AmeriCorps 101
AmeriCorps 101: Introduction to AmeriCorps

Introduction to AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs engaging more than 50,000 Americans in intensive service to meet critical needs in:

- Education
- Public safety
- Health
- The environment

AmeriCorps members serve through more than 2,100 non-profit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations. They tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters.

Created in 1993, AmeriCorps is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which also oversees Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America. Together these programs engage more than 2 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in public service each year.

Landmarks of Service in America

1933: Civilian Conservation Corps

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps. Four million young people joined in response to this call to service, restoring the nation’s parks, supporting themselves and their families, and revitalizing the nation’s economy.

1940s: G.I. Bill

The G.I. Bill linked wartime service to educational benefits, offering returning WWII veterans the opportunity to pursue higher education in partial compensation for service to their country.

1960s: Peace Corps

The Peace Corps was established in the 1960s by President John F. Kennedy. The Peace Corps continues to this day to engage thousands of volunteers who travel the world building schools, helping farmers provide food to the hungry, and creating hospitals to care for the sick.

1964: Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

President Lyndon Johnson brought the spirit of the Peace Corps home to America by creating VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). VISTA, which is
now part of AmeriCorps, continues to fund programs under the sponsorship of local public agencies or non-profit organizations to improve the condition of people living in under-served, low-income communities throughout America.

1960s and 1970s: Foster Grandparent Program, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Senior Companion Program

These programs were developed in order to engage older Americans in the work of improving the nation.

1990: National and Community Service Act

President George H.W. Bush helped spark a revival of interest in national service when he instituted the White House Office of National Service in 1989. In 1990, Congress passed the National and Community Service Act, which created a Commission on National and Community Service, whose mission was “to renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the U.S.” Full implementation began in 1992 when the commission awarded $64 million in grants to support state and local community service efforts.

1993: National and Community Service Trust Act

President Bill Clinton re-authorized the National and Community Service Trust Act, a revision of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which created a new Federal agency, The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS administers three federally-funded national service programs: Learn and Serve America; National Senior Service Corps; and, AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps was designed to support local, state, and national organizations across the nation that engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service that achieves direct and demonstrable results.

AmeriCorps Participants, known as members, serve a one-year term, during which they receive a living allowance. After service, members receive an education award administered by the National Service Trust and paid as a voucher redeemable for current education costs at colleges, universities, other post-secondary institutions, and approved school-to-work programs, or used to pay back qualified student loans already incurred.

2002: USA Freedom Corps

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to engage in a “Lifetime of Service” by performing community service for their country for the equivalent of 4,000 hours, and he announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, an umbrella network for volunteerism. A coordinating council housed at the White House and chaired by the President is working to expand and strengthen federal service programs like the Peace Corps, Citizen Corps, and AmeriCorps and to raise awareness of and break down barriers to service opportunities within all federal government agencies. Several bills have been introduced in Congress to increase funding for national service and to reauthorize the National and Community Service Trust Act.
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AmeriCorps Goals

AmeriCorps aims to meet three major goals:

1. Getting things done

   AmeriCorps Programs provide a variety of specific and identifiable services that address community needs. This may involve direct service or capacity building activities that provide a direct benefit to communities.

2. Developing participants

   AmeriCorps expands opportunities, helping those who help AmeriCorps. Because of their AmeriCorps service, members develop additional skills, gain valuable experience, and receive education awards. To help ensure that members are prepared for and benefit from their service, programs provide members with skills and leadership training.

3. Strengthening communities

   AmeriCorps strengthens communities by involving citizens directly in serving community needs. AmeriCorps members help bring together individuals and groups from different backgrounds to cooperate in achieving constructive change and to solve critical community problems.
How AmeriCorps Works

AmeriCorps members participate in local service programs operated by legal applicants such as:

- Community-based non-profit organizations
- Local and state government entities
- Indian tribes and territories
- Institutions of higher education
- Local schools and police districts, and
- Partnerships among any of the above
- Private non-profit organizations

Members serving in AmeriCorps programs help meet communities’ critical education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and other human needs. The majority of AmeriCorps grant funding passes through state commissions, such as the California Service Corps (CSC). The commissions are in place to foster a bipartisan, state-level commitment to service initiatives and to distribute and monitor grants to local organizations and agencies in response to state-specific local needs.

