Request for Applications (RFA)

2027-2028 Iowa AmeriCorps State RFA

Request for Applications Information:

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

Announcement Type: Posted September 21, 2026

Application Materials: Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps RFA Basecamp

Contact: Americorps@VolunteerIowa.org or 1-800-308-5987

Important Deadlines:

Application Materials	**Competitive Continuation Applicants**	**Competitive New/Recompete Applicants**	**Formula Applicants**
Final Application & supporting documents	November 13, 2026 submitted to eGrants and IowaGrants	December 1, 2026 submitted to eGrants and IowaGrants	March 19, 2027 submitted to IowaGrants

Purpose:

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 commit any particular amount of funding. The actual level, timing, and process of grant funding will be subject to the availability of annual federal appropriations. Any award made under the AmeriCorps Notice may be terminated by the agency if it no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities.

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Significant Changes

Applicants are expected to review all RFA materials thoroughly to prepare a successful application. Below is a list of significant changes applicants should note:

- AmeriCorps Members referred to as AmeriCorps Volunteers in the NOFO (applicants should use the term AmeriCorps Volunteers throughout application materials)
- Revision of the Use Evidence priority to include demonstration of any evidence supporting the performance data described in the application
- Cost/MSY increase to $26,800 for cost reimbursement and full cost fixed competitive applicants
- Cost/MSY increase to $27,000 for non-EAP formula applicants
- Remove the AmeriCorps Fixed Percentage method for determining indirect costs
- Increase to the full-time minimum living allowance
- Increase to the maximum living allowances for all slot types
- Threshold requirement of a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps slots for all competitive applicants. This does not apply to formula applicants
- Reduction of available slot type from seven to five for all applicants
- Applicants funded under the Notice may be approved for pre-award costs for up to 90 days prior to program start, with Commission approval
- Submission of the Operational and Financial Management Survey no longer required
- Decrease in AmeriCorps Volunteer recruitment criterion point value
- Increase in AmeriCorps Volunteer retention criterion point value
- Applicants must not be listed on Do Not Pay or the exclusion list in SAM.gov
- Continuation applicants may not request an increase in funding. Continuation applicants may request an increase in slots/MSY
- Competitive new, competitive recompete, and formula applicants will be required to use the Application Narrative Template for IowaGrants, along with the eGrants application narrative PDF, to submit with their final application in IowaGrants
- Formula-only applicants will only submit application materials in IowaGrants by the deadline. If selected for award by the Commission, formula applicants will submit an abbreviated eGrants application into eGrants
- Change in the way calculating Volunteer Iowa support to programs

A. Program Description

A.1 What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps brings people together to tackle some of the country's most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps Volunteers and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement

of communities. In addition to meeting community needs, AmeriCorps programs support their participants/Volunteers 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 Volunteers.

AmeriCorps State & National grants are awarded to eligible organizations that engage AmeriCorps Volunteers in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. Programs design service activities for a team of Volunteers 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 Volunteers 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 Volunteers to serve in their programs. They must provide the Volunteers with position descriptions and service agreements in addition to documenting the eligibility of AmeriCorps Volunteers to serve and receive the education award. They help Volunteers acquire skills, training, education, and experience which they can carry into the workforce and future service to their communities. The grantee organizations also ensure Volunteers are clearly identified as AmeriCorps Volunteers. 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 Volunteers.

An AmeriCorps Volunteer is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. AmeriCorps Volunteers also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations they serve. Volunteers typically receive a living allowance and other benefits from the sponsor organization while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, Volunteers 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 Volunteers may not do the same range of capacity building, fundraising, and other indirect service activities that AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers may do but are allowed to do direct service activities that AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers cannot. Also, AmeriCorps State grantees have additional grant, financial, and Volunteer 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.

A.2 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

Volunteer Iowa (the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service) is part of a network of state service commissions 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 our website.

About AmeriCorps

The federal AmeriCorps agency (also known as the Corporation for National and Community Service or CNCS) was established in 1994. Among the grant programs it manages are:

- Volunteer Generation Fund;

- AmeriCorps Seniors, including Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and Senior Companion Program;
- 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 and to review the federal Notice of Funding Opportunity and supporting materials upon which Iowa's competition is based, visit the AmeriCorps website.

