
Month One – Why do you want to write an AmeriCorps* State Grant?

From 2009 AmeriCorps Application Instructions:

Whether your proposal describes and adequately documents a compelling need within the target community, including a description of how you identified the need;

The extent to which your proposed program or project:

- (i) Effectively involves the target community in planning and implementation;
- (ii) Builds on (without duplicating), or reflects collaboration with, other national and community service programs supported by the Corporation;

Compelling Community Need:

- Describe the community need that you will address within the target community.
- Why did you select this need as your focus?
- How did you identify the need?
- Provide documentation of the need.
- **If your program will operate at multiple sites**, demonstrate a need in each community you propose to serve.

NOTES:

Helpful Hints, Tips and Resources

Assess Community Needs and Resources:

Outline for Assessing Community Needs and Resources

1. Describe the makeup and history of the community to provide a context within which to collect data on its current concerns.
 - a. Comment on the types of information that best describes the community (e.g., demographic, historical, political, civic participation, key leaders, past concerns, geographic, assets)
 - b. Describe the sources (e.g., city hall, maps, phone book, library, newspaper) of information
 - c. Comment on whether there are sufficient resources (e.g., time, personnel, resources) available to collect this information
 - d. Comment on the methods (e.g., key leader interviews, observation, ethnography, windshield tour) used to collect the descriptive information
 - e. Assess the quality of the information
 - f. Describe the strengths and problems you heard about
2. Describe what matters to local people
 - a. Discuss how you arranged to listen to community leaders and members
 - b. Describe who you listened to and why
 - c. Discuss the methods (e.g., listening sessions, public forums, interviews, concerns surveys, focus groups, ethnography, interviews) you used to listen to the community

- d. Illustrate the issues of concern to people in the community
 - 1. Explain how important these issues are to citizens
 - 2. Express how satisfied citizens are with community efforts on the issues
 - 3. List priorities based on issues of high importance and low satisfaction
- e. Describe barriers or resistance to solving the problem
- f. Describe the resources available to problem solving efforts
- f. Tell of possible solutions and alternatives suggested by the community
- 3. Describe the needs identified by community stakeholders (optional)
 - a. Indicate the target populations and subgroups
 - b. Specify who the stakeholders are
 - c. Describe what they wanted to know
 - 1. List the questions you asked
 - d. Describe the methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, secondary information, small group discussion) you used to gather information
 - 1. If you used a survey, describe the sampling method
 - e. Describe the limitations of the needs assessment
- 4. Compile and describe the evidence suggesting that identified issues should be a priority
 - a. Describe the community level indicators -- those incidence or prevalence levels of behavior or events that relate to the issues of concern (e.g. if joblessness is an issue in the community, you may want to collect information on the unemployment rate and the rate of job creation in the community)
 - b. Explain how frequently it occurs
 - c. Illustrate how many people are affected by it and in what severity
 - d. Discuss how feasible attempting to solve it is
 - e. Explain the possible impact and/or consequences of solving it
- 5. Describe the resources available in or to the community that help address this issue
 - a. Indicate what and where the resources are. Express how we identify and tap into those attributes that could help facilitate the process.
 - b. Indicate who the community leaders are. Describe the individuals and organizations that influence the community.
 - c. Describe how the networks are organized. Explain how you can build on already existing networks and effectively foster new ones.
 - d. Depict the community projects currently in progress. Analyze and discuss what this tells us about where the community is invested and how they might be involved in the future.

Source: The Community Toolbox web site located at <http://ctb.ku.edu/about/>

Month Two – Building Community Partnerships

From the 2009 AmeriCorps Application Instructions:

Community Involvement:

- Describe how you involved the target community (or target communities) in identifying the needs and activities. Which community partners and stakeholders were involved? What roles did they play, and what were their responsibilities in the planning process?
- Explain how you will continue to engage your community partners and stakeholders throughout the three year program period. What will be their ongoing roles and responsibilities?

Web Sites of interest – please understand that the KCCVS can not be responsible for the content of these web sites. We have provided these links for your information only.