AmeriCorps programs are funded through a formula allotment (based upon percentage of national population) granted to each state, and through a process in which programs compete for funding with other programs throughout the nation.

AmeriCorps programs provide full-time and part-time opportunities for members to serve their communities while earning an education award, student loan deferment/forbearance, a living allowance, and health insurance. Childcare is available for eligible full-time members.

For more information on the various AmeriCorps programs operating in California, please visit the CA Service Corps website (www.csc.ca.gov) and click on the Program Directory link.

AmeriCorps Members

More than 250,000 AmeriCorps members nationwide have completed a full or part-time term of service. The demographics related to these alumni are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76 % female</td>
<td>40 % completed some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 % male</td>
<td>16 % college graduates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62 % age 18-24</td>
<td>34 % Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 % age 25-34</td>
<td>34 % White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 % age 35-55</td>
<td>14 % African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 % age 55+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The California Commission

As a state commission, California Service Corps (CSC) has two major responsibilities:

1. Develop and promote a statewide vision to provide meaningful forms of volunteerism and service to the people of California; and

2. Make sure local AmeriCorps programs: comply with legal and grant requirements; progress towards meeting program outcomes; and maintain high quality projects and systems.

The Provisions

The AmeriCorps Provisions are the rules for administering an AmeriCorps program. They encompass specific aspects of running an AmeriCorps program, such as:

- Recruiting members
- Determining eligibility
- Appropriately training members

The Provisions also include the federal Financial Management rules and specific instructions on other financial areas of AmeriCorps program management, such as financial reporting and matching requirements.

For more information on the various AmeriCorps programs operating in California, please visit the CA Service Corps website (www.csc.ca.gov) and click on the Programs link.
Program Design

An AmeriCorps program design is the model of the program in written form. It is a planning process that ensures all aspects of the program have been considered.

A successful program design:

✓ Describes and substantiates the community need(s)
✓ Identifies any gaps in services available to meet that need
✓ Explains why AmeriCorps members are an appropriate strategy to address the need
✓ Describes the specific service activities of AmeriCorps members
✓ Outlines plans to ensure that members will effectively carry out these activities
✓ Forecasts the results of member service activities
✓ Defines how such results will be measured

Community Partnerships

Local involvement is vital to a high-quality service program that sustains and builds communities. High quality AmeriCorps programs use broad-based local input to design, implement, and evaluate projects, including consultation with:

- Representatives from the communities the program serves
- Program members (or potential members)
- Secular and faith-based agencies
- Businesses, foundations, and local labor organizations representing employees of service sponsors
- Local governments

Community partnerships are critical in providing tangible resources for your AmeriCorps program, partly because AmeriCorps funding is rarely sufficient to fully support a program design. In most cases, CNCS/CSC funds extend, match or “blend” with other local, state or federal support for programs meeting critical needs in communities. Service and volunteerism are a critical strategy in filling a program’s resource needs.

Community Alignment

A clearly defined need and an understanding of how that need impacts the community is the key to any AmeriCorps program. A well-designed program is directly aligned with a community need.

State and national statistics help to set the context of problems facing your community, but recent local statistics present the best picture of a specific community
need. The local data essentially determines the extent of the challenges in your community, and the results your program should achieve.

When using statistics to document the program need:

- Carefully choose the data you present: “Kitchen Sink” type statistics and data often lead to unfocused program design.
- Link the expected results of the program back to the compelling statistics: Identify the expected impact of the proposed program on the specific need.

We will look more closely at linking data to the need when we discuss logic models.

**Logic Models: A Program Planning Tool**

After your partnership and community members have identified the compelling, unmet community need(s) to be addressed, use a logic model as a visual plan to illustrate the logical connection between potential program activities and specific community needs.

