonstrates organizational background and staffing and structures, including compliance and accountability, to support the proposed planning activities.

###### Organizational Background and Staffing (15 points)

* Explain, if any, experience the organization has with AmeriCorps State and National and/or other national service programs.
* The organization details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be undertaking the AmeriCorps planning activities and eventually implementing the AmeriCorps program, as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program. Include how much time staff (e.g. percentage of total time or number of hours per week) will meaningfully contribute to planning activities during the grant period. If specific individuals have not been identified, describe the qualification criteria that will be applied to selecting the program leadership. Include how the organization is prepared to begin planning activities in a timely fashion in order to meet planning grant milestones.
* Share any past experience in facilitating, partnering, or participating in similar volunteer, national service, or workforce development programs. Also share other major state or federal grants that your organization has managed.
* Identify any existing partners and plans to engage community members, prospective members and/or partner organizations in the planning process.
* Describe how the organization’s definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is demonstrated by the organization (e.g., diversity on the Board of Directors, agency staff and leadership, and/or volunteers) and the organization upholds a supportive and safe environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds.

###### Compliance and Accountability (6 points)

* Describe how the applicant has the experience, staffing, and management structure to manage the planning grant funds and carry out the planning grant process. Include the systems and processes that the applicant has for sound programmatic and fiscal oversight of the proposed AmeriCorps program, or how it plans to develop this capacity, including:
* Describe the organization’s current monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect non-compliance of existing grants, programs, organizational policies, etc.
	+ Explain how the organization employs continuous improvement to mitigate fraud, waste, and abuse.
* Describe what preparation has been done with agency leadership, board, staff, partners, and stakeholders to gain support for and prepare the organization to host the proposed program.

###### Resource Development (4 points)

* + Detail the organization’s experience in securing outside cash and in-kind contributions.
	+ Describe the resources that could potentially be utilized/secured to assist the organization in supporting an operational AmeriCorps program and your plans to work on resource development during the planning period.

##### d. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent of AMERICORPS scoring)

Staff will assess the quality of the application’s budget to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value. **These criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. Do not include narrative in the narrative box except for “See budget”.** In assessing Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy, reviewers will examine the degree to which the budget is cost effective and appropriate for the program being proposed.

###### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)

* Budget complies with the appropriate Detailed Budget Instructions (see Attachments)
* Budget is submitted without mathematical errors.
* Proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
* Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
* Budget complies with the budget instructions.
* Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget. Indicate the amount of non-AmeriCorps resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash), the sources of these commitments, and if the commitments are proposed or secured.
* The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year. Proposed budgets that contain less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.
* Applicants ensure the current indirect rate cost rate information is in organization’s eGrants account screens if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.

**e. Evaluation Plan (0 percent for AMERICORPS scoring)**

Competitive applicants have specific evaluation requirements, but formula applicants do not. Formula programs are encouraged to engage in evaluation activities relevant to the program design and life cycle.

All applicants should enter “N/A” in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field of the Narrative. Any other text entered in this field will not be reviewed.

**f. Amendment Justification (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant and needs to amend it.

**g. Clarification Information (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period. Please clearly label new information added during clarification with the date.

**h. Continuation Changes (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter changes in the application narratives in continuation requests.

#### Logic Model

Complete the logic model according to the criteria provided in the applicable *RFA Criteria*.

To begin entering your logic model, from your eGrants application page select “Logic Model” in the left side navigation menu.

In the first blank row of the logic model, click “edit.” Clicking this link will open a pop-up screen with fields for each column of the logic model. Complete any fields that are applicable; there are no required fields in this screen. When you are finished click “save and close.”

You may add an unlimited number of rows to the logic model by clicking “add a new row.” However, please be mindful of any page limits specified elsewhere in the Application Instructions or *RFA*.

You may edit or delete an existing row by clicking “edit” or “delete” in the last column of the logic model.

#### Performance Measures

Planning grants do not have a performance measure requirement as the goal of all planning grants is to plan for an AmeriCorps program. See the application instructions for guidance as to how to complete the performance measure module in eGrants.

