

FY 2011 AmeriCorps Planning Grant
Request for Proposals (RFP)



2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Request for Proposals

Thank you for your interest in an AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant, please find included in this packet information pertaining to the RFP process for 2011. AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grants are funded by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) following review and recommendation from the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS).

The purpose of planning grants is to support the development of AmeriCorps programs better preparing applicants to compete in the following grant cycle. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.

AmeriCorps State Planning Grant applicants must not have previously received an AmeriCorps State or National grant.

Indian Tribes Planning Grant applicants must not have received an AmeriCorps grant in the past and must be an Indian Tribe.

Applicants should read all application materials, including attachments, and linked documents, prior to submitting any documents to the Governor's Office of Community Service.

Note: this funding process is for AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grants only.

Full CNCS 2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Application Instructions are available at:

http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=84

NOFA: Notice of Funding Opportunity (**Attachment A**)

In order to be eligible for an AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant, applicants must complete the following:

1. Letter of Intent. (**Attachment B**)
2. Readiness Self-Assessment survey with the Financial and Administrative Survey (**Attachment C**)
3. Send Letter of Intent and Readiness Self-Assessment survey with the Financial and Administrative Survey electronically to the Governor's Office of Community Service at serve@mt.gov by 5pm October 12th 2010 to be considered for an AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant.

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4. The Governor's Office of Community Service will contact you confirming receipt of your letter of intent. If you do not hear from us within 24 hours please call at 406-444-9077 to confirm your letter of intent and self-assessment were received.

The Governor's Office of Community Service will then ask organizations meeting minimum criteria to continue the request for proposal (RFP) application. Applicants must then complete the following:

5. The Full AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Application in eGrants using the Application Instructions from CNCS.
6. Submit the Application via eGrants to OCS.
7. The Governor's Office of Community Service will contact you confirming receipt of your cover letter and application in eGrants. If you do not hear from us within 24 hours please call at 406-444-9077 and confirm cover letter and application arrived.

2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Timeline

Sept. 2010	2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Application and materials released and posted online
Oct. 12	Letter of Intent due to the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) by 5pm
Oct. 14	Technical Assistance Call for applicants- regarding RFP and eGrants
Oct. 28	Applications due in eGrants by 5pm
Nov. 2	Applicants Notified of Funding Recommendations and Technical Feedback for selected applicants
Nov. 4	Staff Submits 2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant Applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
Feb. 2011	CNCS sends out Award Notification

Montana Commission on Community Service and the Governor's Office of Community Service Appeals Process:

For further questions, please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service at:
P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620 Phone: 406-444-9077 Fax: 406-444-4418 Email: serve@mt.gov

<http://serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Appeals-Process-Updated-10.18.10.pdf>



Attachment A - Notice of Funding Opportunity

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service 2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant

Who Can Apply?

- Public or private nonprofit organizations
- Community and faith-based organizations
- State and local education institutions
- Indian tribes
- State agencies, cities, counties, and local governments

How to Apply

The Montana AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant application process is begun by submitting a letter of intent and readiness self-assessment survey to the Governor's Office of Community Service.

Once an applicant has submitted the letter of intent and self-assessment the Governor's Office of Community Service will ask those organizations with strong letters of intent, self-assessments, and meeting National and State priorities to complete the full RFP application.

As stated on page one of this document The Governor's Office of Community Service will contact all submitting organizations confirming receipt of letter of intent and self-assessment, if you do not hear from us within 24 hours please call the Governor's Office of Community Service at 406-444-9077 and confirm your information arrived.

The RFP Application

The RFP application outlines succinctly and precisely the steps to define a proposed project and the needs it addresses. Applicants will also describe their organizational capacity for administering an AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant and identify the source(s) of necessary program support, including a required match.

Overview of AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a national service program providing opportunities for citizens to serve their country in their local communities. Local programs design service activities for a team of AmeriCorps Members, serving full or part-time, to provide specific, intensive community services. Community services may include: tutoring students who need extra help, teaching community residents about issues directly affecting them, and other services to strengthen communities. Members may also mobilize community volunteers to strengthen the capacity of the organizations where they serve.

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The national public/private partnership supporting AmeriCorps is the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS receives AmeriCorps program funding from the United States Congress and awards funding to state commissions, such as the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service, to support and oversee AmeriCorps programs in their state. On April 21, 2009, President Obama signed into law The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, authorizing a dramatic funding increase for AmeriCorps and other volunteer programs. This legislation also establishes a goal of expanding from 75,000 government-supported volunteers to 250,000. With this financial support and a national call to service, there are tremendous opportunities for all Americans to do their part, address unmet needs and help their country. For more information about starting an AmeriCorps program state or national program, please visit www.americorps.gov or www.nationalservice.gov.