Logic Models:

- Specify the issues and goals that your program seeks to address
- Identify resources needed to implement your program design
- Provide necessary information to develop service categories needed in the program
- Identify the resources your community partnership may be able to contribute or identify other resources you need to implement your program design.
- Outline each of the activities your AmeriCorps members will undertake
- Identify and clarify the likely results of those activities
- Identify the key program elements that must be tracked to assess your program’s progress toward its goals
- Clarify program premises and key assumptions
- Communicate your proposed program’s potential value
- Improve program planning and performance by identifying the ways to measure program success and areas for improvement

**Six part logic model**

A logic model provides a direct logical flow, with each step in the model building from the previous step and linking to the next. As a preliminary step in developing the program’s design, develop a logic model describing these six components of the program:

1. Needs
2. Inputs
3. Activities
4. Outputs
5. Intermediate Outcomes
6. End Outcomes
Although a model helps organize your thinking when designing a program, there is no single “right” or “wrong” way to design the model or the performance measures. Different circumstances and priorities lead to different models and performance measures, even for programs engaged in the same service activity.

1. Needs

A need is a challenge, issue or problem facing the community -- the basis for developing your program -- and a specific solution is the proposed program or a component of it. For example: An after school program (the solution) is proposed by a community to address a problem, such as lack of services for school age children between the hours of 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm (the need), Monday through Friday.

2. Inputs

Inputs are resources, both within your program and outside of your program, needed to complete program activities. Documenting the inputs helps to clarify assumptions about who is committing which resources, and forms the basis for partnership agreements that are required in the fiscal section of the program design.

3. Activities

Activities are what the AmeriCorps members and volunteers actually do. To identify and define activities, lay out a typical day for each member position category in your program. Answer at least these questions for each position:

- How many hours during a day will be spent doing what kind of activity?
- How many days does the activity occur during the week?
- Do the hours expected for an activity provide a sense of “dosage” of service that a customer might receive?
- Does the service dosage satisfy the need?

4. Outputs

Outputs are measurements of things for example: miles of watershed restored, number of students served, etc. Outputs do not provide information on benefits or other long-term changes in the lives of members or beneficiaries, as intermediate and end outcomes do.

5. Intermediate outcomes

Intermediate outcomes are changes that have occurred in the lives of the beneficiaries or members, but fall short of a significant benefit for them. The intermediate outcomes contribute directly to the program’s larger goals.
Intermediate outcomes are used to develop performance measures.

6. End outcomes

End outcomes -- the changes in the lives of beneficiaries or members that constitute significant and lasting benefits -- represent the “big picture” goals of the program. They generally answer the “So what?” question. To identify end outcomes, focus on the impact to the intended beneficiaries and ask:

- What was the impact of those service count numbers in the program Outputs above?
- What changed in the population or the conditions you were trying to address?

End outcomes are used to develop performance measures.

**Sample Logic Model**

**Need:** Student data at high school for past 3 years shows poor attendance and truancy, low grades, significant drop out rates

**Goal:** Members help high school students increase their educational attainment and decrease their high-risk behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcomes</th>
<th>End Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff time &amp; expertise; trained members; the time and energy of high school students with low grades and poor school attendance</td>
<td>Trained AmeriCorps members mentor youth in three one-hour sessions each week during the school year.</td>
<td>High-risk teenagers mentored by trained members</td>
<td>Mentored teens will show: o Improved school attendance o Improved attitudes toward school o Improved attitudes toward family life</td>
<td>Mentored teens will: o Increase academic achievement o Decrease their high-risk behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Service Categories**

The activities members engage in will fall into one of three categories:

- **Getting Things Done** Direct services that address the identified need
- **Participant Development** Orientation and ongoing training that members receive to provide and complete their service
- **Strengthening Communities** Indirect service activities, including volunteer recruitment and management
AmeriCorps members devote about 80 percent of their service hours towards the program's activities in the areas of Getting Things Done and Strengthening Communities. Most of these hours should support direct service activities.

The remaining 20 percent of service hours are for providing members with service activity and personal development training. One design element common to many programs includes a schedule in which members serve four days per week and receive ongoing training one day per week.

**Direct and indirect services**

Include both the direct and indirect services in your program design. Direct services are activities that provide an immediate product or effect. Indirect services support the program and members who provide direct services. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Services</th>
<th>Indirect Services</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring and mentoring in an after school program</td>
<td>Recruiting tutors and mentors for after school programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renovating low-income housing</td>
<td>Organizing volunteers to renovate low-income housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although *direct service* activities have been a primary focus of members' services, emphasis is increasing on *indirect service* activities.

