Montana AmeriCorps State FFY2023 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; administered and overseen 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.

Purpose of AmeriCorps 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 are intended to support staff, travel, and other allowable expenses to plan an operational AmeriCorps State program and then apply for a program grant. Planning Grants do not provide service positions.

Funds may be available to *new* applicants to increase AmeriCorps programs statewide by applying for a one-year planning grant. Planning grants provide 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; developing and aligning policies, procedures, manuals, and 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.

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 and the Montana Community Service Act of 1994 (MCA 90-14-103). Under the Montana Commission on Community Service, ServeMontana 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 poverty not currently served by AmeriCorps
- ✓ Clearly connect proposed activities to the needs and priorities in the [Montana State Service Plan](#)
- ✓ Collaborative approach to program planning, design, and 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 2023 [Montana AmeriCorps Formula Operating Program Notice of Funding Available.](#)

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.](#) 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 applicant.

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

Keena Irby, OCS 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.

CONTENTS

Associated Documents

The following documents are referenced throughout this *Notice*.

- Mandatory Supplemental Information
- Montana Planning Grant Application & Performance Measure Instructions
- Planning Grant Letter of Intent Template
- Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)
- Readiness Self-Assessment
- Budget Worksheet

TIMELINE

Mar. 9, 2023,	**Pre-Notice Training and Technical Assistance Call, 11 a.m., Register at:** https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtcO2sqTopEteyHonlxHwC_EdD5oyhp_zp
Mar. 10, 2023	**Letter of Intent and Associated Documents Due 5p.m. MST,** email to serve@mt.gov

- Letter of Intent (LOI)
- Readiness Self-Assessment
- Organizational Chart
- Strategic Plan
- PDF of current SAM registration & UEI, https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1
- Documentation of Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate, *if applicable*
- Most Recent Single Audit (as applicable per 2 CFR 200.501)

Mar. 27, 2023	**Official posting of the *Notice***
Mar. 30, 2023,	**Technical Assistance Call, 11 a.m., Register at:** https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctdOmgrDgjHNVkEuoAvnbQGTcyQs_l592b
Apr. 3-6, 2023	**Written Technical assistance period*** Submit questions via email to serve@mt.gov.
Apr. 20, 2023	**Application Due Date by 5pm Mountain Time**

- Complete Application, submitted in eGrants
  https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp
- Additional Documents, submitted via email to serve@mt.gov (See Page 12)
- AmeriCorps Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)

May 4, 2023	**Formula Operating & Planning Grant Review Workgroup Meeting**
May 11, 2023	**Special Meeting of the Commission on Community Service**
May 15-18, 2023	**State of Montana Applicant clarification period** – All recommended applicants
May 18, 2023	**Clarified applications resubmitted in eGrants by 5pm Mountain Time**
Summer 2023	**Applicants notified of funding determination; AmeriCorps Clarification and Resolution**
August 2023	**Awards issued to successful applicants**

*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/americorps/americorps-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 program focus, intended outcomes, and included program design. Proposing a planning activity 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 programs that make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Tribal Nations, with cultural competency.
- 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.

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, and to achieve the goals laid out in AmeriCorps' Strategic Plan (2022-2026), 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, including 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.

- <u>Healthy Futures</u> Supporting health needs within communities, including mitigating the impacts of COVID-19, access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity, especially in underserved communities.
- <u>Veterans and Military Families</u> Improving the quality of life of veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors.

Performance Measures

Planning Grant applicants required to include performance measures in order to submit the application. Specific instructions to complete the module are in *Attachment A of the Application Instructions.*

ELIGIBILITY, TYPES OF APPLICANTS, 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
- States and US Territories
- Institutions of higher education
- Local governments
- Nonprofit organizations

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 until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the SAM Quick Guide for Grantees. <u>UEI is generated as part of the SAM registration process.</u> 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.

<u>AmeriCorps will not make awards to entities that do not have a valid active SAM registration, Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and Employer Identification Number (EIN). Applications must include the EIN, UEI, and the Applicant Name and Physical Address must match SAM.gov Legal Name and Physical Address exactly.</u> Applicants must use "Edit Organization's Attributes" module in "My Account" area of the eGrants home screen to enter UEI, EIN numbers and to update the address. These entries will populate the Application's 424 Facesheet. If the applicant's name does not exactly match the SAM.gov Legal Entity Name, contact the OCS Program Officer.

Types of Applicants

<u>Single State Applicants:</u> Organizations proposing planning activities only 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. See Mandatory Supplemental Information for applicant descriptions.

