FFY2024 Montana AmeriCorps State Formula Innovation Grant

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY (NOFA)

This Notice outlines the process for applying for an AmeriCorps State Innovation Grant *only*, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) doing business as AmeriCorps, administered by the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (GOCS aka ServeMontana). The level and timing of funding is subject to annual appropriations. GOCS reserves the right to modify any component of this Notice anytime.

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

This Notice is the first in a multistep process an applicant must complete to apply for and receive AmeriCorps State Formula Planning Grant funding. ServeMontana's role is to solicit, screen and rank applications. All applications cleared through screening will be ranked and submitted to AmeriCorps for funding determination. A description of the process used by AmeriCorps is contained in this Notice. This Notice should be read together with AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR 2520–2550, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and Application Instructions which are incorporated by reference. It is recommended that applicants review federal regulations at www.ecfr.gov and grant management materials on AmeriCorps' website.

Governor's Office of Community Service (GOCS) aka ServeMontana

Montana's Commission on Community Service was established to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, amended by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 and the Montana Community Service Act of 1994 (MCA 90-14-103). With support from the Montana Commission on Community Service, GOCS administers funds to AmeriCorps State programs; encourages citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service; involves youth in the life and work of communities; and strengthens volunteerism for all Montanans.

Expectations

ServeMontana expects all respondents to display the following features:

✓ Address rural, Tribal, underserved, or areas of need not currently served by AmeriCorps programs
✓ Inclusive design and delivery, including accessibility to individuals with disabilities
✓ Prioritize local trainers and consultants as practicable

Purpose of Funding

Per 45 CFR 2521.20(d), training, technical assistance and other special grants (referred to as Innovation Grants throughout this Notice) are a type of AmeriCorps subtitle C program grant available for award.

The purpose of an AmeriCorps State Innovation Grant is to ensure program quality by providing training and technical assistance resources to eligible organizations seeking to bolster programmatic operations and/or AmeriCorps services as described in 45 CFR 2524.10. Innovation grants are intended to: develop AmeriCorps programs; improve the ability of AmeriCorps programs to meet community needs; promote leadership development; build an ethic of civic responsibility; develop management and budgetary skills of program operators; and/or encourage AmeriCorps programs to adhere to risk management procedures, including training participants in risk management practices.

Innovation Grants do *not* provide AmeriCorps member positions and do *not* require performance measures. When completing an application for submission, applicants should use this Notice, the Innovation Grant Application Instructions, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and other available resources.

Who Should Apply to this Innovation Grant Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)?
Funds may be available to existing Montana AmeriCorps State subrecipients currently placing members in the state, and who are proposing a new training and/or technical assistance project to develop the program, program staff, and/or AmeriCorps members. Innovation Grant must be described as a separate and unique project from the project described in the Operational Grant per 45 CFR 2522.340

GOCS will engage a Grant Review Workgroup to review and score grants through the selection process described in this *Notice* and select applicants for recommended funding. Funding recommendations are presented to the Montana Commission of Community Service for approval. Applicants who receive funding for Innovation Grants through this Notice are overseen by GOCS in all areas of grant management.

Montana AmeriCorps State Process and Screening
To be eligible for consideration under this Notice, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in this packet. ServeMontana staff will determine if the applicant's proposal complies with the requirements. If responses do not meet all requirements listed in this Notice, the application may be deemed unresponsive and/or incomplete and will be removed from the review process. Applicants will be reviewed to ensure they meet the standards of responsibility in accordance with ARM 2.5.407. A determination of non-responsiveness may be made anytime during the process if information surfaces that would result in the determination of non-responsibility.

Dual Points of Contact - *All Applicants*
From the date this Request for Proposal (RFP) is officially posted until an applicant(s) is selected and announced by GOCS**,** *applicants shall only communicate with designated staff listed below regarding this Notice.* Any unauthorized contact may disqualify the applicant from further consideration.

Kristina Jordan, GOCS Program Officer	Keena Irby, GOCS Fiscal Officer
Phone: 406-444-5547	Phone: 406-444-1809
Email: kristina.jordan@mt.gov	Email: keena.irby@mt.gov

Costs/Ownership of Materials
The applicant is solely responsible for all costs it incurs prior to subaward contract execution. The State shall own all materials submitted in response to this RFP.