Governor's Office of Community Service

The Governor's Office of Community Service and the Montana Commission on Community Service were established in 1993 by the Montana Legislature to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Under the advice from the Montana Commission on Community Service, the Governor's Office of Community Service grants funds to Montana AmeriCorps and National Service programs through a competitive grant process; encourages citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service; involves youth in the life and work of communities; promotes volunteerism in emergency management and preparedness; and helps to strengthen and expand volunteer opportunities for all Montanans.

Funding Priorities

For the FY 2011 competition, the Corporation for National and Community Service funding priorities are projects that address compelling, unmet needs as outlined in one or a combination of the following six federal key objectives:

Federal Key Objectives:

- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Environment Stewardship
- Veterans and Military Families
- Opportunity
- Disaster Services

The Montana State Service plan as recommended by the Montana Commission on Community Service has also identified priority areas; therefore additional consideration will

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be given to programs in Montana that address one or more of the following initiatives and include the following expectations of programs:

Montana Initiatives:

- The Governor's strategic initiative for clean energy
- The Governor and First Lady's strategic initiative for math and science education
- Expand and Promote Volunteerism in Montana

Montana Expectations of All Programs:

- Disability inclusion in the design and delivery of the program
- A collaborative approach to program planning, design and delivery
- Demonstrated ability to successfully administer an AmeriCorps or other federal grant
- Addressing rural, underserved, or areas of extreme poverty that are not currently served by AmeriCorps programs

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Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Overview

Federal Agency Name: Corporation for National and Community Service

Funding Opportunity Title: AmeriCorps State and National and Indian Tribes Planning Grants

Announcement Type: Amended announcement. Initially issued August 31, 2010

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: 94.006

Dates: Applications are due **November 4, 2010** at 5:00 p.m.* Eastern Time. Successful applicants will be notified by January 31, 2011.

*To qualify for a grant, applicants must submit their application by Oct. 28, 2010 at 5pm in eGrants for review by the Montana Commission on Community Service.

Overview:

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For more than fifteen years, the Corporation—through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

On April 21, 2009, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, the most sweeping expansion of national service in a generation. This landmark law not only expands service opportunities, but also focuses the service investment on producing outcomes on key issues; expanding opportunities to serve; building the capacity of individuals, nonprofits, and communities to succeed; and encouraging innovative approaches to solving problems.

In alignment with the Serve America Act, this AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity will focus AmeriCorps grantmaking in six Focus Areas identified by the Act:

- Disaster Services,
- Education,
- Environmental Stewardship,
- Healthy Futures,
- Opportunity, and
- Veterans and Military Families.

In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of the investment in national service, the Corporation is seeking to fund programs that can demonstrate an evidence-based approach to creating community impact and solving community problems.

In particular, as noted above, the Corporation seeks to target its grantmaking in the Education Focus Area for greater impact and increase its investment in the Focus Area of Veterans and Military Families. Accordingly, to meet these goals, the Corporation will give priority consideration to the following, in descending order of preference:

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- Education programs that are focused on improving academic outcomes for children, youth, and young adults, particularly those in low-performing schools and programs that serve veterans and military families, or that include performance measures focused on engaging veterans in service (Veterans Performance Measures 2 or 5).
- All other programs in the Focus Areas with self-nominated measures.

This Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice) should be read together with the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR Sections 2520 – 2550 and the Application Instructions.

The Corporation embraces the Obama Administration's emphasis on open government and is moving toward greater openness and transparency in grant making. This amended *Notice* includes a description of the review and selection process in Section VI., below. In addition, the following information pertaining to this competition will be published on the AmeriCorps website following the January 25 application deadline:

- A detailed description of the review and selection process.
- Blank review worksheet templates.

The following information will be published for new and re-compete applications after final funding notifications at the end of May, 2011:

- List of all applicants considered for funding.
- Executive summaries of all applications considered for funding.
- Full text of approved applications.
- Results of internal and external review for approved applications.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. What is the purpose of AmeriCorps State and National and Indian Tribes Planning Grants?

The purpose of planning grants is to support the development of AmeriCorps programs so applicants are better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.

AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grant applicants must not have previously received an AmeriCorps State or National grant.

Indian Tribes Planning Grant applicants must not have received an AmeriCorps grant in the past and must be an Indian Tribe (See definition in Section III).

