

Fall Montana AmeriCorps FFY2022 Formula Planning Grant

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABLE (NOFA) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

This Notice outlines the process to apply for a Montana AmeriCorps *Planning Grant* only. Planning grant funding is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) doing business as AmeriCorps and administered by the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) also known as ServeMontana. The level and timing of grant funding is subject to annual appropriations. OCS reserves the right to modify any component of this RFP, at any time.

Notice of Funding Available (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, Application Instructions, and Performance Measure 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](#).

ServeMontana

Montana's Commission on Community Service was established in 1993 to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, amended by the Edward M Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009. Under the Montana Commission on Community Service, ServeMontana administers funds to AmeriCorps State programs, encourage citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service, involve youth in the life and work of communities, and strengthen volunteerism for all Montanans.

Purpose of Planning Grant Funding

The purpose of an AmeriCorps planning grant is to provide resources to eligible organizations to assess and develop an AmeriCorps intervention to address Montana's needs and develop contributors. Planning Grants do not include performance measures or provide service positions. Planning Grants are intended to support staff, travel, and other allowable expenses to plan an operational AmeriCorps State program and then apply for a program grant.

Funds may be available to *new* applicants to increase AmeriCorps programs statewide by applying for a one year planning grant. Planning grants provide initial funding to support staff or employ contractors to assess needs and plan the proposed AmeriCorps program. Examples of expected planning activities include needs assessments, collaboration with partners, developing meaningful training, developing data collection for performance measures, and assuring adequate financial systems for successful implementation of an AmeriCorps operational grant program. When completing an application for submission, applicants should use this Notice, AmeriCorps Application Instructions, Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, and other available resources.

Expectations

ServeMontana expects all respondents to display the following features:

- ✓ Address rural, Tribal, underserved, or areas of poverty not currently served by AmeriCorps programs
- ✓ Clearly connect proposed activities to the needs and priorities in the Montana State Service Plan
- ✓ Collaborative approach to program planning, design, and the delivery
- ✓ Planning process is designed to be inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities

Who Should Apply To This *Notice Of Funding Available (NOFA)*?

Organizations proposing to complete a one-year planning period to determine if AmeriCorps State resources are best-suited to meet identified community needs. During the planning grant period, OCS and/or the planning grantee may determine that AmeriCorps resources are not the best resource. Organizations with a proven track record managing federal funds, in particular national service programs, are encouraged to apply.

Applying to this Notice is required for organizations seeking assess, plan, and propose to serve primarily in the state of Montana. Tribes and Tribal organizations may apply through this *Notice* or may choose to apply directly to AmeriCorps for planning funds.

Organizations proposing a program to place members to address Montana's pressing needs are encouraged to apply to the [Montana AmeriCorps Competitive Operating Program Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), now open, or Montana Formula State Operating Grant Notice of Funding Available, available spring of 2023.

Montana AmeriCorps State Process

To be eligible for consideration, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in the *Notice*. ServeMontana will determine whether the submitted materials comply with the requirements in accordance with standards of responsibility set forth in [ARM 2.5.407](#). Federal awarding requirements are incorporated into this notice per ARM 2.5.407(6)(e). Applicant responses that do not meet the full intent of all requirements listed in this RFP may be deemed unresponsive and will not be considered. Such a determination may be made at any time 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 OCS, *applicants shall only communicate with designated state staff listed below, regarding this Notice*. Any unauthorized contact may disqualify the application from further consideration.

Joe Naiman-Sessions, Program Officer
ph: 406.444.5547
joe.naiman-sessions@mt.gov

Keena Irby, Fiscal Officer
ph: 406.444.1809
keena.irby@mt.gov

Costs/Ownership of Materials

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

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Associated Documents

The following documents are referenced through this Notice.