Associated Documents
The following documents and/or forms are referenced through this Notice and are available at
https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/americorps-grants/Formula-Program-Grant
- FFY2024 Innovation Grant Application Instructions
- FFY2024 Mandatory Supplemental Information
- Letter of Intent
- Budget Worksheet

Mar. 29, 2024   **Official posting of the Notice**

Mar. 22, 2024   **Letter of Intent & associated documents due by 5pm Mountain Time** (see Application and Submission Information in this Notice)
- Letter of Intent (LOI)

Apr. 1-4, 2024   **Written Technical assistance period*** Submit questions via email to serve@mt.gov.

May 1, 2024   Last day to submit Match Waiver Request

May. 2, 2024   **All applicants: Application Due Date by 5pm Mountain Time** (see Application and Submission Information in this Notice)
- Complete Application, submitted in eGrants
- Additional Documents as applicable, submitted via email to serve@mt.gov

May 15, 2024   **Formula Grant Review Workgroup Meeting**

May 17, 2024   **Special Meeting of the Commission on Community Service**

May 20-23, 2024   **State of Montana Applicant clarification period** – All recommended applicants

May 23, 2024   **Clarified applications resubmitted in eGrants by 5pm Mountain Time**

Summer 2024   **Applicants notified of funding determination**

Aug. 2024   **Awards issued to successful applicants**

*Technical Assistance
Applicants should use the technical assistance period to ask clarifying questions, obtain a better understanding of the RFP process, the project, and to notify the State of any ambiguities, inconsistencies, or errors discovered upon examination of this Notice of Funding Availability.

Participation in the technical assistance period is optional, however, all interested parties should participate. All questions and written responses will be posted publicly at https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/americorps-grants/Formula-Program-Grant

FUNDING PRIORITIES & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Funding Priorities

Applications that include a plan to:

- Develop and/or fortify organizational systems,
- Improve the program's ability to meet community needs in underserved areas,
- Promote leadership and/or workforce development of program staff and/or AmeriCorps members,
- Build an ethic of civic responsibility among program staff and/or AmeriCorps members,
- Develop management and budgetary skills of program staff,
- Provide for or improve the training provided to AmeriCorps members,
- Provide training and/or encourage adherence to risk management practices and procedures among staff and AmeriCorps members,
- Assist current subrecipients in complying with the AmeriCorps evaluation requirements, and/or
- Ensure access to AmeriCorps programs for all Americans, including those with disabilities.

Performance Measures

Innovation Grant applicants are not required to collect performance measure data during the grant period; however, applicants are required to include Performance Measures in their eGrants application to submit. Specific instructions to complete the module are in *Attachment A of the innovation Grant Application Instructions.*

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Program Authority

Awards under this Notice are authorized by the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.)

Available Funds

GOCS generally expects a competitive grant selection process. The actual amount and timing of funds awarded is subject to availability of funds.

Estimated Award Amount

Awards for innovation grants may not exceed $100,000. Funds will be used to support strategic development of the program and/or provide appropriate training to program staff and/or AmeriCorps members. ServeMontana will review applications and determine the appropriate award amount, if any.

Project and Award Period

Applicants are encouraged to propose a start date of 9/1/2024, but may opt to align the innovation grant period with the existing program grant period. The project start date may *not* occur prior to the date AmeriCorps awards the grant. Innovation grants will be awarded for a period of up to 12 months in duration and are not eligible for renewal, dependent upon availability of funds.

Type of Award

AmeriCorps Innovation Grants are awarded on a line-item budget, cost reimbursement basis.

ELIGIBILITY, TYPES OF APPLICANTS, AND APPLICATION TYPE INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

Current AmeriCorps State programs placing AmeriCorps members in Montana and administered by GOCS.

System for Award Management & Unique Entity Identifier Number
To receive an award, applicants must maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. the System for Award Management (SAM). 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 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 AmeriCorps grant applications. The legal applicant's name and physical address in eGrants must <u>EXACTLY</u> match the applicant's SAM-registered information.***

Applications must include an Employer Identification Number and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). UEI is generated as part of the SAM registration process. *UEI and Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) numbers are not the same.* Applicants must use "My Account" on the eGrants home screen to enter UEI and EIN numbers in the "Edit Organization's Attributes" module. These entries will populate the Application's 424 Face sheet.