A.3 What do AmeriCorps State Grants Cover?

AmeriCorps grants may award two categories of resources to address the local need: Volunteer positions and funds to support AmeriCorps Volunteers 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), and the size of the grant. See Funding, Applicant, and Grant Types and Table 1. Summary of AmeriCorps Grant Types for more detail.

A.4 Funding, Applicant, and Grant Types

Funding Type: Competitive and Formula 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 funded by the agency and other federal partners.

AmeriCorps State Competitive

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

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 program applicants (those in the first three years of operation), applicants whose activities match Volunteer Iowa priorities but not AmeriCorps agency priorities, and applicants whose proposals need more work before being considered for competitive funding 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-year project period with a one-year budget period, so they must re-apply every year.

Applicant Type: Single State and National Direct Applicants

Single State 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). 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

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 Volunteers 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).[1]

Applicant Type: New, Recompeting, and Continuation Applicants

New 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 encourages organizations that have not received prior funding to apply as planning grants.

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 Volunteer enrollment and retention rates for the same period. Finally, recompeting applicants may be required to submit a Evaluation Plan Summary Form and/or summary report. Such applicants are advised that previous site visit reports, performance records, program progress reports, financial reports and eGrants Volunteer documentation, as well as Volunteer 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 Continuation applicants submit an abbreviated application in order to be considered for continued

[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.

funding of their grant, following the requirements for continuation application content as outlined in the Continuation Final Application Instructions.

To be approved for continuation funding, recipients must be in good standing. Continuation application review will also be based on progress reports, the federal financial report, and AmeriCorps staff's knowledge of the grant program. To be approved for continuation funding, recipients must demonstrate satisfactory performance with respect to key program goals and requirements, as well as compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

Continuation applicants may request an increase in slots and/or MSY over their awarded FY 2026 amounts in FY 2027. Continuation applicants may not request an increase in funding over their awarded FY 2026 amount in FY 2027. AmeriCorps reserves the right to award applications in an amount less than the requested level of funding.

Expansion request 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 and the Mandatory Supplemental Information for more information, including definitions of AmeriCorps terminology. AmeriCorps will not provide multiple grants for the same project/Volunteer 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, Volunteer costs (if applicable), and administrative expenses; funding is not directly dependent upon recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps Volunteers. Planning grants are a type of cost reimbursement grant that does not include any Volunteer 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 Volunteer training, supervision and monitoring policies and procedures, and developing budgets. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps Volunteers 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 in eGrants 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 Volunteers 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	**Cost-Reimbursement Operational Grants**	**Full-Cost Fixed-Amount Operational Grants**	**Education Award Only (EAP) or Professional Corps Fixed-Amount Operational Grants**	**Planning Grants**
Maximum Federal Funding Levels[2]	Competitive: $26,800/MSY Formula: $27,000/MSY	Competitive: $26,800/MSY Formula: $27,000/MSY	EAP: $800/MSY Professional Corps: $1000/MSY	$75,000 for new organizations; $45,000 for existing grantees planning a new program or expansion to existing grant

[2] See Table 4: Detail on Maximum Award by Grant Type for detailed information on funding levels.

Match Requirement	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually to 30%.	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
Type of Budget Submitted	Detailed Line-Item Budget	Simple Volunteer Slot-Based Budget	Simple Volunteer Slot-Based Budget	Detailed Line-Item Budget
Available Funding Type	Formula or Competitive	Formula or Competitive	Formula or Competitive	Formula-only
MSY Threshold	Minimum 8 MSY; waiver available	Minimum 8 MSY; waiver available	Minimum 8 MSY; waiver available	0 MSY; no AmeriCorps Volunteers
Slot Threshold	Minimum of 20 slots; minimum does not apply to formula applicants	Minimum of 20 slots; minimum does not apply to formula applicants	Minimum of 20 slots; minimum does not apply formula applicants	n/a
Types of Volunteer Slots Available	All slot types: FT, TQT, HT, QT, MT	All slot types: FT, TQT, HT, QT, MT	All slot types: FT, TQT, HT, QT, MT	n/a
Claiming Funds	Documentation of expenses incurred	Volunteer hours completed/approved	Volunteer enrollment (EAP) & retention	Documentation of expenses incurred
Project and Budget Periods	Formula: 1-year project period with 1-year budget periods; Competitive: 3-year project period with 1-year budget periods	Formula: 1-year project period with 1-year budget periods; Competitive: 3-year project period with 1-year budget periods	Formula: 1-year project period with 1- year budget periods; Competitive: 3-year project period with 1 year budget periods	Up to 1-year project period
Special Requirements	N/A	N/A	Yes, see Mandatory Supplemental Information.	Must be for a new project and cannot exceed