The Corporation's purpose is to maximize the power of service and volunteering to improve lives in communities across the country. In the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, Congress directed the Corporation to focus national service in areas where service can make a major impact, including improving education; energy conservation; the health of all Americans; economic opportunity for economically vulnerable individuals; increasing service by and for veterans; and providing disaster services.

The Corporation is carrying out Congress's intent by targeting AmeriCorps State and National funding in these six focus areas, and is developing strategic objectives for each. In accordance with the Act, through this Notice and its other activities, the Corporation seeks to:

- Direct the power of national service to solve a common set of challenges.
- Expand opportunities for all Americans to serve.

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- Build the enduring capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to effectively use service and volunteering to solve community problems.
- Embrace innovative solutions that work.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to recruit, train, and manage AmeriCorps members who address community needs. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in community service. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust.

B. What are the 2011 AmeriCorps State and National funding priorities?

1. Focus Areas and National Performance Measures

As in 2010, in the 2011 competition the Corporation expects to invest a significant amount of available funding to programs working in the six Focus Areas of **Disaster Services, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Opportunity, and Veterans and Military Families**.

In particular, as noted above, the Corporation seeks to target its grant making in the Education Focus Area for greater impact and increase its investment in the Focus Area of Veterans and Military Families. Accordingly, to meet these goals, the Corporation will give priority consideration to Education programs that are focused on improving academic outcomes for children, youth, and young adults, particularly those in low performing schools; and programs that serve veterans and military families.

Applicants proposing programs in the priority areas are not guaranteed funding. The Corporation reserves the right to pursue a balanced portfolio across the Focus Areas, and other considerations outlined below in **Section VI. B. B. What are the goals of the review and selection process?** Brief descriptions of the six Focus Areas follow:

Disaster Services:

Grants in the Disaster Services Focus Area will help communities with disaster mitigation, preparation, response and recovery. The application instructions include definitions and examples for each of the functional areas.

Education:

Grants in the Education Focus Area will include programs that seek to contribute to the number of students who graduate from high school and college or university. In order to achieve that goal, the Corporation seeks to increase its investment in national service programs that improve academic outcomes for young children, youth, and young adults, particularly those in the lowest-performing schools.

Specifically, the Corporation seeks research- and evidence-based programs that help children and youth prepare for school; perform at grade-level; graduate from high school ready for college, work, and life; and succeed in college and university through academic engagement and civic participation.

Environmental Stewardship:

Grants in the Environmental Stewardship Focus Area will include programs that protect human health and the health of ecosystems by conserving natural resources and restoring the nation's air, water, and land. Environmental Stewardship programs may include activities that encourage organizations and individuals to use energy efficiently and utilize cost-effective renewable energy technologies; minimize waste disposal; restore

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watersheds and aquatic ecosystems; improve at-risk public use lands; restore critical wildlife habitat; increase soil stabilization and quality; mitigate the environmental consequences of disasters; and promote environmental sustainability.

Healthy Futures:

Grants in the Healthy Futures Focus Area will meet health needs within communities including access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity. Access to care is broadly defined and may include health insurance, culturally appropriate health care interventions, transportation, language translation, access to disease and disability prevention, health promotion initiatives, health literacy and efforts to address health disparities. Grants may support older adults, homebound individuals and disabled individuals with activities such as food delivery, transportation or other services that allow them to live independently, including evidence-based programs supported by other partner agencies such as the U. S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs. The Corporation seeks to fund programs that target risk factors for childhood obesity, including poor nutrition and physical inactivity, and that reflect the recommendations of the National Prevention Council and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity.

Opportunity:

Grants in the Opportunity Focus Area will meet the needs of economically vulnerable Americans, their families and their communities. Opportunity programs may include activities that assist individuals and families that are homeless or at risk of homelessness; provide financial literacy training and tools designed to improve financial security; and expand employment possibilities. Opportunity programs include those that engage economically vulnerable Americans as AmeriCorps members leading to positive employment and/or educational outcomes. The Corporation will also support programs undertake community-based strategies to redevelop local areas that are struggling with under-investment and other barriers to economic opportunity.

Veterans and Military Families

Grants in the Veterans and Military Families Focus Area will meet the needs of veterans and family members of active duty and deployed military personnel. Veterans and Military Families programs may include activities in the areas of health, education and economic opportunity, including the elimination of veteran homelessness, educational programs for children in military families, and economic opportunities for military spouses and veterans. The Corporation is also interested in supporting programs that target disadvantaged, homeless, or formerly homeless veterans and programs that align with the efforts of the U.S Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

2. New Applicants

The Corporation anticipates that at least 15 percent of the funds described in this *Notice* will support applicants that have not received an AmeriCorps State or National operational grant in the last five years. Applicants that have received only a state or territory commission formula operational grant within the last five years will be considered new for purposes of this 15 percent target.