<u>Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Montana</u>

Indian Tribes and tribal organizations controlled, authorized, and chartered by Indian Tribes proposing planning activities only in Montana are eligible to apply to this *Notice* or may apply directly to AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants National Direct Opportunities. If interested in pursuing an AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grant, please reach out to the OCS Program Officer for more information. 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 are encouraged to apply to this Montana Formula Planning Grant *Notice*. Organizations proposing new planning activities and who have previously received AmeriCorps or Corporation for National and Community Service funding, have experienced difficulties accessing the Organizations eGrants account or have not been able to create a new application. In either instance, please contact the Program Officer to have the issue resolved.

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 Program Grant Notice of Funding Available.

Minimum Thresholds for All Applications

Applications must meet all threshold requirements. If threshold requirements are not met without justification, the application may be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed.

- All applicants should budget for travel to the Serve Montana Symposium in Helena for staff and members. Symposium takes place annually in March.
  - Budget Section 1 C. Staff Travel includes mileage to and from Helena and 2-3 nights lodging (depending on distance) at the organization's travel policy rate or state rate if applicant does not have a travel policy.
- All applicants should budget for the online AmeriCorps Training Platform On3Learn AmeriCorps Planning Grant Annual Subscription.
  - Budget Section 1. G. Staff Training at $1,500.
- Applicants may choose to budget staff travel and staff training for at least one pertinent program and one fiscal staff to attend the America's Service Commission's National Service Training (location to be determined). National Service Training is typically 3 days with 2 to 3 nights hotel stay.
  - Budget Section 1 C. Staff Travel includes $750 airfare, meals minus 3 lunches, and $175 per night hotel stay for 2-3 nights.
  - Budget Section 1 G. Staff Training includes $300 event registration

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 that propose 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 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

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

Estimated Award Amount

Awards for planning grants may not exceed $100,000. 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 September 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 are awarded on a line-item cost reimbursement basis and are not renewable. 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 must generate 24% match. 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.

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. OCS requires documented permission allowing for funds to be used as match from the non-AmeriCorps federal entity.

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. Methods must be applied consistently across all Federal awards. Applicants that have a Federal negotiated indirect cost rate or that use 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, subgrantees may request prior approval from OCS to charge the following expenses to the grant prior to the project period:

- Staff time and benefits
- Supplies

These expenses must be submitted for reimbursement with the first financial report.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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. *Previously Awarded AmeriCorps State grant applicants, including planning grants and are requesting a New Project application, must request OCS 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 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. 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 account or preparing or submitting the application, contact the AmeriCorps Hotline at 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 continue working with the AmeriCorps Hotline to submit the application via eGrants.

Content and Form of Application

In eGrants, enter the following components of a complete application:

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

Application Package

Information necessary to apply is accessible 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 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.
- o 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.
- o 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

Planning Grant Applicants must notify OCS of their intent to apply **by Friday March 10, 2023.** Entities intending to submit an application must submit the following by email it to serve@mt.gov:

- Letter of Intent (LOI) utilizing the template available on the Montana Formula Program Grant Webpage
- Readiness Self-Assessment
- Organizational Chart
- Current Strategic Plan
- PDF of SAM.gov certification and Universal Entity Identifier, https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1
- Current indirect rate cost agreement, *if applicable*
- Most Recent Single Audit (as applicable per 2 CFR 200.501)

Application Package

Applications are due in eGrants and Additional Documents emailed to serve@mt.gov **by Thursday April 20, 2023, by 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 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:

- Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS) in a MS Word file
- Two letters of support
- Organizational Chart (If not submitted with Letter of Intent)
- Current Strategic Plan (If not submitted with Letter of Intent)
- PDF of SAM.gov certification and Universal Entity Identifier (If not submitted with Letter of Intent)
- Current indirect rate cost agreement (If applicable and not submitted with Letter of Intent)
- Readiness Self-Assessment (If not submitted with Letter of Intent)
- Federal debt delinquency (if applicable)
- Current Single Audit (If applicable per 2 CFR 200.501, and not submitted with Letter of Intent)

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 that should be attached to 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
- 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)"

Attachments to emails should be individually saved files. Each file must include a header or title within the body of the file that includes the legal applicant's name and application ID number.

Tribal Sanctioning Resolution Additional Documents

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

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 AmeriCorps Hotline
- any information provided to the applicant by the AmeriCorps 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 AmeriCorps 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.