				one year grant period.

A.5 Estimated Available Funds

We expect a highly competitive grant competition for Competitive and Formula funding. 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.

A.6 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 Host an AmeriCorps State Program page of the Volunteer Iowa website.

Table 2: Anticipated Key Dates for Iowa AmeriCorps State Applicants

Item	Dates for **Competitive Continuation** Applicants	Dates for **Competitive New/Recompete** Applicants	Dates for **Formula-only** Applicants
Application Materials release date	September 21, 2026	September 21, 2026	September 21, 2026
Pre-Applications due to Volunteer Iowa	October 5, 2026	October 5, 2026	February 5, 2027
Notification to Applicants of Final Application Status (Competitive/Formula)	October 10, 2026	October 10, 2026	February 12, 2027
Application Technical Assistance Period	September – December 2026	September – December 2026	n/a
Final Applications & Supporting Documents due to Volunteer Iowa	November 13, 2026	December 1, 2026	March 19, 2027

Volunteer Iowa Clarification Period for Applicants	November 16-December 1, 2026	December 2-18, 2026	March 22-April 7, 2027
AmeriCorps Agency Clarification Period	Per AmeriCorps federal agency timeline	Per AmeriCorps federal agency timeline	n/a
Applicants Appear Before Volunteer Iowa Review Committee (as needed)	n/a	June 8, 2027 (if not selected for competitive)	June 8, 2027
Funding Decisions Shared with Applicants	Mid-April 2027	Mid-April 2027	Following June Commission Meeting
Applicant Resolution Period	After notification of funding decisions	After notification of funding decisions	After notification of funding decisions
Earliest potential grant start date*	August 1, 2027	August 1, 2027	August 1, 2027
Earliest potential Volunteer start date (with fully executed grant agreement)*	August 1, 2027	August 1, 2027	August 1, 2027
Available Grant Start Dates*	August 1, 2027; September 1, 2027; January 1, 2028	August 1, 2027; September 1, 2027; January 1, 2028	August 1, 2027; September 1, 2027; January 1, 2028

*Grant start and earliest Volunteer start dates will be dependent on AmeriCorps' Notice of Grant Awards being awarded to the Commission.

Late Applications

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.

B. Eligibility Information

B.1 Who Can Apply and Organizational Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are organizations that propose to place AmeriCorps Volunteers in service within Iowa to meet critical needs in Iowa (single-state applicants).2F[3] 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) 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. 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.**

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

Other Requirements

Other requirements specified by the federal AmeriCorps Agency, related to criminal violations, prohibited activities, tax liabilities, and lobbying activities are detailed in the

[3] Volunteer Iowa has signed memorandums of understanding with the neighboring states of Illinois, Missouri, and Nebraska allowing AmeriCorps Volunteers 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.

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.

B.2 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/8MSY AmeriCorps Volunteers or the equivalent number of Member Service Years (MSYs)[4], (such as 16 half-time, or 5 full-time and 12 quarter time). 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. MSY minimum does not apply to planning grants, as they do not engage any Volunteers.

All competitive applicants must submit an application that proposes to enroll a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps Volunteer slots. New, recompete, and continuation competitive applications with less than 20 Volunteers will be deemed noncompliant and will not be reviewed. This slot threshold does not apply to formula applicants.