AmeriCorps will not award a grant to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier. If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time AmeriCorps is ready to make a federal award, AmeriCorps may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Application Types
<u>New Application</u>
Organizations seeking to bolster programmatic operations as described in this Notice are encouraged to apply to this Montana Formula Innovation Grant Notice as a New Project. AmeriCorps will consider a project to be new if there is a meaningful difference between it and previous projects (see Mandatory Supplemental Information).

GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to award applications in an amount less than the requested level of funding and will document the rationale for doing so.

Required Minimum Thresholds for All Applications
Applications must meet all threshold requirements. If threshold requirements are not met and no justification is provided, the application may be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed.
- Budget includes staff training and staff travel (if applicable) for at least one program staff to attend the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs' Tribal Relations Training, held annually in Helena. The training is typically 1-2 days with hotel stay depending on attendee distance. Registration fee is $150 and should be listed in the budget under Staff Training.
  - *If this training is already budgeted on a different grant, note that in the application narrative.*
- Budget may include personnel and fringe benefits (budget sections A and B, respectively) and/or consultant(s) to implement innovation activities. If budgeting personnel and fringe benefits, salaries cannot exceed 100% across multiple grants.

Other Eligibility Requirements
Under Section 132A(b) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, organizations that have violated a Federal criminal statute may not receive assistance described in this Notice.

Applications proposing to engage in prohibited activities listed in AmeriCorps' statutes, regulations, or the terms and conditions of its awards are not eligible to receive AmeriCorps funding. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. §501 (c)(4) that engages in

lobbying activities is not eligible to apply for AmeriCorps funding. Note that under appropriations provisions annually enacted by Congress, if AmeriCorps is aware that any corporation has any unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed; for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed; and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability; that entity is not eligible for an award under this Notice. However, this exclusion will not apply to a corporation that a federal agency has considered for suspension or debarment and determined that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the federal government.

FEDERAL FUNDING RESTRICTIONS AND BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Cost Sharing and Matching
Applicants are required to match the funds at 24% of the total operating cost of the grant, in alignment with the Innovation Grant Application Instructions. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application. Funds may be from state, local, or private sources; proposed or secured; and cash or in-kind contributions. Proposed and secured match must be entered in the Source of Funds section of the budget narrative in eGrants.

Section 121(e)(5) of National Community Service Act (42 U.S.C. 12571(e)) requires programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant to report the amount and source of these funds to AmeriCorps on a Federal Financial Report (FFR). Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at grant closeout. GOCS requires documented permission allowing for funds to be used as match from the non-AmeriCorps federal entity. Federal funds from the applicant's existing AmeriCorps program grant are not eligible matching funds for the Innovation Grant and vice versa.

Match Waiver
Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify for a match waiver, detailed in 45 CFR §2521.70. To qualify, applicants must demonstrate the lack of local resource, that this lack is unique, efforts to raise resources, and amount of resources raised at the time of application. *To receive consideration, an alternative match request must be submitted to GOCS by the date specified in the Timeline.*

Indirect Costs
Budget Section III should include indirect costs. However, no more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps State grants (45 CFR 2521.95 and 2540.110). Applicants may use the Five/Ten Percent Fixed Administrative Costs, a Federally-approved indirect cost rate, or a 10 percent *de minimis* rate (see Innovation Grant Application Instructions), or may claim certain costs directly, as outlined in 2 CFR 200.413. States, local governments, and Indian Tribes may use previously approved indirect cost allocation plans. Methods must be applied consistently across all Federal awards. Applicants that have a Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or that use the 10 percent *de minimis* rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants. See Application Instructions Attachment B: Detailed Budget Instructions for Cost Reimbursement Grants.

Preaward Costs
If awarded, applicants may request approval from GOCS to charge the following expenses to the grant prior to the project period:
- Staff time and benefits
- Supplies

If approved, these expenses must be submitted for reimbursement with the first financial report.

How to Submit an Application
Applications must be created and submitted electronically in eGrants. It is *strongly recommended* that applicants initiate and begin the eGrants application well before the deadline. See the Application Instructions for details on creating an application.