- Montana Fall Planning AmeriCorps Application Instructions
- [Mandatory Supplemental Information](#)
- [Letter of Intent Template](#)
- [Operational and Fiscal Management Survey \(OFMS\)](#)
- Readiness Self-Assessment
- [Budget Worksheet](#)

TIMELINE

Sep. 30, 2022	Official posting of the <i>Notice</i>
Oct. 7, 2022	<u>All applicants, due to serve@mt.gov by 5pm Mountain Time</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter of Intent (LOI)• PDF of current SAM registration & UEI, https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1• Documentation of Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate, <i>if applicable</i>• Most Recent Single Audit for organizations who spend more than \$750,000 in the last fiscal year• Readiness Self-Assessment
Oct. 17-21, 2022	Technical assistance period* Submit questions via email to serve@mt.gov .
Oct. 28, 2022	<u>All applicants: Application Due Date by 5pm Mountain Time</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete Application, submitted in eGrants https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp• Additional Documents, submitted via email to serve@mt.gov (See Page 18)• AmeriCorps Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)
Nov. 16, 2022	Grant Review Workgroup Meeting
Dec. 8, 2022	Commission Meeting
Dec. 12-15, 2022	State of Montana Applicant clarification period – All recommended applicants
Dec. 15, 2022	<u>Clarified applications resubmitted in eGrants by 5pm Mountain Time</u>
Jan. 2023	AmeriCorps Clarification and Resolution
Jan. 2023	Awards issued to successful applicants
Feb. 2023	Planning Period Start

***Technical Assistance**

Participation in the technical assistance period is optional, and highly encouraged. Applicants are encouraged to use the opportunity 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 in this RFP. All questions and written responses will be posted on the ServeMontana website at <https://serve.mt.gov/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-grants/grant-formula-planning>.

PLANS, FOCUS AREAS, FUNDING PRIORITIES, & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To receive priority consideration, applicants must show the priority area is a significant part of the project focus and intended outcomes and must include a high-quality program design. Proposing a project that receives priority consideration does not guarantee funding.

Montana State Service Plan

The 2022-2024 Montana State Service Plan outlines the goals and objectives of the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS). Applicants should strive to implement evidence-based service strategies to meet one or more needs identified in the [State Service Plan](#).

Governor and First Lady Priorities

- American Indian Affairs- Partner with Tribal Nations and people to help create more and better opportunities. OCS seeks to engage Tribal members into service with Montana's AmeriCorps programs and to foster cultural competency in programs to make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Montana's Tribal Nations.
- Improve Education and Empower Montana's Workforce – Provide better resources for K-12 Educators, prepare Montana students for the jobs of tomorrow, and bring our kids and grandkids home to serve in AmeriCorps.
- Boosting Literacy – Prepare Montanans of all ages to better engage in daily life through developing written communication and reading comprehension skills.
- Promote Stewardship of Montana's Public Lands – Bring Montanans together in service interventions that result in healthier landscapes, more recreational opportunities, more jobs, less severe wildfires, and improved habitat and water quality.
- Improve Access to Mental Health Care – Increase Montana's access to mental health care, suicide prevention services, health education, and innovative community strategies.
- Increase Opportunities for Veterans – Engage veterans in overcoming barriers to employment, connect them with employment opportunities, and provide services for veterans to fulfill their hopes and dreams. OCS seeks to engage veterans into service with Montana's AmeriCorps programs and to foster programs that make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Montana's veterans and military families.

Montana Encouraged Program Elements

- Program design that incorporates National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service's recommendations in their Final Report Appendix C, Best Practices in Civic Education and Service Learning. AmeriCorps members receive impactful civic education and/or service-learning as part of member development that increases knowledge and deepens the members' ethic of service.
- Program design includes engaging citizens with lived experience to serve people in the area of defined need with robust training, development, and support.
- Program design engages Montanans and uniquely prepares them to serve the communities where they live.

AmeriCorps Focus Areas

[The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act](#), emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. To carry out Congress's intent, maximize the impact of investment in national service, AmeriCorps has the following Focus Areas:

- [Disaster Services](#) Helping individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of disasters and increase community resiliency.
- [Economic Opportunity](#) Improving the economic well-being and security of underserved individuals.
- [Education](#) Improving educational outcomes for underserved people, especially children. AmeriCorps is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes.
- [Environmental Stewardship](#) Supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in underserved households and communities.
- [Healthy Futures](#) Supporting for health needs within communities, including mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and other public health crises, access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity, especially in underserved communities.
- [Veterans and Military Families](#) Improving the quality of life of veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors.