Technical Assistance

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

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.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR NEW PLANNING GRANT APPLICANTS

Each applicant must describe a project to deploy AmeriCorps members to effectively meet significant community need(s). OCS urges applicants to submit high quality applications that follow the *Notice* and the Application Instructions. Application and budget quality are key factors in determining the funding recommendation. Applications should be based in evidence *and include in line citations*; reviewers will not review any documents external to the application.

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

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	COMMUNITY NEED	15
	RATIONALE & APPROACH	15
	PLANNING PROCESS	15
	NOTICE PRIORITY	5
Organizational Capability	ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND AND STAFFING	25
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 a planning grant in the AmeriCorps Focus Area of [list Focus Area]. At the end of the planning period, [Name of the organization] will be responsible for developing an AmeriCorps intervention that will result in [anticipated outcome/benefit and for whom]. Additionally, the organization will learn about AmeriCorps grant and financial management. 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 describes a community need, documented with relevant data, and how it is prevalent in communities where AmeriCorps intervention is being planned to be deployed.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community need will be further explored and defined.

RATIONALE & APPROACH (15 points)

- The applicant clearly describes why they are applying for a planning grant and what they intend to achieve during the planning period.
- Describe how an AmeriCorps intervention could serve to help you address the identified community need, and why an AmeriCorps intervention may be the best solution to address the community need.

Planning Process & Timeline (15 points)

The applicant describes a clear and logical planning process, including:

- An assessment of community members, partner organizations, and stakeholders in the planning process.
- A clear description of how the planning period will be used to develop the necessary components to effectively manage an AmeriCorps intervention in the future. A detailed description of these components, that aligns with OCS' planning timeline, can be found in Appendix A: Montana AmeriCorps Planning Grant Performance Periods, Guidance, and Deliverables.

Notice Priority (5 points)

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2023 Montana funding priorities outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section.

Logic Model (0 points)

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

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Organizational Background and Staffing (25 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 its experience, staffing, and management structure to plan the proposed intervention.
- Describe how the person(s) who will conduct the planning process are sufficiently qualified, or if they are not yet identified, describe the preferred or desired qualifications.
- 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 addressing the identified community need.
- 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.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (25 POINTS TOTAL)

Only enter "See budget" in the narrative box. Any other narrative will not be reviewed.

Reviewers will review the budget and budget narrative against the following criteria:

- Budget complies with the Minimum Thresholds 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 to the application criteria.

- Source of Funds should match the total amount in budget narrative exactly, and follows the directions in the Application Instructions page 14 (for each source designate if the match is secured or proposed; type of classification: cash or in-kind; source type: Private, Federal, State/Local).

Staff will conduct a "budget check" on the application's budget and budget narrative to ensure compliance with the Application Instructions (See Attachment 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 cleared through this process will be sent to AmeriCorps for final funding determination. The review process will consist of:

- OCS staff reviews application for completeness including Letter of Intent, Additional Documents, and Audit Report as applicable, Minimum Thresholds and other requirements as articulated in this *Notice*. 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 consensus scores, ranking, and a funding recommendation.
- Funding recommendations are 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, 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 assessment 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 Operating Program Continuation requests
2	Unawarded Montana State Competitive Operating Programs
3	New/Recompete Formula Operating Program applicants currently administering AmeriCorps Programs or Planning in Montana
4	New Formula Planning Applicants
5	New Formula Operating 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.

OCS 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

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.

Resolution Process

As a result of the review, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide resolution information and/or make changes to the application including the budget. This information is used by AmeriCorps staff in making final funding determination. Applications may be recommended for funding with or without a Resolution request. Failure to respond to AmeriCorps/OCS requests for additional information in response to Resolution items in a timely fashion may result in the removal of application from consideration.

Pre-Award Risk Assessment

AmeriCorps staff will 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
AmeriCorps is committed to transparency in grant-making. A list of all approved applications for new and re-competing applications will be published on AmeriCorps Funded Grants within 90 business days after all grants are awarded.

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

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

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

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 2023 to State Commissions, contingent on the availability of congressional appropriations. Applicants will then be notified by OCS 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 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 2023 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2023 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 AmeriCorps 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.

Planning Grant Applicants are exempt from the NSCHC Requirements but should be aware of them for planning purposes. Successfully Awarded Applicants should still perform organizational background check policies for any staff hired in the process of planning and 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.

Official Guidance

All AmeriCorps active 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, 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 periodic progress reports, more information on progress reporting can be found at: https://serve.mt.gov/americorps/program-directors/. Grantees are also required to submit monthly 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
Program Officer: 406.444.5547 joe.naiman-sessions@mt.gov
Fiscal Officer: 406.444.1809 keena.irby@mt.gov
General email: serve@mt.gov

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 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)

This document is intended to be a helpful guide however does not cover everything, be sure to read and ask questions so we can be partners in success, thank you!