3. Encore Programs

Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support encore service programs. The Corporation seeks to meet that 10 percent target in this competition and encourages programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older to apply.

II. Award Information

A. How much funding is available?

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Funding for 2011 is contingent upon appropriations, and is estimated to be \$500,000 for AmeriCorps State and National Planning grants and \$500,000 for Indian Tribes Planning grants. Applicants may apply for up to a maximum of \$50,000.

B. When will the grants be awarded?

The Corporation will award grants following the grant selection announcement, contingent on appropriations. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition by January 31, 2011.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Who is eligible for this funding?

1. AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grants

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and intermediaries planning to subgrant funds awarded are encouraged to apply. Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *Notice*.

AmeriCorps State and National Planning Grant applicants must not have previously received an AmeriCorps State or National grant. Applicants may have received funding through Learn and Serve America, NCCC, Senior Corps, or VISTA.

2. Indian Tribes Planning Grants

Indian Tribes Planning Grant applicants must not have received an AmeriCorps grant in the past and must be an Indian Tribe. Applicants may have received funding through Learn and Serve America, NCCC, Senior Corps, or VISTA.

“Indian Tribe” is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, Regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and services provided under federal law to Indians because of their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

Note: Indian Tribes are eligible to apply to any Corporation competition, including State or National Planning Grants.

B. What are the matching requirements for these grants?

Applicants must provide 24% of the total project cost in match. Match may be cash or in-kind. The Corporation complies with Executive Order 13175 and will handle any waiver request from an Indian Tribe in an expedited manner.

IV. Application and Submission Instructions

A. What do I need to do before I apply?

1. Notice of Intent to Apply*

Applicants are encouraged to send an e-mail by October 4, 2010 to americorpsnational@cns.gov for National and Indian Tribes applicants, or americorpsapplications@cns.gov for State

*Applicants in Montana are required to submit a Letter of Intent and Financial Readiness Survey to the Governor's Office of Community Service by Oct. 12, 2010 at 5pm.

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Commissions stating intent to apply.

Although submission of the Notice of Intent is not mandatory*, submitting it will help the Corporation plan more efficiently for external and internal review. Include the name of the applicant organization, address, contact person, and phone number in the Notice of Intent. National applicants should state category of funding. State Commissions are encouraged to include an estimate of the number of programs planned for submission to the state competitive competition.

*Applicants in Montana are required to submit a Letter of Intent and Financial Readiness Survey to the Governor's Office of Community Service by Oct. 12, 2010 at 5pm.

Providing an e-mail address will also allow the Corporation to contact applicants directly if application materials are updated.

2. Universal Identifier

Applications must include a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with the Central Contractor's Registry (CCR). **The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number.**

DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 24-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, **we suggest registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date.** Expedited DUNS numbers may be obtained by following instructions found here: <http://smallbusiness.dnb.com/establish-your-business/12334338-1.html>.

CCR is the primary registrant database for the U.S. Federal Government. CCR collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All CNCS recipients are required to maintain a valid registration, which must be renewed annually.

We urge applicants that are not already registered with the CCR to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with the CCR. It typically takes 3-5 days to finalize CCR registration. To register online go to www.bpn.gov/CCR.

B. What is the Content and Form of the Application Submission?

1. Submitting in eGrants

The Corporation requires that all applicants submit applications electronically via the Corporation's web-based application system, eGrants. Applications must arrive at the Corporation by November 4, 2010 at 5 p.m*. ET in order to be considered. The Corporation reserves the right to extend the submission deadline. Any notice of such extended deadline will be posted in eGrants.

*To qualify for a grant, applicants must submit their application by Oct. 28, 2010 at 5pm in eGrants for review by the Montana Commission on Community Service (Commission). Governor's Office of Community Service will submit all recommended applications to the corporation by Nov. 4, 2011.

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We recommend that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document, then copy and paste the document into eGrants no later than 10 days before the deadline.

Contact the eGrants Help Desk at 888-677-7849 if a problem arises while creating an account, preparing, or submitting an application. Be prepared to provide the application ID. eGrants Help Desk hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET Monday through Friday.

If technical issues will prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the eGrants Help Desk prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the eGrants Help Desk to submit via eGrants.

2. *Late Applications**

The Corporation may consider an application after the deadline, but only if the applicant submits a letter explaining the extenuating circumstance which caused the delay. The letter must be sent to LateApplications@cns.gov within the 24-hour period following the deadline. Late applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

*The Montana Commission on Community Service will not accept late applications. Please call 406-444-9077 if there are issues when submitting to eGrants.