#### Program Information

In the Program Information Section, applicants must check the relevant boxes in order to be considered for AMERICORPS’ assessment of the strategic considerations and Special Initiatives. Applicants should only check the boxes for those characteristics that represent a significant part of the program.

**AmeriCorps Funding Priorities**

Check any priority area(s) that apply to the proposed planning activities. Do not select those that apply only if a future operational grant is awarded.

**Grant Characteristics**

Check any grant characteristics that apply to the proposed planning activities. Do not select those that apply only if a future operational grant is awarded.

#### Documents

See the via the guidance in the *RFA* regarding which documents are required for your application. eGrants does not allow you to upload any additional documents so you are required to upload them to IowaGrants. However, the eGrants application does request the status of certain documents. After you have uploaded your documents to IowaGrants*,* change the status in eGrants from the default “Not Sent” to the applicable status: “Sent (i.e. uploaded to IowaGrants),” “Not Applicable,” or “Already on File at AMERICORPS.”

 Please submit all required documents in IowaGrants as instructed below using the naming convention and other instructions found there. These materials must be submitted by the deadline in the *RFA.*

####  Budget Instructions

**Planning grant applicants should use the Detailed Budget Instructions for Cost Reimbursement Grants; noting that no member costs are allowed for planning grants.**

##### a. Match Requirements

Program requirements, including requirements on match, are located in the AmeriCorps regulations and summarized in the RFA.

* In the “Source of Funds” field that appears at the end of Budget Section III, enter a brief description of the match. Identify each match source separately. Identify if the match is secured or proposed. Include dollar amount, the match classification (cash or in-kind), and the source type (Private, State/Local, or Federal) for your **entire match**. (The total amount in the Source of Funds field should match the total amount in the budget narrative exactly.) Define all acronyms the first time they are used.

##### b. Preparing Your Budget

Volunteer Iowa Guidance: Applicants for AmeriCorps State Cost Reimbursement grants must prepare detailed budgets and meet program matching requirements. Review the Attachment: Detailed Budget Instructions for Planning Grants for more details.

Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your narrative. Reviewers will consider the information you provide in this section in their assessment of the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy selection criterion. Follow the appropriate, Detailed Budget Instructions in the Attachments to prepare your budget. An Excel Budget Narrative Worksheet is provided by Volunteer Iowa (see Attachments) for the purposes of drafting your budget; we recommend you work on your budget in this tool and enter into eGrants when finalized.

As you enter your detailed budget information, eGrants will automatically populate a budget summary and budget narrative report. Prior to submission be sure to review the budget checklist (Attachments) to ensure your budget is compliant. In addition, eGrants will perform a limited compliance check to validate the budget. If eGrants finds any compliance issues you will receive a warning and/or error messages. You must resolve all errors before you can submit your budget. Note that the system also applies some warnings that relate only to competitive submission thresholds (such as the competitive cost/MSY limit) but not to formula grantees and will not prevent submission.

As you prepare your budget:

* All the amounts you request must be defined for a particular purpose. Do not include miscellaneous, contingency, or other undefined budget amounts.
* Itemize each cost and present the basis for all calculations in the form of an equation.
* Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an activity.
* Do not include fractional amounts (cents).
* Note that National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) requirements do not apply to planning grantees.

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and the requirements of the Uniform Guidance. Please refer to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200) for allowable, allocable, and reasonable cost information, as well as audit requirements, including the need to provide audits to the Clearinghouse if expending over $750,000 in federal funds as required in the OmniCircular. The OMB Uniform Guidance can be found on-line at <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl>.

#### Funding/Demographics

In the Funding/Demographics Section enter the information requested which could include:

* Other Revenue funds. Enter the amount of funds that your organization uses to run the program that are not identified on the application budget as AMERICORPS/CNCS share or grantee share (match). Note: Programs should not enter the total operating budget for their organization unless the entire operating budget supports the AmeriCorps program. Programs that have additional revenue sources not included in the matching funds section of the budget should provide the amount of this additional revenue that supports the program. This amount should not include the AMERICORPS/CNCS or grantee share amounts in the budget. Fixed amount grantees should enter all non-AMERICORPS/CNCS funds that support the program in this field. All fixed grants will have other revenue.
* Number of Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members. Please enter the number of volunteers participating in one day service projects or ongoing volunteer commitments that the proposed AmeriCorps members will generate.