**Service support**

California Service Corps (CSC) prefers to place members in teams of two or more at well-prepared placement sites with strong member supervision and support. When team placement is not feasible, members may be placed individually if appropriate support structures are in place. Support structures include:

- Opportunities for frequent interaction
- Training
- Reflection with other members

**Needs and Service Activities**

The Needs and Service Activities section of your program design describes:

1. The need(s) of the involved communities
2. How the need was identified
3. Direct member service activities that address the need
In meeting local community needs, AmeriCorps supports activities in four major areas:

- **Education**
- **Environment**
- **Public safety**
- **Health and human needs.**

Although some activities may apply to multiple areas, the program design should focus on the applicant’s area of expertise as it relates directly to the community’s need. For example, a program focused on increasing the academic success of children should not feel compelled to address issues related to public safety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Activity Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Math tutoring to students who tested below grade level in low performing schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Placement of service-learning coordinators in after school programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruiting federal college work-study students as after school tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faith-based programs that provide literacy training for low-income adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eliminating exposure to lead-based products that affect the health of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating a summer youth corps program focusing on service projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Converting unused public areas into playgrounds or community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessing, restoring and stewarding local watersheds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and human needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing prenatal care and parenting education to families with young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting outreach and referrals for preventive health services in low-income communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assisting homeless families to secure permanent housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Placing college students community clinical settings to introduce them to health care professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public safety</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing specific crime prevention strategies targeted at public gathering locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involving youth in conflict resolution and prevention efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing community emergency preparedness education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing illegal drug use prevention programs and intervention support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Need and AmeriCorps

When documenting the needs and service activities, consider both the community need and the reason AmeriCorps should be involved in addressing the need.

- **Community need**
  Establish a compelling community need through statistics or other relevant information. Statistics establish the scope and severity of the need that will be addressed by the AmeriCorps program.

- **Why AmeriCorps?**
  Describe why AmeriCorps resources will be effective in addressing the need. In addition, describe the roles that AmeriCorps members will play and how these roles will lead to positive outcomes for the members and the community.

Tutoring Programs

Tutoring programs use AmeriCorps members to provide planned, consistent, one-to-one or small group activities that build on students’ strengths and target students’ needs, with the ultimate goal of developing and improving academic performance. Most commonly, AmeriCorps tutoring programs provide literacy tutoring.

Literacy tutoring programs must assure that tutoring activities are consistent with The No Child Left Behind Act: reading instruction built upon research-based methods ensures every child in public schools reads at or above grade level by third grade. Incorporate scientifically based approaches to reading, including those identified by the National Reading Panel and on the LEARNS web page.

Tutoring program designs must include:

- **Curricula**
  Describe the relationship between: a) the proposed curricula and tutoring strategies, and b) school, state or district standards.
  
  Also, demonstrate school site participation in training design and implementation, or evidence that the content of the tutoring sessions is approved by the relevant school district.

- **Standards for tutors**
  Identify any standards that you use to qualify individuals as tutors (for example: qualifications test; enrollment in or completion of a reading course; or demonstration of certain academic skills).

- **Tutor training**
  Outline plan for training tutors before and during the term of service to develop skills needed to support student learning.
• Outcomes

Identify student academic goals and the proposed strategies for achieving the goals. Link program performance measures, tutoring activities, tutor training, and proposed strategies for achieving these goals.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs should be consistent with Recommended Best Practices for Mentoring Programs, as outlined by the Governor’s Mentoring Partnership (www.mentoring.ca.gov).

Collaboration with Other National Service Programs

CNCS defines collaboration as a mutually beneficial relationship entered into by two or more organizations or programs to achieve a common goal. Both CNCS and CSC encourage programs to begin or continue collaborative relationships with other national service programs.