If extenuating circumstances make the use of eGrants impossible, applicants may send a hard copy of the application to the address below in Section X. Agency Contacts, via overnight carrier. Please use a non-U.S. Postal Service because of security-related delays in receiving mail from the U.S. Postal Service. All deadlines and requirements in this *Notice* apply to hard copy applications. Hard copy applications must include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via e-Grants.

Do not submit supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, letters of support, or any other item not requested in these application instructions. The Corporation will not review or return them.

3. *Character Limits*

In eGrants, applicants will enter text for an Executive Summary, Section A. Program Design, B. Organizational Capability, and C. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy. **You may not exceed 30,000 characters, or about 15 double spaced pages, in Sections A, B, and C combined.** The character count includes all letters, punctuation, and spaces in a document.

E. **Coordination among State Commissions* and Multi-state Applicants**

The Corporation expects State Commissions* and multi-state grantees to consult and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131. [42 U.S.C. 12583] of the National Community Service Act (NCSA). This consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination among grantees. The list of State Commissions can be found here: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>.

*Montana Commission on Community Service and the Governor's Office of Community Service

Multi-state applicants and grantees are expected to:

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- Consult with the State Commission of each state in which the organization knows it will operate **prior to application submission**.
- Provide the State Commission with contact information for multi-state programs in their state **after grants are awarded**, and update these lists on an annual basis.
- Participate in the State Commission's annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of their state service plan, as well as appropriate training and other events.
- Include the State Commission on the multi-state grantee's mailing list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

State Commissions are expected to:

- Consult with the multi-state applicants and grantees that contact them prior to application submission.
- Consider the schedules and needs of multi-state programs in their states when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
- Include multi-state programs in their annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of their state service plan.
- Add AmeriCorps staff of multi-state programs in their state to their mailing list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

The Corporation will solicit State Commission input on multi-state applicants proposing to operate in their state. Participation by State Commissions is optional. This input will be provided via eGrants.

D. Funding Restrictions

Grants under this program are subject to the applicable Cost Principles under OMB Circulars A-21 (2 CFR part 220), A-122 (2 CFR part 230), or A-87 (2 CFR part 225) and the Uniform Administrative Requirements for grants under A-102 (45 CFR part 2541) or A-110 (45 CFR 2543 or 2 CFR part 21).

E. Other Submission Requirements Equal Opportunity Survey*

Applicants are asked to complete the Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants. Applicants may complete the survey in eGrants while preparing the application for submission or contact the Corporation to obtain a hard copy.

*Applicants need to complete survey in eGrants before submitting application.

V. Application Review Information

A. What are the Selection Criteria?*

In evaluating applications for funding, staff reviewers will assess program design (50%), organizational capability (25%), and cost-effectiveness and budget adequacy (25%). Staff reviewers will assess application narratives against these criteria and weight them accordingly. Please see the AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2522.420–2522.448, for additional detail regarding these criteria and what reviewers will assess in each category.

Section 2522.450 of the AmeriCorps regulations describes types of programs or program models that may receive special consideration in the selection process.

*Expanded to encompass Montana State Service Plan:
Initiatives:
- Governor's initiative for clean energy
- Governor and First Lady's initiative for math and science
- Expand and Promote Volunteerism in Montana
Expectations:
- Disability inclusion in the design and delivery
- Collaborative approach to program planning, design and delivery
- Demonstrate ability to successfully administer an AmeriCorps or other federal grant
- Addressing rural, underserved or areas of extreme poverty that are not currently served by AmeriCorps programs

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Section 2522.455 describes how you can find out about additional priorities governing the selection process. Section 2522.470 describes other factors or information the Corporation may consider in making final decisions.

B. What are the goals of the review and selection process?

The Corporation's review and selection process is designed to:

- Give every eligible application full and fair consideration
- Select a high-quality, well-balanced portfolio of programs that will engage AmeriCorps members in solving pressing problems in communities across the nation.

The Corporation's assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. As in the past, the Corporation will engage external reviewers to provide insight and input with respect to eligible applications. In addition, Corporation staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a balanced set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and selection factors described in this *Notice*.