All applicants must propose program designs that are either evidence-based or evidence-informed. Competitive applicants. Applicants rated as insufficient evidence are removed from funding consideration. Insufficient evidence is determined by:

- A competitive applicant being assessed as in the pre-preliminary evidence tier AND
- Providing inadequate responses to the Evidence Quality in the application narrative

All applicant organizations must submit a copy of the most recent agency audit and financial statements 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 Volunteers serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals.

[4] See a definition and more information about Member Service Years (MSYs) under the Member Service Year & Member Service Terms/Slots section.

If the proposed service activities require specialized Volunteer qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must describe how the program will meet these requirements.

C. Application Submission Information

C.1 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 documents such as the AmeriCorps Mandatory Supplemental Information, Volunteer Iowa Pre-Application Instructions, Review Criteria and Final Application Instructions, the AmeriCorps Performance Measure Instructions, and other RFA materials available in the link at the top of this document, on the AmeriCorps website, and the full Code of Federal Regulations are available online.

This RFA also builds upon the AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity for AmeriCorps State and National 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 for 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)

C.2 Steps to Apply and 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.

a) Submit a mandatory pre-application in SurveyMonkey by the deadline corresponding to your applicant category (new, recompeting, continuation) and funding type (competitive or formula).
b) Obtain a Universal Entity Identifier and register (or update) your organization with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).
c) Establish an eGrants and an IowaGrants account for each individual who will be working on the application in those systems (see more in Electronic Application Systems below).
d) If invited to submit a final application, write a high-quality proposal that is responsive to this Request for Applications.
e) 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).
f) Respond to Volunteer Iowa and AmeriCorps Agency clarification requests and make necessary updates to your submitted application.
g) 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 eGrants or IowaGrants systems at any point must have their own respective account(s).

C.3 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 and Final Application 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.

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 Application Components

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

Limited to 11 double-spaced pages as printed out from eGrants

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Automatically generated when applicants complete the data elements in the eGrants system (1 page).
- Required Narrative Sections (10 pages):
    - Executive Summary
    - Program Design
    - Organizational Capability
    - Cost-Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy

The additional narrative sections do not count towards any page limits

- Additional Narrative Sections:
    - Evaluation Summary/Evaluation Plan Summary Form
    - Clarification Summary

Limited to 6 double-spaced pages as printed from eGrants

- Continuation Changes

Limited to 8 pages when as printed from eGrants from the application

- Logic Model

The additional components do not count towards any page limits

- Additional Components
  - Applicant Info
  - Application Info
  - Performance Measures
  - Program Information, Documents, and Funding & Demographics
  - Budget
  - Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications[5]

Additional Documents Requirements

The Review Criteria and Application Instructions detail which additional documents are required for all applicants, competitive recompete applicants, competitive continuation applicants, and formula applicants.

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. Do not submit any items that are not requested in this Notice and Guidance. AmeriCorps will not review or return them.

Application Certifications and 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

[5] https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/ECERTS.HTM and https://egrants.cns.gov/cnsmisc/EASSUR.HTM

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.

D. Program Design and Budget Information

D.1 AmeriCorps Focus Areas and 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 Volunteer supports provided. The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas.

AmeriCorps Funding Priorities for Competitive Applicants

For this funding opportunity, AmeriCorps will prioritize consideration from organizations that:

Faith-Based:

- **Organizations that are faith-based.**

Serve Communities:

- **Serve communities with concentrated poverty, rural communities**, and tribal communities.
    - Rural Communities: AmeriCorps uses rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes to classify program addresses as either rural or urban for analytic purposes. RUCA codes classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting. Census tracts with an urban cluster population less than 50,000 are considered rural (RUCA codes 4-10). Applicants are encouraged to designate themselves as serving rural communities if some or all service

locations are in rural areas as defined by RUCA codes or if the program can provide other compelling evidence that the program is rural in the narrative portion of the application. This self-designation will be considered in competitive grant-making decisions.

