Montana Commission on Community Service   New Applicant Readiness Self-Assessment

Is Our Organization Ready to Apply for an AmeriCorps Grant?
The New Applicant Readiness Self-Assessment is used by the Governor's Office of Community Service to determine if the organization is financially and programmatically prepared to apply, implement and manage an operational AmeriCorps program grant. The assessment also serves as a tool for a new applicant to plan for the implementation and administration of an AmeriCorps grant-funded program. Completion of the assessment does not guarantee AmeriCorps funding through the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) or the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Please read each question carefully, answer honestly and respond to each item.

Name of Organization or Agency:_____

Fundamental Questions
Is the organization a public or private nonprofit agency - including labor organizations, faith-based and other community organizations; an institution of higher education; a State of Montana government entity; an Indian Tribe; or a partnership or consortia?

_____Yes, which:_____   _____No   _____Unsure

Does your plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members provide service exclusively within the state of Montana?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Does the organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address specific unmet community needs in the focus area of Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, or Veterans & Military Families?

_____Yes: _____   _____No   _____Unsure

Does the organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address specific unmet community needs in the area of Childhood Hunger, Drought Resiliency, Workforce Development, Suicide Prevention, or Safe & Affordable Housing?

_____Yes, which: _____   _____No   _____Unsure

Does the organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address community needs to benefit people living on or nearby American Indian Reservation(s) in Montana?

_____Yes, where:_____   _____No   _____Unsure

If the answer to any of the above questions is "No" then your organization may not be eligible to receive an AmeriCorps grant, or to serve as a Host Site for AmeriCorps members. However, if the organization is eligible and proposing to serve a multistate area then consider applying directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service for a National Direct grant. If the organization opts to apply for National Direct, please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for guidance on completing the required National Direct consultation. Note, 501(c)(4) non-profit entities (under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4)) that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible.

Administrative Competencies

Does your organization have a proven track record of establishing measurable outcomes for its programs?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Does your organization have the infrastructure to recruit, train, and support AmeriCorps members? Variables include office space, technology, supervisory time & skill, financial expertise, and ability to manage community volunteers.

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Has your organization previously managed a major federal, state, or foundation grant?

_____Yes   _____No

Does your organization have formal written internal controls governing all financial operations?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Does your organization have sufficient resources on hand to operate a major grant on a reimbursement basis?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Has your organization been audited by a Certified Public Accounting firm within the past two years?

_____Yes   _____No   _____N/A

If you answered "No" to any of the questions above, it is likely the organization may struggle to successfully administer an AmeriCorps grant. Please consider a partnership with an existing Montana AmeriCorps*State program. Serving as an AmeriCorps host site rather than as a primary grant applicant may be a practical option. Contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for more details.

Mission Statement

1. Does the organization have a clear written mission statement? (if no, skip to question 6)

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

2. Do all organizational programs and efforts align with the mission?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

3. Has the organization declined opportunities that are not consistent with the organization's mission?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

4. Is the mission frequently referred to (e.g. in planning sessions and other meetings)?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Governance & Operations

5. Does the organization have an active and independent board of directors and/or other governing body? (Independent is defined as a majority of board members who are neither employees of the organization nor family members of employees or other board members.)

   _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

6. Does the organization have written policies and procedures, including a conflict of interest policy for employees and directors?

   _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

7. Does the organization plan to dedicate full time staff to manage the proposed AmeriCorps program?

   _____Yes   _____No

Strategic Planning

8. Does the organization have a strategic plan i.e. 3-5 year strategic plan? (if no, skip to question 13)

   _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

9. Does the strategic plan have well defined measurable goals and achievable action steps with timeframes?

   _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

10. Are the strategic plan goals well known and understood by the staff and board?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

11. Is the strategic plan made actionable by annual plans that outline the specific work to be accomplished?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

12. Does the organization conduct regular assessment of internal operations to assess efficiency and effectiveness?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Financial Management

13. Does the organization have an accrual or a fund accounting system?

    _____Yes, Current system used: _____   _____No

14. If the organization uses accrual basis accounting, are there procedures in place to allow for reconciliation between cash and accrual basis reports?

    _____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

15. Is the organization's accounting system manual, automated, or a combination?

_____Manual   _____Automated   _____Combination

16. How often are entries posted to the general ledger?

_____Daily _____Weekly   _____Monthly _____Unsure   _____Other:_____

17. Does the accounting system track completely and accurately the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or funding source?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

18. Does the accounting system allow cash basis reporting and for the recording of in-kind contributions?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

19. Does the organization have a development/fundraising plan in place?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

20. Does the organization have plans to secure the financial and in-kind resources to meet required matches?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

21. Is the organization familiar with federal cost principles?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

22. Is the organization familiar with procedures for the determination and allowance of costs in connection with Corporation for National and Community Service grants and contracts?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Technology

23. Does each key staff member have access to a computer with current software, internet and e-mail capacity?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

24. Are all staff able to find and use grantor provided resources posted online?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Human Resources

25. Does the organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain the best employees in accordance with an equal opportunity environment?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

26. Does the organization provide staff and volunteers with written position descriptions and the necessary resources to carry out described duties effectively?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

27. Are time and activity records maintained by funding source and project type to account for hours and activities with the organization?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

28. Does the organization provide relevant and regular training for staff and board members?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

29. Are employee performance appraisals conducted on a consistent basis with a standardized process?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

30. Does the organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain community volunteers?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Internal Controls

31. Is there separation of duties within the organization?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

32. Are checks signed by individual(s) whose duties exclude recording cash received, approving vouchers for payment, and the preparation of payroll?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

33. Are purchase approval methods documented and communicated?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

34. Are employee payroll reports supported by appropriately signed documentation?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

35. Are employees who handle funds bonded against loss by reasons of fraud or dishonesty?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Organizational Needs Assessment and Implementation

36. Does the organization conduct community needs assessments?

_____Yes, how often? _____   Date last conducted: _____   _____No

37. Does the organization analyze and use results of needs assessments to chart change and target services?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

38. Are the organization's programs and services well defined and succinctly communicated?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Measuring Program Performance and Continuous Improvement
39. Does the organization have a comprehensive well-developed community assessment or evaluation system used to measure the impact of programs and services?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

40. Does the organization conduct regular community assessments of existing programs' effectiveness in meeting recipient needs and identify areas for improvement?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

41. Does the organization collect data to measure performance and progress on a continual basis?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

42. Is data analyzed, used in program redesign and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis? (e.g. annual report)

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Partnership and Collaboration
43. Does the organization participate in partnerships with other groups?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

If yes, have the partnerships led to mutually beneficial collaborations and measureable, impactful results?

_____Yes   _____No   _____Unsure

Thank you for completing the New Applicant Readiness Self-Assessment!
Additional comments:

Signature of individual completing assessment: _____

Date completed: _____