Specifically, the review and selection process is designed to:

(1) Identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- **High-quality response to criteria articulated in this *Notice*, above.**
- **Priorities, in the order of preference stated in this *Notice*, above.**
- **Additional Considerations:**
 - Recruitment and deployment of community volunteers to leverage impact.
 - State Commission rank and recommendations.
 - State Commission input on multi-state applications.
 - Data on applicant history and performance.
 - Relative risk and opportunity.
- **Strategic Characteristics:**
 - Expanding opportunities to serve; particularly for new Americans, low-income individuals, rural residents, older Americans, veterans, members of faith-based organizations, communities of color, Native Americans, and people with disabilities.
 - Building capacity for individuals, nonprofits and communities to solve problems.
 - Embracing innovative approaches to solving problems.

(2) Compile a balanced portfolio based on the following characteristics:

- Geographic representation.
- Equitable treatment of
 - rural and urban communities,
 - small and large programs, and
 - single and multi-state programs.
- Involvement of underserved and economically disadvantaged communities.

C. What are the stages in the review and selection process?

1. Compliance Review

Corporation staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. Applications that are submitted by eligible organizations, submitted by the deadline, and that are complete, will advance to External Review.

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2. Internal Review

Corporation staff will assess Program Design, particularly focusing on evidence-basis for the proposed solution(s) to the identified community problem(s), appropriateness of national service as a solution, and potential quality of the member experience; Organizational Capability; and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy. Following staff assessment, some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information. Clarification information is used by CNCS staff in making final recommendations. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award.

CNCS staff will determine which applications to recommend for selection based on the results of External Review, Quality Control, Internal Review, and Clarification; and the priorities, balancing characteristics, additional considerations, and strategic characteristics listed above.

3. Selection

The Chief Executive Officer will select the final portfolio based on staff recommendation, and considering overall quality, priorities, balancing characteristics, additional considerations, and strategic characteristics listed above.

D. What feedback will applicants receive?

Following grant awards, each applicant will receive the results of external and, if applicable, internal review pertaining to their application.

E. How long will the selection and review process take?

Processing and selecting applications for funding will require approximately three months.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. What is the post-review and award process?

Corporation program officers may call applicants to seek clarification, resolve questions and issues, and request revised budgets as part of the pre-award review process. Failure to respond to requests for information in a timely fashion will result in the removal of applications from consideration.

When will grants be awarded?

The Corporation will award grants following the grant selection announcement. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition by January 31, 2011.

What is the project period for these grants?

The project period for these grants is up to one year. **The project start date may not occur prior to the date the Corporation awards the grant**

What documents govern the grant?

The AmeriCorps regulations and grant provisions are incorporated in the Notice of Grant Award. The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant.

What are the reporting requirements for these grants?

Grantees are required to provide annual performance and bi-annual financial reports. All grantees provide quarterly expense reports to the Payment Management System at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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If you receive an award, you will be required to report at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for your organization. You must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 C.F.R. Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

VII. Agency Contacts*

This *Notice* is available at www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp. The TTY number is 202-606-3472. For further information or for a printed copy of this *Notice*, call (202) 606-7508. For questions regarding multi-state or Indian Tribes applications to be submitted directly to the Corporation, please call (202) 606-7508 or send an e-mail to americorpsnational@cns.gov. If you have questions concerning a single-state application, e-mail americorpsapplications@cns.gov or contact the State Commission. A list of all State Commissions can be found here: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>.

*In Montana, please contact:
Governor's Office of Community Service
PO Box 208001
Helena, MT 59624

Phone: 406-444-9077
Fax: 406-444-4418
Email: serve@mt.gov
Website: <http://serve.mt.gov>

The mailing address is:
Corporation for National and Community Service
ATT: Office of Grants Policy and Operations/ASN Application
1201 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20525



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Attachment B – Letter of Intent

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service 2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant

Organization Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Proposed Program Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____ (note – all applicants must have access to the Internet at the time of the program's start date)

Federal Employer Identification No (FEIN): _____

Type of Applicant (nonprofit, government, etc.): _____

Geographic Area to be Served: _____

Amount of Funds Requested and Total Project Budget: _____

Question 1: Brief Description of Program (max 1,000 words): _____

Issue Areas - Which federal key objective(s) and/or Montana Initiative(s) will the proposed program address?

Federal Key Objectives:

- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Environment Stewardship
- Veterans and Military Families
- Opportunity
- Disaster Services

Montana Initiatives:

- The Governor's strategic initiative for clean energy
- The Governor and First Lady's strategic initiative for math and science education
- Expand and Promote Volunteerism in Montana

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The Montana Commission on Community Service also has the following expectations of all AmeriCorps Programs:

Montana Expectations of All Programs:

- Disability inclusion in the design and delivery of the program
- A collaborative approach to program planning, design and delivery
- Demonstrated ability to successfully administer an AmeriCorps or other federal grant
- Addressing rural, underserved or areas of extreme poverty that are not currently served by AmeriCorps programs

Question 2: Describe how your program will address these expectations (max 1,000 words): _____

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to reviewing your proposal!