AmeriCorps Strategic Plan

AmeriCorps [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) defines goals, objectives, and strategies to meet the agency’s mission to improve lives and strengthen communities. AmeriCorps’ four goals will better prepare the agency to respond to national and local needs and help the communities it serves prosper. The goals are: partner with communities to alleviate poverty and advance racial equity, enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members, unite Americans by bringing them together in service, and to effectively steward federal resources.

Performance Measures

Planning Grant applicants do not include performance measures, however the performance measure module must be completed in order to submit the application. Specific instructions to complete the module are in Attachment A of the Application Instructions.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION TYPE INFORMATION

Eligible Entities

The following non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#)) are eligible to apply:

- Indian Tribes
- Institutions of higher education
- Local governments
- Nonprofit organizations
- States and US Territories

System for Award Management (SAM) & Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number

To receive an award, applicants *must* register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) and maintain an active SAM registration. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the [SAM Quick Guide for Grantees](#).

SAM registration must be renewed annually. AmeriCorps suggests that applicants finalize a new registration or renew an existing one at least three weeks before the application deadline, to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise.

Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and physical address on AmeriCorps grant applications. The legal applicant's name and physical address in eGrants must exactly 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 Facesheet.

AmeriCorps will not make awards 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 that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

State and Territory Service Commissions (for Single-State Applicants)

Single State Applicants: Organizations planning interventions in Montana must apply through ServeMontana. Each state and territory commission administers its own selection process and submits the selected applications to compete for funding directly to AmeriCorps. *A Single-State application from a State or Territory with a Commission that is submitted directly to AmeriCorps by the applicant instead of the Commission will be considered unresponsive and will not be reviewed.* See Mandatory Supplemental Information for applicant descriptions.

Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Montana

Indian Tribes planning interventions in Montana are eligible to apply to this Notice, or may apply directly to [AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants National Direct Opportunity](#). If interested in pursuing an AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grant, please reach out to the OCS Grants Manager for more information.

In addition to Indian Tribes (2 CFR §200.54), tribal organizations controlled, authorized, and chartered by Indian Tribes are also eligible to apply. An entity applying on behalf of one or more federally recognized tribe(s) must submit a Tribal Council adopted resolution or other authorization which covers the entire period of performance. The resolution must identify the entity by name as a tribal organization and indicate whether it is controlled, authorized, or chartered by an Indian Tribe(s). It must authorize the entity to be the legal applicant and act on behalf of and include the Indian Tribe(s) in an AmeriCorps application for the purpose of conducting the activities and providing the services described in the application.

Application Types

New Application

Organizations seeking to plan to utilize AmeriCorps resources, including AmeriCorps members, and who have never received AmeriCorps funding, are encouraged to apply to this Montana Formula Planning Grant Notice.

Organizations seeking to operate an AmeriCorps program and place members in the first year of funding are encouraged to apply to the Montana Formula Operating Grant notice.

The Montana Formula Operating Grant Notice of Funding Available will be available Spring 2023.

Continuation Applications

Planning Grants are not eligible for continuation grants. Organizations seeking a second or more year of AmeriCorps funding must apply through the Montana Formula Operating Grant Notice of Funding.

Minimum Thresholds for Planning Applications

Applications should meet all threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying.

- All applicants should budget for staff travel staff to attend the [Serve Montana Symposium](#) in March 2023 in Helena, MT, and the online AmeriCorps Training Platform On3Learn [All Access Pass Annual Subscription](#).

Other Eligibility Requirements

Under section 132A(b) of the National Community Service Act, organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime may not receive assistance described in this *Notice*. Applications that propose to engage in activities that are prohibited under statutes, regulations, or the terms and conditions of its awards are not eligible to receive funding.

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501(c)(4) of 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.