Current AmeriCorps State grant subrecipients must request a New Project application and must request GOCS have an application created when the Letter of Intent is submitted or earlier. eGrants may block the Applicants who were previously awarded from creating a new application or may not apply the correct match schedule.

Applicants should draft the narratives in a word processing document, then copy and paste the content into the appropriate eGrants fields. The length of a document in word processing software will likely be different than what will print out from eGrants- follow the page limits in this Notice.

The application's Authorized Representative must be the person who certifies and submits the application and must use their own eGrants account to do so. A copy of the governing body's authorization for the official representative must be on file in the applicant's office.

If a problem arises when creating an eGrants account or preparing or submitting the application, contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 or via Live Chat or Webform. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the Notice you are applying to. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must inform GOCS and continue working with the Hotline to submit the application via eGrants.

Content and Form of eGrants Application
- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: this populates when an applicant completes the Applicant Info in the and My Organization Info in the Application and My Account portions of eGrants, respectively.
- Narratives:
  - Executive Summary
  - Program Design
  - Organizational Capability
  - Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
  - Evaluation Summary/Plan
  - Continuation Changes
  - Clarification
- Logic Model
- Standard Form Budget and Budget Narrative
- Performance Measures
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certification

Application Package
Information necessary to apply is available at https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/americorps-grants/. Applicants may email serve@mt.gov or call 406-444-5547 for printed materials.

Page Limits
Page limits are determined by the length of the application as printed from eGrants. The character limits in eGrants fields do not align with page limits set in this Notice – eGrants will allow an applicant to enter text that exceeds page limits. The length of a document in word processing will likely be different than the eGrants printout.

GOCS strongly encourages applicants to print the Application for Federal Assistance from the "Review and Submit" tab in eGrants prior to submission to confirm it does not exceed the page limits.

Application & Narratives must not exceed 6 pages as printed from eGrants. Anything beyond 6 pages will not be reviewed. The application sections that count towards the page limit are the:
- SF-424 Face Sheet
- Narrative portions contained in the Executive Summary, Program Design, Organizational Capability, and Cost-Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy sections.

The application page limit does not include the Budget; Performance Measures; Continuation, Amendment, Clarification, or Evaluation Plan narratives; or any required additional documents.

Submission Dates and Times

Letter of Intent

Applicants must notify GOCS of their intent to apply by **Friday March 22, 2024.** Entities intending to apply must submit the following by email it to serve@mt.gov:
- All applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI), template available on the Montana Formula Program Grant Webpage.

Application Package

Applications are due in eGrants and Additional Documents emailed to serve@mt.gov by **Thursday May 2, 2024, 5:00pm Mountain Standard Time.** Incomplete applications will not be considered. Late applications may not be reviewed, see below.
- This deadline applies to new applicants and includes submission of additional documents. ServeMontana reserves the right to add documents to the RFP and to extend the deadline. Any such changes will be posted on GOCS's website.
- **Once the application is submitted in eGrants, send a confirmation email to serve@mt.gov.**

Additional Documents

Applicants must submit the following additional documents by the application deadline, as applicable. Items not requested will not be reviewed or returned.
- Competitively funded programs: the following are only required to submit if anything has changed since they were last submitted to GOCS.
- Formula funded programs: the following are not required to submit, as they will be submitted in response to the Formula Program Notice.
    - PDF of current SAM.gov certification and Universal Entity Identifier, https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1
    - Current indirect rate cost agreement, if applicable
    - Confirmation that the organization's most Recent Single Audit is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse, as applicable per 2 CFR 200.501, or indication that a Single Audit is Not Applicable.

Additional Documents Formatting and Submission

Additional Documents must be emailed to serve@mt.gov with the subject line: [Legal Applicant Name] – [Application ID number].

Emails should include the following information:
- the legal applicant's name and point of contact information
- a list of documents that should be attached to the email
- individually saved files that are clearly labeled

- files that include a header or title within the body of the file that includes the legal applicant name and application ID number
- If the size of an applicant's files requires multiple emails, please also include an ordering system in the subject line, such as "(1 of 3)"

Late Applications

Applications received after the submission deadline published in this Notice are presumed to be non-compliant. To overcome this presumption, the applicant must provide a written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstance(s) that caused the delay, including:
- the timing and specific cause(s) of the delay,
- the ticket number if a request for assistance was submitted to the AmeriCorps Hotline,
- any information provided to the applicant by the AmeriCorps Hotline, and/or
- any other documentation or evidence that supports the justification.