SCALES – A Collaboration Success Story

The SCALES (Schools and Children Engaged in Learning and Service) project is a school-based Learn and Serve program administered by a local school district. SCALES utilizes AmeriCorps members as service-learning coordinators at schools throughout the district. Once members are trained on service-learning concepts and best practices, the district places them with individual teachers that use service learning at participating schools. With the teachers, the members:

- Research potential projects
- Conduct outreach to establish relationships with community partners
- Identify and secure service project resources or supplies
- Act as liaisons between teachers and community partners
- Make arrangements for the service project activities

Finally, the members deepen their own understanding of service-learning principles by helping their teachers conduct post-activity reflection sessions with their students.

Homeland Security and Emergency/disaster Preparedness and Response

The CNCS has adopted the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definition of homeland security as:

“...appropriately engaging citizens and communities in preparedness and response to acts of terrorism and other disasters. Homeland security includes programs that prepare to minimize the damage and recovery from any emergency, natural or man-made.”
Homeland security programs are distinguished from other AmeriCorps public safety, public health, and disaster preparedness and response programs because:

“While many of the day to day activities may be similar, homeland security programs also focus on preparing communities to be able to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, and respond to acts of terrorism or other disasters that breach the security and safety of their citizens.”

Applications submitted under this issue area should include evidence of organizing, training, and preparing people for homeland security disasters or emergencies.

At the most basic level, every CSC-funded AmeriCorps program is required to develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The plans address policies and procedures to ensure the safety of AmeriCorps members and program staff. In addition, these plans offer strategies and contingencies to permit the program to continue operating and potentially offer assistance to first responders, emergency management agencies, and disaster relief organizations.

Examples of homeland security programs include those that partner with appropriate public safety agencies to:

- Mobilize trained volunteers to assist first responders
- Provide support for professional or volunteer fire departments
- Organize, conduct, and support community-based immunization programs
- Provide immediate support to disaster or emergency response agencies
- Organize communities to identify and respond to crime through existing community organizations
- Support the activities and capacity building efforts of Citizen Corps Councils

CSC encourages all programs to provide the basic CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training to all AmeriCorps members. This training takes approximately 20 hours to complete and includes basic First Aid as well as procedures for responding to all hazards, including a recently added terrorism module. Contact your local fire department or American Red Cross chapter to locate a CERT training provider. In your community the program may have a different (but related) name such as NERT (Neighborhood Emergency Response Team).
To learn more about established emergency response networks, visit:

- Your city or county emergency management office
- Regional branch of the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES)
- Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)
- American Red Cross
- The Salvation Army
- Local first responders, such as fire/rescue and police/sheriff departments

**Citizen Corps Councils**

CSC is the state Point of Contact for Citizen Corps, a program of the USA Freedom Corps. Citizen Corps Councils work to coordinate efforts among first responders, relief organizations, and service and volunteer organizations that organize volunteers for disaster assistance. A local Citizen Corps Council may exist in your community. More information regarding Citizen Corps is available on the CSC website: www.csc.ca.gov

**Strengthening Communities**

Strengthening communities is the process of involving citizens in both direct community service and indirect service activities and other awareness events, such as national service days. To increase citizen involvement, all program designs **must include** volunteer recruitment and management.

**Volunteer Recruitment and Management**

Both CSC and the CNCS emphasize the recruitment and management of volunteers. By creating volunteer opportunities and helping organizations engage volunteers, AmeriCorps programs improve their impact on the community.

While AmeriCorps members and "traditional" volunteers have much in common, we usually make a distinction between the two.

- AmeriCorps members serve intensively over a period of one or two years
- Volunteers traditionally serve less intensively or for shorter periods of time
Volunteer involvement should enhance or build upon the direct service goals of the program. The program design should address all aspects of volunteer recruitment and management, including:

- Recruitment
- Screening
- Matching
- Training
- Supervision
- Retention
- Recognition
- Support

**Recruitment Strategy Examples**

AmeriCorps members mobilize volunteer recruitment and management in a variety of ways:

- Enlisting, training, coordinating and supervising volunteers
- Developing volunteer management systems that include clear position descriptions, screening and matching techniques, and volunteer policy and procedure manuals
- Promoting volunteer retention through recognition events
- Supporting volunteers to ensure they have a quality experience

Members may also create opportunities for the beneficiaries of their service to volunteer, such as:

- AmeriCorps members in a teacher corps program engage students in service-learning projects that support classroom learning and provide students with volunteer experience.
- An AmeriCorps program designates a small number of members as volunteer managers who recruit and support volunteers whose activities complement the direct service of the rest of the corps.
- AmeriCorps members tutoring in an after school program recruit volunteers to read with students once a week so that the program can serve additional students.
- An entire corps of AmeriCorps members serves as volunteer coordinators at various local host sites to assist organizations in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers.