Please submit a completed letter of intent to the Governor's Office of Community Service by October 12, 2010 at 5pm in order to be eligible for a 2011 AmeriCorps State and Indian Tribes Planning Grant.





Attachment C – Readiness Self-Assessment

Is My Organization Ready to Apply for an AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant?

INTRODUCTION

This Readiness Assessment asks simple questions to help you determine whether your organization is poised to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps grant. Read each question carefully and answer honestly. This assessment is a tool to help you plan for implementation and administration of AmeriCorps grant-funded programming.

Successful 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).

Once you have completed the readiness assessment, please continue with the Financial and Administrative Survey that will be used by the Governor's Office of Community Service to determine if your organization is financially ready for any AmeriCorps Grant.

Regardless of your results, The Governor's Office of Community Service is eager to assist you in designing and implementing services benefiting the residents of Montana. For more information please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service at serve@mt.gov or (406) 444-9077.

Please submit a completed readiness assessment with the letter of intent (**Attachment B**) to the Governor's Office of Community Service on October 12th, 2010 by 5pm in order to be eligible for a 2011 AmeriCorps State or Indian Tribes Planning Grant.

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FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

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

Yes No Unsure

Does your organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address specific unmet community needs in the areas of education, healthy futures, environmental stewardship, veterans, opportunity, and disaster services? *Note: Key objectives have not yet been finalized by CNCS.*

Yes No Unsure

If the answer to either of the above questions is "No" then your organization would not be eligible to receive an AmeriCorps grant or serve as a Host Site for AmeriCorps members. You are similarly ineligible if your organization is a 501 (c)(4) non-profit entity [under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4)] that engages in lobbying.

Do your plans for utilizing AmeriCorps members call for members to provide service exclusively within the state of Montana?

Yes No Unsure

If the answer to the above question is "No" and the other results of this Assessment are favorable, then your organization may be interested in applying directly to the Corporation for National & Community Service for an AmeriCorps*National grant BUT are ineligible to apply to the Governor's Office of Community Service.

If your organization does apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service you are required to submit a consultation form to the Governor's Office of Community Service. Please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for more information.

Administrative Competencies

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

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

Are there formal internal controls governing all financial operations?

Yes No Unsure

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Does your organization have sufficient cash to operate a major grant on a reimbursement basis? Both the Federal and State governments rarely, if ever, pay grant funds in advance. Payments are made 30-60 days after submission of invoices by programs.

Yes No Unsure

Are the financial operations of your organization audited annually by an independent auditor?

Yes No Unsure

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, it is likely your organization would struggle to successfully administer an AmeriCorps grant. Consideration should be given to seeking a partnership with an existing AmeriCorps program in Montana. Serving as an AmeriCorps host site, rather than as a primary grant applicant is often a better option for smaller organizations. Contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for more details.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES

The following questions address key elements of successful organizations. Completion of this portion of the assessment will help provide you with additional information about the capacity and structure in place to operate an AmeriCorps program.

Score this section of the assessment by giving yourself one (1) point for each correct answer.

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE: THE MISSION

1. Does your 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 your organization said no to potentially good opportunities which are not consistent with the organization's mission?

Yes No Unsure

4. Is the mission understood by ALL stakeholders within the organization?

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure



ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS

6. Does your 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

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

Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION: STRATEGIC PLANNING

8. Does your organization have a clear and coherent written strategic plan for the future (i.e. 3-10 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 goals in the strategic plan well known and understood by the staff and board?

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

12. Is this annual plan consistently used at all levels of the organization to guide operations?

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL REVENUE: SUSTAINABILITY

14. Does the organization have diversified funding from multiple sources?

Yes No Unsure



ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

16. Are organizational and programmatic budgets closely and regularly monitored?

Yes No Unsure

17. Does the organization produce and review financial statements at least monthly?

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: TECHNOLOGY

20. Does your organization have computers?

Yes No Unsure

21. Does every key staff member have access to a computer with up-to-date software, internet access, and e-mail capabilities?

Yes No Unsure

22. Are all staff competent and comfortable using their computers?

Yes No Unsure

23. Does your organization have a computerized accounting system?

Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: HUMAN RESOURCES

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

Yes No Unsure

25. Does your organization provide staff and volunteers with written job descriptions and the necessary resources to carry out duties appropriately?