- Implement programs for or **expand access to high-quality youth mental health and substance use recovery services** and prepare AmeriCorps Volunteers to enter behavioral health careers. These may include individuals who have experienced substance use and mental health challenges.
- **Focus on improving quality of life for veterans, active-duty members of the Armed Forces, and their families** through models that provide effective interventions or services or that are designed to recruit veterans, military spouses, and their older children into national service, e.g., veterans serving in mentorship roles.
- **Focus on public safety, crime prevention, and/or partnerships between law enforcement and the community.**
- **Focus on expanding outdoor recreation opportunities for future generations** by maintaining public lands; supporting wildland fire mitigation and sustainable forest management; and providing reforestation services.
- **Create workforce pathways for AmeriCorps Volunteers**, including deliberate training, such as pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities, certifications, and hiring preferences or support;
- **Focus on strengthening families**, e.g., activities that aim to support low-income parents through parenting education, responsible parenting and healthy relationship skills.

Benefit AmeriCorps Volunteers:

- **Enhanced AmeriCorps Volunteer experience** by providing opportunities for skill attainment, personal growth and connection to the community they are serving in support of a lifetime of civic participation.
- **Enhance and expand services to formerly incarcerated and at-risk youth** and/or engage those youth as AmeriCorps Volunteers.

Use Evidence:

- Utilize reports from the AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange on programs assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence to scale, replicate, or adapt the intervention **OR** demonstrate any evidence supporting the performance data described.

To receive priority consideration, applicants must show 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.

D.2 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.

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.

- Developing New Service Opportunities: 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, develop service opportunities that involve populations that are less engaged or provide a high return on investment for Iowa, such as youth and those approaching a life transition (i.e. graduation or retirement).
- Improving Existing Service Opportunities and Programming: Volunteer Iowa will seek to fund programs that have a demonstrable record of efficacy and adds to the quality of national service programming in Iowa.
- Building a Culture and Climate of Service: Volunteer Iowa will seek to fund programs that have successfully and/or have a strategy to remove barriers to national service for potential AmeriCorps Volunteers and host sites or that are proactively working to engage more Iowans in their work using AmeriCorps.
- Expanding Iowa's Volunteer Base: Volunteer Iowa seeks national service programs that recruit Volunteers and/or engages volunteers via Volunteer service activities from the following populations: Iowans age 55+, disconnected youth (those at-risk for or currently out of school or unemployed), students, and/or rural residents.
- Governor's priority areas. Volunteer Iowa will prioritize programs that support Governor-identified priorities including: connecting Iowans to children in need to help them thrive through economic mobility volunteer opportunities, expanding Iowa's volunteer base to help Iowans during disaster responses and emergent needs, and strengthening Iowa's volunteer infrastructure for feeding and meal partners.
- Participation in the Iowa AmeriCorps Disaster Cadre. 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 Volunteers to federally declared disaster areas. Priority is placed on funding programs that sign up for the Iowa AmeriCorps Disaster Cadre, to allow their Volunteers 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. 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. 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. Program details are outlined in the Iowa Administrative Code 817, Chapter 14.

- 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 14.14(15H)
- 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 14.15(15H).
- 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 14.16(15H).
- 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 14.17(15H).

- 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. 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).

D.3 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 in the RFA materials.

D.4 Grant Award Elements (Volunteer Positions and Funding)

AmeriCorps State grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants. AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps Volunteer positions (noted both as Member Service Years and Volunteer slots) and associated funding. The funds awarded by AmeriCorps are directly tied to the specific number of Volunteers 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 and Volunteer 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 Volunteer slot types. There are five options for AmeriCorps Volunteers' 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	$20,954	$41,908
Three Quarter-time (TQT)	0.7	1,200	n/a	$29,336
Half-time (HT)	0.5	900	n/a	$20,954
Quarter-time (QT)	0.26455027	450	n/a	$10,896
Minimum-time (MT)	0.21164022	300	n/a	$8,801

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 Volunteer may earn. The maximum amount an applicant may request from AmeriCorps per MSY is determined on an annual basis.

Continuation applicants may not request an increase in funding over their awarded FY 2026 amount in FY 2027. Cost per MSY limits do not apply to planning grants, since those grants do not engage Volunteers.