**Indirect Service**

Historically, AmeriCorps members served primarily in direct service roles, and AmeriCorps*VISTA members service in indirect service roles. The exception to this
practice has been AmeriCorps members’ recruitment and management of volunteers. Current CSC and CNCS policies provide more flexibility for AmeriCorps members to serve in a broader range of indirect service activities.

### Examples of Acceptable Indirect Activities

- Developing a volunteer handbook or training materials
- Developing written training materials, brochures, or websites to provide information that is not available from other sources (such as volunteer opportunities, disaster preparedness, or community services)
- Conducting outreach to expand the number of individuals served by the member placement site
- Developing community partnerships that increase the direct service capacity of the placement site
- Securing media partners to help recruit volunteers
- Securing funds that increase the placement site’s ability to support additional volunteers in direct service roles

AmeriCorps members may NOT be assigned roles that:

- Secure resources to meet the match requirements (cash or in-kind) of your AmeriCorps grant
- Prepare grant applications for funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) or any other federal agency
- Are primarily clerical in nature or lead to the displacement of staff
- Secure resources that support other programs or the general operating budgets and resources of participating organizations

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### Community Partners

AmeriCorps has a long tradition of assisting faith-based and small community-based organizations. Thousands of members have been directly placed at faith-based organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Notre Dame Mission Volunteer Program and the Church Council of Greater Seattle. Although faith-based programs have a great impact on local communities, many of these organizations do not receive assistance through public funding.

CSC makes AmeriCorps resources accessible to faith-based organizations (FBOs) and small community-based organizations (CBOs) that may have little or no experience with government grants.
Faith-based and small community-based organizations may be grantees, or CNCS-funded programs might partner with such organizations to meet their objectives. In other cases, CNCS grantees may serve as intermediaries.

**Faith-based Organizations**

CSC identifies faith-based organizations as:

- Organizations, programs or projects sponsored or hosted by a religious congregation (must be incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) organization)
- Non-profit organizations founded by a religious congregation or religiously-motivated incorporators and board members that clearly states in its name, incorporation, or mission statement that it is a religiously-motivated institution

  -- or --

- A collaboration of organizations that clearly and explicitly includes organizations from the previously described categories.

**Community-based Organizations**

According to CSC, a small community-based organization (CBO) is a non-profit organization with six or fewer full-time employees and an annual budget of less than $450,000.

All programs are encouraged to partner with and/or support the efforts of faith-based and small community-based organizations. Support can include member placement at selected FBO/CBO sites, volunteer recruitment partnerships, or other well-defined roles for such organizations. This includes civic, community and nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups, as well as faith-based organizations. Programs are encouraged to consult the CNCS’ Faith-based Toolkit, available here.

**Intermediary Organizations**

Intermediary organizations are national, regional, state, or local organizations that provide FBOs and CBOs with technical and financial support to access AmeriCorps and other CNCS resources. Intermediaries:

- Serve as the legal applicant for a CNCS grant, thereby ensuring that the systems to manage a federal grant are in place
- Place individual members at the sites of many neighborhood, community or faith-based organizations
- Assume responsibility for monitoring the progress of the program sites

**Participation in National and State Days of Service**

National service days provide a way to raise community awareness of their profile of you and to recruit community volunteers. Grant funds for program involvement in service days are often available from corporate sponsors.
CNCS and CSC expect all AmeriCorps programs to participate in one or more days of service, including:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- National Youth Service Day
- National Volunteer Week
- Join Hands Day
- One Day’s Pay
- Make a Difference Day
- National Family Volunteer Day

Please visit the Points of Light Foundation website (www.pointsoflight.org) for more information regarding National Service Days.