AmeriCorps will not award grants to an entity if it is aware that the entity has any unpaid Federal tax liability:

- which 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

This exclusion will not apply to an entity which a Federal agency has considered for suspension or debarment and has made a determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Federal Government. A similar restriction may be enacted with the appropriation which will fund awards under this *Notice*.

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

AmeriCorps Formula State funding process is generally competitive. Funding available for planning grants are subject to prior AmeriCorps Montana Formula competitions, AmeriCorps appropriations, allocations, and approval.

Estimated Award Amount

Awards for planning grants may not exceed \$70,000. Funds will be used to support strategic development of an AmeriCorps program (no AmeriCorps member positions). ServeMontana will review applications and determine the appropriate award amount, if any.

Project and Award Period

If funds are available, planning grant awards cannot exceed 12 months in duration and are not eligible to be continued. ServeMontana expects organizations receiving planning grants will apply for an AmeriCorps operational grant in the next grant year or will responsibly determine that an AmeriCorps program is not the best strategy to meet the stated needs.

The project start date may not occur prior to the date AmeriCorps awards the grant. The earliest suggested start date is February 1, 2023. Applicants recommended for funding should plan to complete any hiring, National Service Criminal History Check, and/or contracting processes prior to the start date, to begin efforts on day one.

Type of Award

AmeriCorps planning grants will only be awarded on a line-item cost reimbursement basis. Cost reimbursement grants fund a portion of costs and require documented match.

FEDERAL FUNDING RESTRICTIONS AND BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Cost Sharing and Matching

Awarded Planning Grants are required to generate 24% match. Planning Grants are administered on a cost reimbursement basis. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission. Funds may be from state, local, or private sources; proposed or secured; and cash or in-kind contributions.

AmeriCorps permits matching AmeriCorps grant funds from other federal sources but requires programs that use other federal funds as match 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 closeout. OCS requires documented permission allowing for funds to be used as match from the non-AmeriCorps federal agency.

Indirect Costs

Budget Section III may 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 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. All methods must be applied consistently across all Federal awards. Applicants that have a Federal negotiated indirect cost rate or that will be using the 10 percent *de minimis* rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants. Details can be found in the Application Instructions Attachment B: Detailed Budget Instructions for Cost Reimbursement Grants.

Preaward Costs

If awarded, the following expenses to the grant are permitted prior to the budget period with prior written approval from OCS:

- Staff time and benefits
- Supplies

These expenses must be submitted for reimbursement with the first Periodic Expense Report.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

How to Submit an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically in [eGrants](#). It is *strongly recommended* that applicants initiate and begin the eGrants application well before the deadline. Applicants should draft the content as 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 in eGrants- *follow the [page limits](#)*.

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. The submitting authorized representative must be on the organizational chart and should be listed on the authorized signature sheet submitted during contracting.

If a problem arises when creating an account or preparing or submitting the application contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at 800.942.2677 or via [eGrants Questions](#). Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which you are applying. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the AmeriCorps Hotline to submit the application via eGrants.

Content and Form of Application

The following components must be entered in eGrants and are required to submit a complete application:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Populates when applicant completes eGrants fields in Applicant Info
- 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 (See Application Instructions for how to complete)
- Performance Measure Module (See Attachment A in Application Instructions for how to complete)
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certification

Application Package

Information necessary to apply is accessible at <https://serve.mt.gov/amicorps/amicorps-grants/>. Applicants may email serve@mt.gov or call 406.444.5547 for printed materials. TTY # 800.833.3722.

Page Limits

Page limits are determined by eGrants print out length. The character limits in eGrants fields do not align with page limits set in the Notice and 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.

OCS strongly encourage applicants to print the Application for Federal Assistance from the “Review and Submit” tab in eGrants prior to submission in order to confirm it does not exceed the page limits. Reviewers will not consider material that is over the page limits in the printed report.