D.5 Volunteer Living Allowance and Segal Education Awards

Volunteer Living Allowance

AmeriCorps programs must provide a living allowance to eligible Volunteers[6]. A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage. Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for Volunteers serving in less than full-time terms of service, however nearly all Iowa AmeriCorps programs offer their less than full-time Volunteers a living allowance that is pro-rated to the amounts required for full-time Volunteers. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time Volunteer, it must comply

[6] 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 AmeriCorps Volunteers 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 AmeriCorps Volunteer salaries and benefits including childcare are paid entirely by the organizations with which the AmeriCorps Volunteers serve and are not included in the budget request to AmeriCorps (Federal share).

with the maximum limits in Table 4: Service Terms with Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance.

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 Volunteers 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 Volunteers 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 Volunteers 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 Volunteer has up to seven years after his or her term of service to use the Education Award or Volunteers age 55 or older at the time of enrollment into AmeriCorps may transfer their award to an eligible child, grandchild, or foster child.

D.6 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.

Cost-Reimbursement Grants

Applicants are required to match, funds provided by AmeriCorps. The applicant's match can be non-AmeriCorps cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must show that they can meet the match requirement when they submit the application. Applicants must indicate whether the match is proposed or secured.

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 your 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).[7] 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%	28%	30%

Match Waiver

Applicants may request a match waiver at the time of pre-application, application, or post-award. Contact Volunteer Iowa for more information.

D.7 Volunteer Iowa Costs and Other Budget Information

Volunteer Iowa Support Costs

Volunteer Iowa charges Iowa AmeriCorps State programs as noted below. Detailed instructions about how to include these costs in the budget are included in the Detail Budget Instructions document.

State Member Management System Costs: Applicants are required to budget for costs of participation in the state's AmeriCorps Volunteer management and timekeeping systems. Applicants who anticipate seeking approval for an alternate system should budget for a higher amount, in addition to any system cost. Programs will be invoiced annually.

State Support Costs: Volunteer Iowa does not claim administrative costs from subrecipient's grants, allowing subrecipients to claim the full 5% of available indirect costs from the CNCS share. The State Support Costs supports Volunteer Iowa in fulfilling our duties as a state service commission. Volunteer Iowa fully expends Commission Support Grant and Commission Investment Fund grants that support administration of Iowa AmeriCorps programs. In the future, if Volunteer Iowa ever had a surplus of funds through either of these grants, Volunteer Iowa would reevaluate the need to collect State Support Costs. Refer to the Detailed Budget Instructions Attachment to determine how much to budget.

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

Indirect Costs

Application budgets may include indirect costs. Based on qualifying factors, applicants may use a Federally approved indirect cost rate if they have one and if not, may use a

[7] Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. §12571(e)).

15 percent *de minimis* rate of modified total direct costs 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. No more than five percent of the award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps State and National grants under section 121(d) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended and AmeriCorps' regulations at 45 CFR 2521.95 and 2540.110.

Applicants that have a Federal negotiated indirect cost rate or that will be using the 15 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 can be found in the RFA attachments. Applicants should not submit documentation addressing the indirect cost rate agreement via email.

Pre-Award Costs

Applicants funded under this Notice are approved for pre-award costs for one month prior to the start of their program. Volunteer Iowa will issue a pre-award letter to applicants selected for award. No Volunteers may start, nor may Volunteer costs be incurred before award of the grant and execution of the grant agreement.

D.8 Waivers for Program Design and 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 Volunteer development elements of the program. This minimum balances the administrative burden with the benefits to the Volunteers, 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 AmeriCorps Volunteers 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 AmeriCorps Volunteers will not generate volunteers, such as summer-only AmeriCorps Volunteers or AmeriCorps

Volunteers at certain sites). Applicants should keep in mind that AmeriCorps Volunteers can engage with volunteers in ways that fall outside of the assigned primary service activity, but that still fit with the AmeriCorps Volunteer focus. For example, AmeriCorps AmeriCorps Volunteers could plan a volunteer event for MLK Day or another National/State Day of Service or could help volunteers participate in a special project.

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 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.