The California Service Corps encourages programs to participate in Cesar Chavez Day.

www.csc.ca.gov/news/service_calendar.asp

Success Story
Community and Faith-Based Organization Partnership

Serving as an intermediary, the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service placed over 2,000 AmeriCorps members through 120 national, state, and local faith-based organizations, including Jesuit Volunteer Corps, the Christian Appalachian Project, Lutheran Volunteer Corps and Holy Cross Associates. These AmeriCorps members recruited an additional 35,000 volunteers, assisted over 30,000 homeless people, taught and/or tutored thousands of schoolchildren, and helped more than 8,000 low-income pregnant women access prenatal care and other services.

Member Development

AmeriCorps helps those who help America. AmeriCorps members develop additional skills, gain valuable experience, and receive education awards that they can use to repay qualified school loans or for future education.

To ensure members benefit from their service, programs are required to include plans for member training in their applications, including:

- Civic-related education
- Skill training required to perform service activities

Member Development Goals

Member development in the program design should address elements such as leadership opportunities and long-term positive impacts on members. By the end of a term of service, each AmeriCorps member should have:
• Discussed and explored their community and the people, processes, and institutions most effective in improving community conditions

• Developed skills to help plan effective service projects that respond to real community needs and emergencies

• Fostered positive attitudes regarding the value of lifelong citizenship and service for the common good

• Obtained or increased life or employment skills

• Gained a greater appreciation and understanding of people from different backgrounds

**Member Training Plans**

Members must receive an initial orientation that includes information on the community in which they serve, the history of national service, expectations of members, and specific training regarding the service they will provide.

Orientation includes:

• Comprehensive training for knowledge and skills

• Information about AmeriCorps, its philosophy, role of members and its guiding concept of “Getting Things Done”

Orientation may or may not include site-specific information.

Regardless of the specific activities they will engage in, or whether the program has multiple sites, members need the basic skills and technical information associated with good practice before they perform service. In addition, members must receive ongoing training that supplements their initial orientation and adds depth to their service experience.

Training plans should reflect the unique nature of your program and be appropriate for the age, skill level, and other differences in the members’ backgrounds. The following elements may be appropriate to include in the training plan of your program design:

Throughout the year, reinforce the concepts and AmeriCorps philosophy presented at orientation.
• Conflict Management – Help members work through difficult situations
• Communication Skills – Assists members in becoming more effective communicators
• Teambuilding – Activities that foster a team environment and esprit de corps among members
• Leadership Development – Assists members in developing leadership skills
• Diversity Training – Helps members appreciate the differences between team members and the larger community
• First Aid/CPR – Programs are encouraged to train members in basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
• CERT Training – Includes emergency response protocols, basic first aid and CPR
• Certified Application Assistant (CAA) Training – Provides individuals with training necessary to determine the eligibility of children for the Healthy Families and MediCal for Children low and no-cost insurance programs
• Life After AmeriCorps – Assists members transition from their AmeriCorps experience
• Career Exploration – Training, education and referrals that allow members to explore career possibilities in areas such as child development, teaching, public health, or public safety

Required Training Topics

All ongoing training plans need to include civics education and educational support.

Civic Education

The CNCS continues to promote and ensure that citizenship skills are a key ingredient in the lives of every AmeriCorps member and AmeriCorps program. While an enhanced civics training model is in development for programs to adopt, AmeriCorps programs have the flexibility to determine the specific methods and materials used to conduct their own civics training

When developing the program design, describe which materials or curriculum will be used to help members acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for active civic engagement. Check out The Citizenship and Member Development Toolkit for guidance, as well as By the People and A Guide to Effective Citizenship through National Service.
Support Services

Programs are required to support members who are high school dropouts in earning the equivalent of a high school diploma (GED). Programs are encouraged to support GED efforts that clearly are linked to higher education.

Prohibited Training Topics

Do not include in the training plan any civics-related activities that are prohibited to staff and members while they are supported by AmeriCorps or CNCS funding, including:

- Attempting to influence legislation
- Engaging in partisan political activities, and
- Participating in or endorsing activities that include advocacy for or against political parties.