<http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_building

<http://communityx-roads.org/about/>

<http://www.community4me.com/communitybldg1.html>

<http://www.orgnet.com/BuildingNetworks.pdf>

NOTES:

Month Three – Can your organization handle a complicated federal grant?

From the 2009 AmeriCorps Application Instructions:

D. Organizational Capability

Criteria

§ 2522.430 How does the Corporation assess my organizational capability? (25%)

(a) In evaluating your organizational capability, the Corporation considers the following:

(1) The extent to which your organization has a sound structure including:

(i) The ability to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight;

(ii) Well-defined roles for your board of directors, administrators, and staff;

(iii) A well-designed plan or systems for organizational (as opposed to program) self-assessment and continuous improvement; and

(iv) The ability to provide or secure effective technical assistance.

(2) Whether your organization has a sound record of accomplishment as an organization, including the extent to which you:

(i) Generate and support diverse volunteers who increase your organization's capacity;

(ii) Demonstrate leadership within the organization and the community served; and

(iii) If you are an existing grantee, you have secured the matching resources as reflected in your prior grant awards;

(3) The extent to which you are securing community support that recurs, expands in scope, or increases in amount, and is more diverse, as evidenced by—

(i) Collaborations that increase the quality and reach of service and include well-defined roles for faith-based and other community organizations;

(ii) Local financial and in-kind contributions; and

(iii) Supporters who represent a wide range of community stakeholders.

(b) In applying the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section to each proposal, the Corporation may take into account the following circumstances of individual organizations:

(1) The age of your organization and its rate of growth; and

(2) Whether your organization serves a resource-poor community, such as a rural or remote community, a community with a high poverty rate, or a community with a scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources.

Recommendations on Addressing the Criteria

Sound Organizational Structure

Ability to Provide Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight:

- Provide a brief history of your organization. What year was your organization established? Describe your organization's experience in the proposed areas of activity and your experience operating and overseeing a program comparable to the one proposed. Include specific examples of your prior accomplishments and outcomes. Describe your capacity to manage a federal grant and to provide on site monitoring of the financial and other systems required to administer an AmeriCorps grant. If you are proposing a multi-site program:
 - Explain how you are able to support and oversee service sites.
 - Describe your process for selecting service sites and ensuring they have adequate programmatic and financial capabilities. How will your site selection process incorporate the criteria required by the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2522.475 (quality, innovation, sustainability, quality of leadership, past performance, community involvement), and the special considerations found in 45 CFR § 2522.450 (program models, program activities, and programs supporting distressed communities)?
 - What are your current or previous programmatic and funding relationships with the sites?
 - Describe your plans for monitoring site compliance with fiscal and programmatic requirements.
 - How will you develop connections among the sites through common program elements or activities to ensure that your overall mission and vision for the AmeriCorps program is maintained at each site?

Board of Directors, Administrators, and Staff:

- Describe your organization's management and staff structure and how the board of directors (if applicable), administrators, and staff members will be used to support your program.
- Identify the key program and fiscal positions responsible for your proposed program. Describe the relevant background and experience of all staff members working on the project and their respective roles, or your plans to recruit, select, train, and support additional staff, and their roles.\

Plan for Self-Assessment or Improvement:

How does your organization conduct ongoing internal assessment and improvement of its overall—not program-specific—systems, structure, staffing, and other capacities to ensure that it remains sound and well managed?

Plan for Effective Technical Assistance:

- How do you plan to provide or secure any needed financial and programmatic technical assistance for your program, and if applicable, your service sites? What are your plans for providing financial and programmatic orientation, and training and technical assistance to your program and service sites?
- Explain how you will identify and respond to your programs' and, if applicable, your service sites' ongoing training and technical assistance needs.

Sound Record of Accomplishment as an Organization

Volunteer Generation and Support:

Describe how your organization recruits and supports a diverse group of volunteers to increase your own organizational capacity.

Organizational and Community Leadership:

Provide examples of how you have demonstrated leadership as an organization and in the community you serve. For example, describe awards received by the organization or individuals within the organization, public positions of leadership such as staff serving on other community boards, or participation in community events, task forces, and other community activities.

Current Grantees Only: Success in Securing Match Resources

Describe your successes and challenges in securing match resources during your current three-year grant cycle and, if applicable, during the period of previous awards.