Application & Narratives must not exceed 7 pages as printed from eGrants. Anything beyond 7 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 narratives.
- 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

5 p.m. MST Friday, October 7, 2022 - Letter of Intent

Applicants should notify OCS of their intent to apply by submitting a [Letter Of Intent \(LOI\)](#). Submit the LOI by completing the template and emailing it to serve@mt.gov. The following is due with the LOI:

- Readiness Self-Assessment
- SAM.gov registration confirmation
- Current indirect rate cost agreement, if used to claim indirect/administrative costs

5 p.m. MST Friday, October 28, 2022 - Application Package

Applications are due in eGrants and additional documents emailed to serve@mt.gov.

- 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 OCS’s website.
- **When the application is submitted in eGrants, send an email to serve@mt.gov.**

Additional Documents

Only submit items requested in this *Notice* and the Application Instructions. Items submitted that are not requested will not be reviewed or returned. Applicants must submit additional documents by the application deadline:

- Federal debt delinquency (if applicable)
- Current Single Audit (if organization expended over \$750,000 federal funds in prior fiscal year, 2 CFR 200.501)
- [Operational and Financial Management Survey \(OFMS\)](#) in a MS Word file
- Readiness Self-Assessment (If Letter of intent not submitted)
- Two letters of support
- SAM.gov registration confirmation (If Letter of intent not submitted)
- Current indirect rate cost agreement, if applicable (If Letter of intent not submitted)

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 name and point of contact information
- A list of documents in the body of the email
- Individually saved files that are clearly labeled
- Files that include the legal applicant name and application ID number within the body of each document

Tribal Sanctioning Resolution Additional Documents

Entities applying on behalf of a Federally Recognized Tribe must submit sanctioning resolution adopted by the Tribal Council of each Indian Tribe (See the *Eligible Applicants*) by the time the grant is awarded.

Late Applications

All 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 National Service Hotline
- Any information provided to the applicant by the National Service Hotline
- Any other documentation or evidence that supports the justification

OCS 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 National Service Hotline to submit the application as soon possible. OCS 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.

REVIEW CRITERIA NEW PLANNING GRANT APPLICANTS

Each applicant must describe planning efforts to effectively address significant community need(s). OCS urges applicants to submit high quality applications that follow this *Notice* and Application Instructions. Application and budget quality are key factors in determining the funding recommendation. Applications should be based in evidence and should use inline citations; however, reviewers will not review any documents external to the application.

Applicants should address the assessment criteria. Each narrative subsection heading should be formatted in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response, do not assume all criteria are of equal value. Use subsection points to prioritize the length of information provided in the narratives. Prior to submission, OCS recommends applicants use the assessment criteria and/or score sheet to review your 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	PROBLEM/NEED	15
	RATIONALE & APPROACH	15
	PLANNING PROCESS & TIMELINE	15
	NOTICE PRIORITY	5
Organizational Capability	ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND AND STAFFING	20
	CULTURE THAT VALUES LEARNING	5
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy		25

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 to plan to utilize AmeriCorps members to [how the community need will be addressed] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members may serve]. The organization will learn about AmeriCorps grant and financial management. The organization will complete planning and financial reporting on time. At the end of the planning period, the [Name of the organization] will be responsible for developing an AmeriCorps intervention that will result in [anticipated outcome/benefit and for whom]. In addition, organization will plan to leverage [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

*This program will focus on the AmeriCorps focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)]. * 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)

PROBLEM/NEED (15 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will eventually serve, and the need has been well documented with relevant data.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community need has been or will be identified by the program.
- The applicant provides a clear explanation for why a planning grant is needed.

RATIONALE & APPROACH (15 points)

- The applicant clearly describes why they are applying for a planning grant and what they intend to achieve during the one-year planning award period.
- Describe how AmeriCorps members could serve to help you address the community need, and why AmeriCorps interventions are the best solution to address the community need.

Planning Process & Timeline (15 points)

- The applicant describes a clear and logical planning process, including:
 - A detailed description of who is leading the planning process

- A clear description of how the planning period will be used to develop the necessary components to effectively manage an AmeriCorps program in the future
- An assessment of community partners and stakeholders
- A detailed plan for program sustainability
- The planning timeline includes development of the following program elements:
 - Needs assessment and resource alignment
 - Intervention and evidence base
 - Theory of change/logic model
 - Data collection and performance measurement
 - Member training and supervision plans
 - Program compliance and accountability
 - Securing match to support the program

Notice Priority (5 points)

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2022 Montana funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section.