Yes No Unsure

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

Yes No Unsure

27. Are employee performance appraisals conducted on a consistent and fair basis?

Yes No Unsure

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28. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain volunteers?
Yes No Unsure

PROGRAM DESIGN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

29. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of community need?
Yes No Unsure

Date Last Conducted: _____

30. Does your organization analyze and use the results of needs assessments to chart change?
Yes No Unsure

31. Does your organization have the ability to grow and/or create new and innovative programs to meet the needs of the community?
Yes No Unsure

32. Are your organization's programs and services well defined?
Yes No Unsure

33. Does your organization have the ability to close a program that is no longer needed or relevant?
Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE & CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

34. Does your organization have a comprehensive well-developed evaluation system used to measure the impact of programs and services?
Yes No Unsure

35. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of existing programs' effectiveness in meeting recipient needs AND identify areas for improvement?
Yes No Unsure

36. Does your organization collect data to measure performance and progress on a continual basis?
Yes No Unsure

37. Is data analyzed, used in program redesign and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis? (e.g. annual report)
Yes No Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH: PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

38. Does your organization participate in partnerships with other groups?
Yes No Unsure

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39. Have these relationships led to mutually beneficial collaboration?

Yes No Unsure

RESULTS

Count the total number of times you selected "yes" and refer to the chart below to determine your organization's readiness. Balanced organizations with consistent excellence across organizational competencies tend to be most successful in administering complex grants like AmeriCorps. If your replies to this assessment reveal significant areas of growth, it might be best to address these before pursuing AmeriCorps support.

- **25 - 40 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have the capacity to successfully operate a government-funded project or program.
- **15 - 24 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may need to make a few improvements in your capacity and planning to independently administer an AmeriCorps grant. Exploring partnerships might be beneficial.
- **Less than 15 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have a significant need to build its capacity before it is ready to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, government funding is probably not a good option:

- Participation in government funded programs must be open to all who qualify, without regard to religious beliefs.
- No participant in a government funded program may be required to participate in inherently religious activities.
- Government funded positions must not proselytize.
- Government funded programs must be held in a separate place or time from religious activities.

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Financial and Administrative Survey

<u>A. General Information</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Has your organization received a federal grant or cost-type award in the last 2 years? If yes, what is your cognizant federal agency? _____		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attach a schedule showing the total federal dollars awarded to your organization, by granting agency, for the two most recently completed fiscal years. 	<u>Attach schedule</u>	
2. Has your organization been audited by a Certified Public Accounting firm within the past two years?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Yes, attach a copy of your most recent audit report. 	<u>Attach audit</u>	
3. Are there established policies related to salary scales, fringe benefits, and travel reimbursement and personnel policies?		
4. If so, would these policies conflict with regulations regarding the AmeriCorps grant or AmeriCorps Members?		
5. Does your organization plan to use existing staff to manage the AmeriCorps program? If so, which position(s)?		
<u>B. Financial Management</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Do you have a "job cost" or "fund based" accounting system?		
2. Is your organization's accounting system a manual system?		
An automated system?		
A combination of manual and automated systems?		
3. Are entries posted to the general ledger daily?		
Weekly?		
Monthly?		
Other? Please describe: _____		
4. Does the accounting system track completely and accurately the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or funding source?		
5. Are common or indirect costs accumulated into cost pools for allocation to projects, contracts and grants?		
6. Does your organization have a federally approved indirect cost rate? If so, please attach.		
7. Does the accounting system provide for the recording of actual grant/contract costs according to categories of your approved budget(s), and provide for complete and current disclosure?		
8. Are time and activity distribution records maintained by funding source and project for each employee to account for total hours (100%) devoted to your organization?		

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9. Is your organization familiar with federal cost principles?		
10. Is your organization familiar with procedures for the determination and allowance of costs in connection with federal grants and contracts?		
11. Does your accounting system allow for the recording of "in-kind" contributions?		
12. Does your accounting system allow for cash basis reporting?		
13. If your organization uses accrual basis accounting, are there procedures in place to allow for reconciliation between cash and accrual basis reports?		
C. Internal Controls	YES	NO
1. Are the duties of the bookkeeper/record keeper separate from cash functions (receipts, deposits, check signing/releasing)?		
2. Are checks signed by individual(s) whose duties exclude recording cash received, approving vouchers for payment and the preparation of payroll?		
3. Are purchase approval methods documented and communicated?		
4. Are all accounting entries (both cash and in-kind) supported by appropriate documentation?		
5. Are employee payroll reports supported by appropriately signed documentation (timesheets, leave slips, etc.)?		
6. Are employees who handle funds bonded against loss by reasons of fraud or dishonesty?		