Success in Securing Community Support

Collaboration:

Describe any collaborations you have developed that increase the quality and reach of services you provide. What roles have community organizations, including faith-based organizations, played in these collaborations?

Local Financial and In-kind Contributions:

Discuss examples of how local contributions have continued over time, expanded in scope, increased in amount, or become more diverse.

Wide Range of Community Stakeholders:

Describe community stakeholders in your organization. How has non-financial support from your community stakeholders continued over time, expanded in scope, increased in amount, or become more diverse?

Special Circumstances:

In applying the organizational capability criteria to each proposal, reviewers may also take into account the following circumstances of individual organizations:

- The age of your organization and its rate of growth.

- Whether your organization serves a resource-poor community, such as a rural or remote community, a community with a high poverty rate, or a community with a scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources.

If you feel that any of the circumstances stated above have an impact on your organizational capability that has not already been discussed, please describe.

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Month Four – How is this proposed program going to function and what will be accomplished?

From the 2009 AmeriCorps Application Instructions:

Whether your proposal includes well-designed activities that address the compelling need, with ambitious performance measures, and a plan or system for continuous program self-assessment and improvement;

(3) Whether your proposal describes well-defined roles for participants that are aligned with the identified needs and that lead to measurable outputs and outcomes; and

Description of Activities and Member Roles:

- Describe the activities you propose to address the need.
- What will be the member's roles in these activities, and how do the member roles relate to addressing the need as distinct from staff or volunteer roles? Discuss your program structure including number of members, where members will serve (for example, at the applicant organization or at local service sites). How do the types of member slots you are requesting (for example, full-time, half-time, quarter-time, etc.) align with the program design and activities? See Budget Instructions on page 25 for a chart that lists slot types, minimum hours served, and minimum and maximum living allowance.
- How will your plan for member development, training, and supervision contribute to achieving your desired outcomes?
- How will you ensure that members comply with rules on prohibited service activities? See 45 CFR § 2520.45, 45 CFR § 2520.65 and the AmeriCorps grant provisions for a list of prohibited service activities.
- How will receiving an AmeriCorps grant add value to your existing service activities?

Measurable Outputs and Outcomes:

- Describe the measurable outputs and outcomes you expect to achieve as a result of your activities.
- What systems will you use to track these outputs and outcomes?
- **Note:** You will develop more detailed performance measures in eGrants, including what you will measure, how they will be measured, your targets for each year, and the data you will gather, during the post-review clarification period.

B. Member Outputs and Outcomes

Criteria

(b) *Member outputs and outcomes (20%).* In evaluating how your proposal addresses member outputs and outcomes, the Corporation considers the extent to which your proposal or program:

- (1) Includes effective and feasible plans for, or evidence of, recruiting, managing, and rewarding diverse members, including those from the target community, and demonstrating member satisfaction;
- (2) If you are a current grantee, has succeeded in meeting reasonable member enrollment and retention targets in prior grant periods, as determined by the Corporation;
- (3) Includes effective and feasible plans for, or evidence of, developing, training, and supervising members;
- (4) Demonstrates well-designed training or service activities that promote and sustain post-service, an ethic of service and civic responsibility, including structured opportunities for members to reflect on and learn from their service; and
- (5) If you are a current grantee, has met well-defined, performance measures regarding AmeriCorps members, including any applicable national performance measures, and including outputs and outcomes.

Recommendations on Addressing the Criteria

Member Recruitment and Support:

- Describe your plans for recruiting members for your program. What criteria will you use to select your members, including specific qualifications, characteristics, or backgrounds? What are your

plans to ensure that your corps is diverse and includes members from the communities to be served?

- How will you assess member satisfaction? Describe your plan for providing incentives to members including opportunities for skill-building, professional development, education, activities promoting esprit de corps, member recognition, and rewards. What are your strategies to ensure that members complete their term of service (retention)?
- **Tutoring programs only:**
Describe how your strategy for recruiting and selecting members complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications. Members who tutor must have a high school diploma, or a higher degree, or pass a proficiency test that the program has determined is effective in ensuring that members tutoring have the necessary skills to achieve program goals.

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