Volunteer Iowa Guidance: According to current AmeriCorps guidance, programs will be asked to report on Other Revenue Funds for which they have supporting documentation as part of their program progress reports. This is currently only required for Fixed-Amount grantees.

Volunteer Iowa Guidance: This is not applicable to planning grants.

#### **Operating Sites (for multi-state applicants only)**

This section is not applicable to single-state applicants and therefore should not appear for Iowa AmeriCorps State applicants.

#### Review, Authorize, and Submit

Applicants must submit common federal government-wide Representations and Certifications through SAM.gov. Entities creating new registrations in SAM.gov and existing entities completing their annual registration renewals in SAM.gov are required to review financial assistance representations and certifications before their registration can be activated. As entities renew and re-register their accounts, the data collected make SAM.gov the federal repository for the government-wide information.

eGrants requires that you review and verify your entire application before submitting, by completing the following sections in eGrants:

* Review
* Authorize
* Assurances
* Certifications
* Verify
* Submit

Read the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications carefully (<https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/EASSUR.HTM>, and <https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/ECERTS.HTM>). The person who authorizes the application must be the applicant’s Authorized Representative or his/her designee and must have an active eGrants account to sign these documents electronically. An Authorized Representative is the person in your organization authorized to accept and commit funds on behalf of the organization. A copy of the governing body’s authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant’s office.

## IowaGrants Final Application

#### Starting a Final Application in IowaGrants.

On the IowaGrants home page select Grant Opportunities, or after logging in select Funding Opportunities from your main menu. Click on the AmeriCorps State 2024-2025 funding opportunity.

Click on the button at the top that allows you to Start a New Application (you may need to first login to your account). Do not select to copy an existing application or you will not have the correct components available to you. You will first be directed to the General Information component.

When each IowaGrants component has been completed, you will need to click on the “Mark as Complete” option for that component before the system will allow you to submit the application.

Your final application in IowaGrants consists of the following components. Make sure to complete each section.

1. General Information
2. Minority Impact Statement
3. Final Application Supporting Documentation Attachments
4. Application Signature (appears after you click “Submit”)

#### General Information

Include “AmeriCorps” (for operational grants) or “AmeriCorps Planning” (for planning grants) in the Project Title. The project title should match the program name in eGrants. If you are connected to more than one organization (as is the case for existing AmeriCorps grantees who also had an IowaGrants timekeeping account), be sure to choose the correct applicant organization. The IowaGrants user who creates the final application will become the primary grantee contact (the “registered applicant”) in the system. The registered applicant can add additional contacts from the same organization to allow them access to the final application.

#### Minority Impact Statement

This is a required form for all State of Iowa grants; please complete as directed.

#### Final Application Supporting Documentation Attachments

The following additional documents are part of the final application in IowaGrants. See the RFA for details on supporting documentation to be included with the final application, as many of the attachments are relevant for only certain applicants. On the attachment page, click the name of the required attachment. You can then choose the file to upload. A description is required by the system in order to accept the file. In order to ensure that state reviewers see the final version of your application materials from eGrants, you should first submit your eGrants application and then download copies of the submitted eGrants materials to upload to IowaGrants.

* Copy of submitted eGrants Application
	1. Application for Federal Assistance (from eGrants)- REQUIRED
	2. Budget Attachment (from eGrants)- REQUIRED
	3. Budget Narrative (from eGrants)- REQUIRED
* Additional Documents

1. Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form- REQUIRED

2. Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)- REQUIRED

3. Copy of Most Recent Agency Audit or Financial Review- REQUIRED for NEW

4. Evaluation briefs, reports, studies to support the Evidence Base.- N/A to planning

5. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate supporting documentation.