Planning Period 1: 9/1 to 12/31

Programmatic Deliverables
- Review AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions: reread grant and budget, ask questions
- Begin Needs Assessment, strategy, content, audience, timeline, open for data collection
- Need & Intervention: Identify research, evidence, and planning documents
- Service Foundation Building and Networking: Local & statewide partners scoping, outreach, engagement
- Have appropriate staff read the State Service Plan

Fiscal Deliverables
- Review Periodic Expense Report and compare to budget
- Develop and/or refine existing Fiscal Management Systems to include federal and nonfederal accounts
- In-kind match policy if applicable

Reporting
- Periodic Expense Reports (PER) due monthly. See first tab of the PER for introduction

OCS Scheduled meetings
- Planning Grant OCS Open Office Hours and TTA Calls: see Montana AmeriCorps Basecamp Calendar
- Commission Meeting: October & December, see OCS website Commission page
- Competitive Grant Review (highly recommended): see Montana AmeriCorps Competitive Grant website

Double Check! Verify the contract with OCS is complete and that your organization has sent in the Authorized Signature Sheet and Certificate of Insurance

Planning Period 2: 1/1 to 3/31

Programmatic Deliverables
- Program feasibility: Analyze needs assessment data collection and assess if AC is the resource to meet identified need(s) and how
- Theory of Change & Logic Model: review requirements to hone intervention and program design
- Develop program design. How many members are needed, for how long, and where?
- Service site recruitment plan, site supervisor training outcomes
- Review AmeriCorps Performance Measurement and program alignment
- Performance Measurement and Data Collection
- Read about National Service Criminal History Checks aka NSCHC

Fiscal Deliverables

- Program Match Plan, Tracking and Requirements Plan for generating match of proposed operating grant

Reporting

- Progress report for Performance Period ending 12/31 due 1/20
- Periodic Expense Reports (PER) see first tab of the PER for introduction and monthly due dates.

Scheduled meetings

- Planning Grant OCS Open Office Hours and TTA Calls: see Montana AmeriCorps Basecamp Calendar
- ServeMontana Symposium in Helena: visit OCS website for details
- Montana Commission on Community Service Meeting: typically first day of ServeMontana Symposium

Think ahead! Schedule an Operating Program Consultation with OCS to discuss why or why not to apply.

Begin to outline the Program Grant Application begin writing if applicable.

Planning Period 3: 4/1 to 6/30

Programmatic Deliverables

- Draft Member Position Descriptions & read about the My AmeriCorps
  - Member Recruitment and Selection Plan
  - Member Enrollment Policy and Procedure
- Service site training and compliance plan
  - Site visits
  - Site support and management
  - Develop site supervisor training plan and timeline
- Operating Program National Service Criminal History Check Policy and Procedure - draft
- Program Compliance Plan

Fiscal Deliverables

- Member Service Hours Tracking Plan, what else? Ask questions, please!

Reporting

- Progress report for Performance Period ending 3/31 due 4/20
- Periodic Expense Report (PER) due monthly, included Federal Financial Report (FFR) ending March 31

Scheduled meetings

- Planning Grant OCS Open Office Hours and TTA Calls: see Montana AmeriCorps Basecamp Calendar
- Montana Commission on Community Service Meeting: June, TBD

If your organization is not applying for or was not recommended to receive an Operating Program grant, schedule a consultation with OCS on next steps. Future planning periods elements may no longer apply.

Planning Period 4: 7/1 to 8/31

Programmatic Deliverables, if applicable

- Member & Multisite Management
  - Member Service Agreement
  - Member Training Plan (Orientation, ServeMontana Symposium, Mid-year training, Close of Service, Other Program Specific Trainings)
  - AmeriCorps Branding: Service Gear, Program website

- ▪ Actively recruiting members (if 9/1 start)

Fiscal Deliverables
- Member Service Hour Tracking System/tools

Key Due Dates
- Progress report for Performance Period ending 6/30 due 7/20
- Periodic Expense Report (PER) due monthly

Scheduled meetings
- Planning Grant OCS Open Office Hours and TTA Calls: see Montana AmeriCorps Basecamp Calendar
- Montana Program Director Convening, typically second week in August in Helena

Grant Closeout

- Progress report for Performance Period ending 8/31 due 9/20 if applicable
- Federal Fiscal Report (FFR) due upon closeout
- Close out forms on OCS website