GOCS must receive the written justification no more than one business day after the submission deadline at serve@mt.gov. Applicants must continue working in eGrants and with the AmeriCorps Hotline to submit the application as soon possible. GOCS will determine whether to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis. Applicants that do not submit a justification or any other evidence to overcome the presumption of non-compliance within the published timeframe will not be reviewed.

Technical Assistance

GOCS will host technical assistance calls to answer questions about the funding opportunity and eGrants. GOCS strongly encourages all applicants to participate in these sessions. Call-in information will be posted on the Montana Formula Program Grant Webpage. A written technical assistance period is also available as described in the Notice Timeline.

During the grant application timeline, applicants are encouraged to consult the ServeMontana website for updated materials, the Innovation Grant Application Instructions, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and AmeriCorps regulations.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR INNOVATION GRANT APPLICANTS

✓ Application and budget quality are key factors in determining the funding recommendation.

✓ Applications should include a well-designed plan with clear and compelling justification for requesting funds. Reviewers will assess the quality of applications using the review criteria described in this Notice and will rate applications accordingly. Reviewers will also consider the weights assigned to each criterion.

✓ Within the application narrative, each narrative subsection heading (see Required Narratives table below) should be included in the narrative text and formatted in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Applicants should use subsection points to prioritize the length of information provided in each narrative subsection.

✓ Prior to submission, GOCS recommends applicants use the review criteria and/or score sheet to review the application, or to have a peer review. Scoresheets are available on Serve Montana's AmeriCorps Grants page.

Table: Required Narratives

Required Narrative Fields	Narrative Subsection	Subsection Points
Executive Summary		Pass/Fail
Program Design	COMMUNITY NEED	15
	RATIONALE & APPROACH	15
	IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS	15
	FUNDING PRIORITY	5
Organizational Capability	ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND AND STAFFING	25
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy		25
	TOTAL POINTS	100

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (REQUIRED – PASS/FAIL)

Fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. ***Do not deviate from the template.***

The [Name of the organization] proposes an Innovation Grant to support the development of the organization's existing AmeriCorps Montana program. At the end of the grant period, [Name of the organization] will be responsible for developing program operations, program staff, and/or AmeriCorps members, which will result in [anticipated outcome]. The organization will complete planning and financial reporting on time.

The AmeriCorps investment of $[amount of request] will be matched with $[amount of projected match], $[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and $[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

PROGRAM DESIGN NARRATIVE (50 POINTS TOTAL)

COMMUNITY NEED (15 points)
- The applicant clearly and concisely describes the existing AmeriCorps Montana program and the community need addressed by the program.
- The applicant describes how the innovation grant will improve the ability of programs to meet the identified community need(s) by deepening member experience, improving program management, or otherwise developing the program as described in the Purpose of Funding section of this Notice.

RATIONALE & APPROACH (15 points)
- The applicant describes why they are applying for an innovation grant and what they intend to achieve during the grant period.

Implementation Process & Timeline (15 points)
- The applicant describes an innovation grant implementation process and timeline that starts 9/1/2024 and does not exceed one year.

Funding Priority (5 points)
- The applicant's proposed plan fits within one or more of the priorities outlined in the Funding Priorities section of this Notice.

Logic Model (0 points)
- Enter "N/A" in all required narrative boxes in this section of the application in eGrants.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Organizational Background and Staffing (25 points)
- The applicant concisely describes experience implementing AmeriCorps program and/or member development activities that have resulted in increased capacity.
- The applicant describes how the people or entities who will provide training and/or technical assistance to the program via the innovation grant is/are sufficiently qualified, or if they are not yet identified, describes the preferred or desired qualifications.
- The applicant describes sufficient policies, procedures, and controls in place to prevent, detect, and mitigate the risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, such as appropriate segregation of duties, internal oversight activities, measures to prevent timekeeping fraud, etc.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Only enter "See budget" in the narrative box in eGrants. Any other narrative will not be reviewed.
Reviewers will evaluate the budget and budget narrative against the following criteria:
- Budget complies with the Minimum Thresholds in this Notice as applicable.
- Total CNCS share must not exceed $100,000.
- Total Grantee share is at least 24%. Applications that do not meet the required match will be considered unresponsive.
- The Source of Funds section total must match the total amount in budget narrative exactly, and follow the directions in the Innovation Grant Application Instructions. For each source, designate if the match is secured or proposed; type of classification: cash or in-kind; and source type: Private, Federal, State/Local.