6. Evaluation plan- N/A to planning

7. Evaluation report- N/A to planning

8. SAM registration renewal date documentation.

9. Tribal organization eligibility documentation.

10. Labor union concurrence.

11. Federal debt delinquency explanation.

#### Application Signature

Before submitting, the authorized user will need to sign (within the system) and verify understanding of the Funding Opportunity terms.

Be sure to check your entire application to ensure that there are no errors before submitting it. When you verify the application eGrants will also generate a list of errors and potential errors if there are sections that need to be corrected or reviewed prior to submission. If someone else is acting in the role of the applicant’s Authorized Representative, that person must log into his/her own eGrants account and proceed with Authorize and Submit. After signing off on the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications, his/her name will override any previous signatory that may appear and show on the application as the Authorized Representative.

## Important Notices

These application instructions conform to AmeriCorps’ online grant application system, [eGrants](https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp) and the Volunteer Iowa online system, [IowaGrants](https://www.iowagrants.gov/home.do). All funding announcements by AmeriCorps are posted on [www.americorps.gov](https://americorps.gov/partner/funding-opportunities) and [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov/). AmeriCorps funding announcements by Volunteer Iowa are posted on [www.iowagrants.gov](http://www.iowagrants.gov) and/or [www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org).

**Public Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 80 hours per submission, including reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing the form. Comments on the burden or content of this instrument may be sent to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Attn: Arminda Pappas, 250 E Street, SW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20525. AMERICORPS informs people who may respond to this collection of information that they are not required to respond to the collection of information unless the OMB control number and expiration date displayed on page one are current and valid. (See 5 CFR 1320.5(b)(2)(i).)

**Privacy Act Notice:** The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C § 552a) requires that the following notice be provided to you: The information requested on the AmeriCorps Application Instructions is collected pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12581 - 12585 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended, and 42 U.S.C. § 4953 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 as amended. Purposes and Uses - The information requested is collected for the purposes of reviewing grant applications and granting funding requests. Routine Uses - Routine uses may include disclosure of the information to federal, state, or local agencies pursuant to lawfully authorized requests. In some programs, the information may also be provided to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to determine the existence of any prior criminal convictions. The information may also be provided to appropriate federal agencies and Department contractors that have a need to know the information for the purpose of assisting the Department’s efforts to respond to a suspected or confirmed breach of the security or confidentiality or information maintained in this system of records, and the information disclosed is relevant and unnecessary for the assistance. Executive Summaries of all compliant applications received and applications of successful applicants will be published on the AmeriCorps website as part of ongoing efforts to increase transparency in grantmaking. This is described in more detail in the *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity.* The information will not otherwise be disclosed to entities outside of AmeriCorps without prior written permission. Effects of Nondisclosure - The information requested is mandatory in order to receive benefits.

**Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act:** Grant recipients will be required to report at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.fsrs.gov/) on all subawards over $25,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for recipients and subrecipients. Recipients must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 C.F.R. Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

**Indirect Cost Rates:** AMERICORPS allows applicants to include indirect costs in application budgets. Based on qualifying factors, applicants have the option of using a federally approved indirect cost rate, a 10% de minimis rate of modified total direct costs, or may claim certain costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR § 200.413 Direct costs. Applicants who hold a federal negotiated indirect cost rate must use that rate in lieu of the AmeriCorps 5/10% allocation of administrative costs.

Applicants who hold a state or federal negotiated indirect cost rate or will be using the 10% de minimis rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants (see Attachments).

Those applicants who receive state funding from Volunteer Iowa that is awarded to be used as match to the federal AmeriCorps funds may have a portion of those state funds (up to 10%) retained by Volunteer Iowa for the commission’s administrative costs. So, while the full amount of these state funds should be reflected in the AmeriCorps budget the program should be aware of the amount that may be designated to the commission.

**Universal Identifier:** Applicants must include a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in eGrants at the time of submission. Applicants must obtain their UEI and register their entity through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid registration, which must be renewed annually. The name and address of the organization reflected in SAM.gov must EXACTLY match what is entered into eGrants.