Logic Model (0 points)

- Enter N/A in all required narrative boxes in this section.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Organizational Background and Staffing (20 points)

- The applicant provides a brief history of the organization including the year it was established and any funding history with ServeMontana and AmeriCorps, if applicable.
- The applicant describes how it has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan the proposed program.
- The applicant describes the organization’s management and staff structure and the role the board of directors, administrators, and staff members will play in the planning process.
- The applicant describes its prior experience in the proposed area of programming and examples of the organization’s leadership in the community.
- The applicant describes its plans to engage community members and partner organizations in the planning process.
- The applicant has 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.

Culture that Values Learning (5 points)

- The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information, including performance data, for learning and decision making.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Only enter “See budget” narrative box. Any other narrative will not be reviewed.

- Budget complies with the Application Instructions (See Application Instructions Appendix B and C).

- Required training and travel is budgeted for (See [Threshold](#) requirements).
- Applicant meets match requirements Applicant identifies sources in the Source of Funds section of the budget.
- The CNCS Share does not exceed the maximum [estimated award amount](#).

Staff will conduct a “budget check” on the application’s budget and budget narrative. Proposed budgets that exceed the maximum estimated award amount and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

EVALUATION PLAN (0 POINTS)

Enter N/A.

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

Applications cleared through this process will be sent the AmeriCorps for final funding determination. The review process will consist of:

- OCS staff review Letters of Intent; Additional Documents and Audit Report, as applicable. If the applicant is determined 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 responsible for scoring applications and making funding recommendations.
- The Grant Review Workgroup will individually score the applications then convene with applicants present to arrive at a consensus score and a funding recommendation.
- Grant Review Workgroup recommendations are presented to the Montana Commission on Community Service for approval. If the proposal of the review committee is rejected by the Montana 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, OCS and AmeriCorps reserve the right to adjust or make changes to the review process at any time. Adjustments or changes will not affect the selection criteria used to assess applications.

Funding priority

This NOFA is only available to Planning Grant Applicants which are ranked based on consensus scores by the Grant Review Workgroup. Review scores will not necessarily have sole bearing on the distribution of funds. However, 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 as to how best to carry out the mission of OCS. When making funding recommendations, the Grant Review Workgroup will consider the score of the application, the effectiveness of the program in addressing Montana's needs, the priorities, if any, set by the Governor and/or State Service Plan, and the input of commission staff.

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

All applications approved by the Montana Commission to be submitted to AmeriCorps are subject to the following review and selection process:

AmeriCorps will engage Reviewers with relevant knowledge and expertise to assess and provide input on the eligible applications. The review and selection process is intended to produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and strategic considerations described in this Notice. The determinations made by AmeriCorps reviewers may be different than what the applicant self-determined upon submission of its application.

Selection for Funding

OCS and AmeriCorps review and selection process is designed to identify how well eligible applications are aligned with the application review criteria and build a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:

- AmeriCorps Funding Priorities (See *Funding Priorities*)
- meaningful representation of
 - geographic diversity
 - rural communities
 - faith-based organizations
 - focus area representation

Based on the evaluation of these strategic considerations, applications may be selected for funding over applications with a greater degree of alignment with the review criteria. In selecting applicants to receive awards under this Notice, the Montana Commission, and the AmeriCorps Chief Executive Officer will endeavor to include a diverse portfolio of applications based on staff recommendations and strategic considerations.

Compliance and Eligibility Review:

OCS Staff conduct a Compliance Review to determine if an application meets the requirements published in this *Notice*. Reviewing for eligibility ensures only the applications that are eligible for award are reviewed. However, determinations of eligibility can take place at any point during the application review and selection process. Applicants that are determined to be ineligible will not receive an award.