Education and Training Waiver

Prior to the May 2024 publication of the AmeriCorps State and National new rule, regulations set a 20 percent limit to the aggregate total of all service hours in a program that AmeriCorps Volunteers may spend in education and training activities (45 CFR § 2520.50). The new rule allows AmeriCorps to waive this limit under certain circumstances, permitting up to 50 percent of the aggregate AmeriCorps Volunteer hours in a program to be spent in education and training activities.

Alternate AmeriCorps Volunteer Management and Timekeeping Waiver

Effective Volunteer management and timekeeping is critical for the success of any AmeriCorps State program. Volunteer Iowa requires programs to budget for costs to participate in the state's AmeriCorps Volunteer management and timekeeping system (OnCorps). Use of an alternate timekeeping system subjects the program to additional cost to account for increased Volunteer Iowa staff time required to conduct required monitoring in a separate system.

E. Review and Selection Process

E.1 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. 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, AmeriCorps Volunteer, 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.

E.2 AmeriCorps Agency Review and Selection Process

For a full description of the AmeriCorps agency review and selection process, see the appropriate AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity.

E.3 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.

Refocusing 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.

F. Federal Financial Management and Grant Administration Requirements

F.1 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 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.

F.2 Administration 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 and 2205.

Requests for Monitoring or Payment Integrity 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. 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 2027 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2027 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.

National Service Criminal History Check Requirements[8]

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a specific screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. Volunteer Iowa requires new grantees to utilize the approved vendor AmeriCorps has engaged to conduct the required NSCHCs.

Official Guidance

AmeriCorps: All AmeriCorps active Guidance is available on the agency's Guidance webpage. *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 access AmeriCorps State grantee resources on our website on the Current AmeriCorps Grantee Resources page.

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 on our website). A copy of the most recent grant agreement template is available upon request.

F.3 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 per 2 CFR §200.315.

F.4 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

[8] See 45 CFR 2540.200– 2540.207 and National Service Criminal History Check Resources for complete information and FAQs.

full list of required reports will be included in the grant agreement issued by Volunteer Iowa (draft agreements are available upon request).

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.

G. Awarding Agency Contacts and Technical Assistance

G.1 Volunteer Iowa

The Volunteer Iowa RFA and opportunities for technical assistance will be available on the Host an AmeriCorps State Program page of the Volunteer Iowa website. Questions can be submitted via email to americorps@volunteeriowa.org or call 1.800.308.5987.

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 Iowa 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. The earlier applicants communicate and/or submit applications, the more opportunities for TA. Volunteer Iowa may require organizations new to AmeriCorps grant projects/programming to apply for a planning grant, as funding is available.

G.2 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@americorps.gov. AmeriCorps also offers live text chat. For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, call the AmeriCorps Hotline at (800) 942-2677. AmeriCorps Hotline hours 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.

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

G.3 Other Programs, Services, and Initiatives Offered by Volunteer Iowa and our Partners

AmeriCorps NCCC: Organizations may apply to host a team of AmeriCorps NCCC AmeriCorps Volunteers 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 AmeriCorps Volunteers effectively.

AmeriCorps 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 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 AmeriCorps Volunteers provide capacity building services at their host organizations. AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsors generally must be able to support three or more full-time AmeriCorps VISTAs serving for one-year on an anti-poverty project.

Other AmeriCorps State & National opportunities: Organizations wishing to place AmeriCorps Volunteers 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 Volunteer 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.

H. Appendices and Attachments

H.1 List of Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Pre-Application Instructions for Returning Grantees
2. Appendix 2: Pre-Application Instructions for NEW Applicants
3. Appendix 3: Review Criteria and Application Instructions

H.2 List of Attachments

1. Attachment 1: Alignment with Volunteer Iowa Priorities Form
2. Attachment 2: Detailed Budget Instructions
3. Attachment 3: Cost Reimbursement Budget Worksheet
4. Attachment 4: Fixed Amount Grant Budget Worksheet
5. Attachment 5: Volunteer Iowa Budget Checklist
6. Attachment 6: eGrants Indirect Cost Rate Instructions
7. Attachment 7: eGrants Performance Measure Module Instructions
8. Attachment 8: Application Narrative Template for IowaGrants
9. Attachment 9: AmeriCorps Evaluation Plan Summary Form