GOCS Staff will conduct a "budget check" on the application's budget and budget narrative to ensure compliance with the Application Instructions (see Attachments B and C), including checking calculations. Points will not be deducted for budget check deficiencies, but correction must be made during clarification without modifying approved CNCS or Grantee totals.

EVALUATION PLAN (0 POINTS)

Enter "N/A". Any other text entered in this field will not be reviewed.

AMENDMENT JUSTIFICATION (0 POINTS)

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

CLARIFICATION INFORMATION (0 POINTS)

Enter "N/A". This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.

CONTINUATION CHANGES (0 POINTS)

Enter "N/A".

APPLICATION REVIEW AND AWARD DETERMINATION PROCESS

All applications approved by the Montana Commission for submission to AmeriCorps are subject to the following review and selection process.

Montana Application Review
Applications selected through this process will be sent to AmeriCorps for final funding determination. The review process will consist of:

- GOCS staff review application for completeness including Letter of Intent, Additional Documents, Audit Report as applicable, Minimum Thresholds and other requirements as articulated in this Notice. If the applicant appears to have sufficient capacity to manage federal grants, they are eligible to continue the application process.
- Submitted applications are reviewed for compliance with pertinent state and federal regulations, and responsibility to the request for proposal. All compliant and responsive applications will continue through the review process.
- Applications passing staff review will next be reviewed by a Grant Review Workgroup, which will individually score each application then convene with applicants present to arrive at consensus scores, ranking, and a funding recommendation.
- The funding recommendation is presented to the Montana Commission on Community Service for approval. If the funding recommendation is rejected by the Commission, the review process may be repeated.

If unforeseen challenges or circumstances make it impossible, impracticable, or inefficient to conduct the review process as planned, GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to adjust or make changes to the review process at any time. Adjustments or changes will not affect the review criteria.

Funding Priority
All organizations applying for Montana AmeriCorps Formula Funding are placed into Priority Tiers based on Notice type and organization experience. Within each tier, applicants will be ranked based on consensus scores by the Grant Review Workgroup.

Table: Funding Priority Tiers

Priority Tier	Notice Type and Organizational Experience
1	Formula Program Continuation requests
2	Unawarded Montana State Competitive Programs
3	Innovation Grant applicants
4	New/Recompete Formula Program applicants currently administering AmeriCorps Programs or Planning in Montana
5	New Formula Planning Applicants
6	New Formula Program applicants not currently administering AmeriCorps programs or planning in Montana

Review scores will not necessarily have sole bearing on the distribution of funds. However, within each Priority Tier, a lower scoring application will not be recommended for funding at the expense of a higher scoring one. The distribution of funds will be based on the assessment of the Grant Review Workgroup.

GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to award applications in an amount other than the requested level of funding and will document the rationale for doing so. When making funding recommendations, the Grant Review Workgroup will consider the score of the application, the likelihood of planned intervention to address Montana's needs, the priorities, if any, set by the Governor and/or State Service Plan, and the input of commission staff.

Applicant Clarification & Resolution
Applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to the application including the budget, narratives, or performance measures. This information is used in making final recommendations. Failure to respond to GOCS/AmeriCorps clarification or resolution requests in a timely manner may result in the removal of application from consideration. Applications may be approved for funding with or without clarification or resolution requests.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment
AmeriCorps staff may assess the risks posed by each applicant and assess an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If AmeriCorps determines an award will be made to an applicant with assessed risks, then special conditions corresponding to the degree of assessed risk may be applied to the award. Additionally, if AmeriCorps concludes the reasons for applicants having a poor risk assessment are not likely to be mitigated, those applications may not be selected for funding. In assessing risks, AmeriCorps may consider the following criteria:

Due Diligence, including:
- Federal debt delinquency
- Suspension and debarment
- Information available through Office of Management and Budget (OMB)- designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as:
  - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)
  - U.S. Treasury Bureau of Fiscal Services
  - System for Award Management (SAM)
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under Uniform Administrative Guidance and findings of any other available audits or investigations
- IRS Tax Form 990
- Oversight.gov
- Public Litigation Records

Operational and Financial Management:
- Financial stability
- Operational and Financial Management Survey

Other Programmatic Risks:
- Publicly available information, including from the applicant organization's website

Consideration of Integrity and Performance System Information
Prior to making any award that exceeds the $250,000, AmeriCorps is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS, see 41 U.S.C. §2313). Additionally, AmeriCorps may expand upon these requirements and use its discretion to review and consider information about any applicant receiving an award, including those under $250,000. Any applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through FAPIIS and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through FAPIIS.

Transparency in Grantmaking
Submitted narratives, executive summaries, a list of reviewers who completed the review process, and a summary of reviewer comments for successful applications may be available upon request via email to serve@mt.gov.

Re-Focusing Funding
AmeriCorps/GOCS reserve the right to refocus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

AmeriCorps will make awards following the selection announcement. AmeriCorps anticipates announcing the results of this funding opportunity in July 2024 to State Commissions, contingent on the availability of congressional appropriations. Applicants will then be notified by GOCS as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. A formal Notice of Grant Award will be produced and the state contracting process is then initiated.

Uniform Guidance

All awards made under this Notice 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 will request documentation from award recipients in order to monitor the grantee and award to ensure compliance with legal requirements, including the Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019. Failure to timely respond 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 Notice will be subject to the FY2024 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY2024 AmeriCorps State and National Terms and Conditions. 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 is available at https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/manage-your-grant .

National Service Criminal History Check Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a specific screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. Training, technical assistance and other special grants (referred to as Innovation Grants throughout this Notice), are listed as one of the AmeriCorps subtitle C program grant types available for award; however, are not listed in 45 CFR 2540.200 as one of the grant types required to comply with NSCHC requirements. Therefore, Montana Innovation Grant applicants are exempt from NSCHC requirements.

Subrecipients should follow their respective organizational background check policies. Full requirements and guidance on how to conduct NSCHC can be found at https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check.

Official Guidance

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

Use of Material

To ensure materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, GOCS and AmeriCorps reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so. 2 CFR §200.315(b)

Reporting

Innovation grant recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award, including monthly financial reports, periodic progress reports, and a final financial report due at the end of the grant. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time.

AGENCY CONTACTS

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
General email: serve@mt.gov

Program Officer: Kristina Jordan, 406-444-5547, kristina.jordan@mt.gov
Fiscal Officer: Keena Irby, 406-444-1809, keena.irby@mt.gov

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Public Burden Statement

Public reporting burden for collection of information under this Notice of Funding is estimated to average 80 hours per submission, including reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing the application and reporting forms. AmeriCorps informs people who may respond to this Notice of Funding that they are not required to respond unless the OMB control number and expiration date are current valid. (See 5 C.F.R. 1320.5(b)(2)(i).) This collection is approved under OMB Control *#:* 3045-0047, Application Instructions, State and National Competitive, New and Continuation, Expiration Date: September 30, 2023.

Privacy Act Statement

Per the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C §552a), the information requested under this Notice of Funding is collected pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§12592 and 12615 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended, and 42 U.S.C. §4953 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 as amended.

- Purposes and Uses - The information requested is collected for the purposes of reviewing grant applications and granting funding requests. Routine uses may include disclosure of the information to Federal, state, or local agencies pursuant to lawfully authorized requests. In some programs, the information may also be provided to Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to determine the existence of any prior criminal convictions. The information may also be provided to appropriate Federal agencies and contractors that have a need to know the information for the purpose of assisting the government to respond to a suspected or confirmed breach of the security or confidentiality or information maintained in this system of records, and the information disclosed is relevant and unnecessary for the assistance.
  - Effects of Nondisclosure - The information requested is voluntary; however, to be a recipient of this grant program, disclosure of personal or sensitive information is required to receive federal benefits.

End of AmeriCorps State Grant Formula Request for Proposal (RFP)