Post-Review Quality Control: After the initial review process is complete, AmeriCorps staff will review the results for fairness and consistency. Some applications may be selected for a Quality Control assessment.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment: AmeriCorps staff will evaluate the risks posed by each applicant to assess an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to assessment of the applicant's eligibility and the quality of its application based on the Selection Criteria. Results from this assessment will inform funding decisions. If AmeriCorps determines that an award will be made to an applicant with assessed risks, special conditions that correspond to the degree of assessed risk may be applied.

In evaluating risks, AmeriCorps may consider some of the following criteria:

Due Diligence:

- federal debt delinquency
- suspension and debarment
- information available through 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)
 - "Do Not Pay"
- 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 information from the applicant organization's website

AmeriCorps may use the results of the review of the risk assessment evaluation in determining which applications to fund. If AmeriCorps concludes that the reasons for applicants having poor risk assessment evaluations are not likely to be mitigated, those applications may not be selected for funding.

Clarification Process

As a result of the review, prior to OCS submission to AmeriCorps, and again after submission to AmeriCorps, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to the application including changes to the budget, narratives, or performance measures. This information is used in making final recommendations. Failure to respond to OCS/AmeriCorps clarification requests in a timely manner may result in the removal of application from consideration. Applications may be approved for funding with or without clarification requests.

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Depending on availability of funding, AmeriCorps expects that successful State Commissions will be notified no later than January, contingent on appropriations. Applicants will be notified by OCS as to funding determination. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. A formal *Notice of Grant Award* will be produced and then the state contracting process is 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](#).

Official Guidance

All AmeriCorps active Guidance is available on the agency's Guidance webpage:

<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.

Requests for Monitoring or Payment Integrity Information

AmeriCorps may randomly select and request documentation from recipients in order to monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the [Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019](#). Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on manual hold, reimbursement only status, or other remedies may be applied as appropriate.

AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this Notice will be subject to the FY 2022 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2022 AmeriCorps State and National Specific Terms and Conditions. These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. AmeriCorps General and Program Specific Terms and Conditions are 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. Programs are encouraged to minimize barriers to service without putting their program beneficiaries at genuine risk.

Planning Grant Applicants are exempt from the NSCHC Requirements but should be aware of them for planning purposes. Successfully awarded applicants will be trained on NSCHC by AmeriCorps and Commission staff as part of the planning process. Full requirements and guidance on how to conduct NSCHC can be found at <https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check>.

Use of Material

To ensure materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, OCS 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

Recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time.

Planning grantees are required to provide four progress reports based on performance periods, more information on progress reporting can be found at: <https://serve.mt.gov/ameriCorps/program-directors/>. Grantees are also required to submit monthly and semi-annual financial reports. A final financial report is due at the end of the grant.

AGENCY CONTACTS

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Joe Naiman-Sessions, Program Officer
406.444.5547 joe.naiman-sessions@mt.gov

Keena Irby, Fiscal Officer
406.444.1809 keena.irby@mt.gov

General email: serve@mt.gov

OTHER INFORMATION

Technical Assistance

OCS will host technical assistance calls to answer questions about the funding opportunity and eGrants.

AmeriCorps strongly encourages all applicants to participate in these sessions. Call-in information for the technical assistance calls is on the OCS Grants website.

In addition to consulting the Application Instructions, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and AmeriCorps regulations, applicants are encouraged to consult the ServeMontana website for updated materials during the RFP period.

Re-Focusing Funding

AmeriCorps/OCS reserve the right to refocus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Public Burden Statement

Public reporting burden for collection of information under this Notice of Funding is estimated to average six 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 CFR 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

The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C 552a) requires that OCS notify applicants that 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.

OCS and AmeriCorps reserves the right to adjust or make changes to the review process, if unforeseen challenges or urgent circumstances make it impossible, impracticable, or inefficient to conduct the review process as planned. Any adjustments or changes will not affect the selection criteria used to assess applications.

Appendix A: General AmeriCorps Planning Grant Requirements

To be accomplished and documented during the planning grant award period.

Organization Capability

Ensure Adequate Organization Capability

- Leadership and oversight for program and within organization (e.g. Advisory Committee/Board)
- Financial Management systems
 - Financial and accounts procedure manual
 - Plans for securing match
 - Accounting program required to manage AmeriCorps funding
- Policies and procedures
- Staff members working on the program and roles
- Position description for program staff
- Capacity to develop Policy & Procedures and implement National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC)

Define and Document Community Needs

- Problem to be addressed is a true need of the community
- Local data to support the need
- Community benefit

Identify Supporting Documentation for Evidence Informed/Based Service Intervention

- Evidence Informed (see Mandatory Supplemental Information) are supported by best available :
 - Knowledge
 - Non-rigorous research
 - Evaluation of other similar program designs
 - Past performance measurement data
- Evidence Based (see Mandatory Supplemental Information) are supported by:
 - Matches “Same Intervention” definition of another rigorously evaluated (Randomized Control Trial or Quasi-Experimental Design) project
 - Intervention has been evaluated using rigorous methods
- Proposed Program Design
 - National/Montana Priority Areas
 - Member Structure (Number of Members and Slot Types)
 - Program Service Year defined (10-month, 8-months...)
 - Participation in National Service Days

Identify Partners and Service Locations

- Current partners and past relationships
- Collaboration with local faith based and or small community-based organizations
- Service site identification with national service
- Member supervision strategy
- Site supervisor training strategy
- Commitment letters from potential host sites

Develop Logic Model and Identify Performance Measures

- Develop logic model as per AmeriCorps definition
- National Performance Measures (*alignment with logic model*)
 - Outputs
 - Outcomes
 - Data collection policies, procedures, and tools

Member Recruitment and Management

Program Systems in Place

- Policy and procedure manual including all member procedures, along with programmatic policies and procedures

Develop Member Position Descriptions in compliance with AmeriCorps

- Minimum requirements and characteristics
- Primary/secondary duties

Member Recruitment

- Recruitment plan
- AmeriCorps National Recruitment webpage
- Diversity within the program, recruitment from locations where the service occurs
- Inclusivity, members with disabilities and reasonable accommodation

Member Orientation & Training

- Member onboarding plan and procedures, including NSCHC
- Training for members (program orientation, service site orientation, ongoing) including:
 - Policy and procedures
 - Member time keeping
 - National Identity to AmeriCorps and storytelling tips
 - Life after AmeriCorps
- Affiliation with AmeriCorps, training and issuance of official service gear

Service Site/Community Partner Plan/Fiscal Agent

Service Site

- Service site recruitment plan
- Site supervisor position description
- Orientation and ongoing training plan for service sites, supervisors, and staff
 - Justification for the number of members placed at a site
- Site visit plan for ensuring compliance at host sites

Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement

- Service Site agreements
 - Outline responsibilities
 - Policy and procedure expectations
 - Member placement
 - Fiscal responsibilities; example Financial support from sites; cash and in-kind match

Member Application, Interview, and Selection

- Application packet to distribute to interested persons
- Screening and interview process

- Final selection of members
- Matching members to host sites

Member Supervision

- Plans for convening members on a regular basis
- Member evaluation materials and procedures for:
 - Mid-term evaluation
 - End of term evaluation
- Plans and materials for visiting service sites

Manuals and Tracking Instruments

- Member handbook for each service location
- Member service agreement that includes the required items in the grant Terms and Conditions
 - Position description
 - Term type and dates
 - Drug free workplace policy
 - Discipline, suspension, and termination policy
 - Grievance procedure
 - High School Diploma, equivalency, or agreement to obtain prior to using Education Award

Procedure to assure the program obtains the required documentation

- Signatures
- Health care enrollment/waiver
- Media/photo release
- Childcare benefit (as applicable)
- Tax forms
- Member’s eligibility to serve

Public Outreach Plan

- Plan to increase awareness and educate the community about the program
- Program website and brochures
- Develop standard messaging about program that includes AmeriCorps and identifies as service

Sustainability Plan

- Plan for non-AmeriCorps, community volunteer generation, training, and management for:
 - Episodic (event based/one time)
 - Recurring volunteers
- Current relationship with funders such as foundations and corporations
- Plans for the next three to five years
- Plans for the program to continue if AmeriCorps resources are cut