Member Supervision

Successful member development depends on appropriate supervision and coaching. Programs are required to have qualified supervisors to provide members with regular and adequate oversight.

In the program design, describe plans to provide members with close supervisory support, modeling the behavior expected of a member while giving guidance on a consistent basis.

- Supervisors must be trained on AmeriCorps policies and procedures.
- Members may not serve as the legal supervisor of other members.

Member Service Terms

Programs engage members on a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time members must serve at least 1,700 hours during a period of not less than nine months and not more than one year. Each full-time member represents one member service year (MSY), or full-time equivalent (FTE) position.

Other member positions and their FTE conversions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term of Service</th>
<th>Minimum No. of Hours</th>
<th>FTE Conversion</th>
<th>Recommendations for Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>1.0 FTE</td>
<td>College students, afterschool programs, summer programs, others with similar program design needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-time</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0.5 FTE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced half-time</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>0.375 FTE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter-time</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>0.25 FTE</td>
<td>College students, afterschool programs, summer programs, others with similar program design needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AmeriCorps 101: Program Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum-time</th>
<th>300</th>
<th>0.2 FTE</th>
<th>design needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design needs</td>
<td>College students, summer programs, others with similar program design needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AmeriCorps was designed to provide opportunities for intensive terms of service. Since the education award is limited to two per lifetime, it is important that members derive the maximum possible benefit from their term of service. Therefore, programs using reduced half-time, quarter-time and minimum-time positions must ensure that those positions provide member intensive service experiences.

For example, CSC supports the use of a 300-hour position in a program where a member would serve only 300 hours over the course of a calendar year ONLY if that member is a college student.

**Performance Measurement**

Creating performance measures is an important part of program design. When developing performance measures:

- Think through each of the different activities AmeriCorps members will engage in.
- Identify the likely impact or change that will result from those activities.
- Determine how to best measure those results.

Performance measures provide good indicators of progress toward program goals, and defining these measures is integral to program planning. Defining performance measures helps to clarify and plan members’ activities in the context of the logic model.

**Choosing and Reporting Performance Measures**

The last three steps of the logic model (outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes) represent the results of your members’ efforts in relation to the program’s goal. Performance measures come directly from these efforts, and well-constructed performance measures quantify the program’s progress toward reaching its goals.

Using the logic model and the Performance Measurement Worksheet, define performance measures. If your program has more than one output, complete a worksheet for each output.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>END OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify the result you expect to achieve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe how you will achieve this result</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What data and instruments will you use?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limit the number of member positions used in program designs. A program using multiple member positions, such as 1,700, 900, and 450, can be difficult to manage.
1. **Identify the result you want to achieve.**

Your logic model has already laid out the general effect you plan to achieve (for example, the end outcome of “increased educational attainment”). Programs should use this section to convert each general goal from the logic models into a tangible, observable result (such as “increased grade promotion”). These types of results are called **indicators**.

Your response here might look quite similar to your logic model. This is not necessarily a problem; indicators and logic models will be closely tied, but this connection will vary depending on how directly the logic model goal can be measured. For example, outputs are generally easy to measure directly. End outcomes, on the other hand, usually require more indirect measures, so these end outcome indicators will often look somewhat different from the broader effects described in the logic model.

2. **Describe how you will achieve this result.**

This response is closely related to your member activities, but it should provide more detail than the “Activities” section of the logic model. This section should discuss the specific ways that your activities will lead to the desired result from step 1.

3. **List the data and instruments you will use.**

This step describes how you will measure the result you identified in step 1. In describing your “data,” you should clarify the exact information you will use to report on this result. Your “instrument” should describe the tool you will use to collect these data.

4. **Identify targets you expect to meet.**

A target is a specific and quantifiable level of change that you want to attain. This is your opportunity to define what success means to you, with regard to your result from step 1. Be realistic about what your program can accomplish, given the resources at your disposal and the factors within your control.

To maximize the value of this section, you should include targets for breadth (for example, the percentage of students who will show improvement) and depth (how much improvement these students will show) whenever possible.

5. **Combine steps 1 and 4 to create your performance measure.**

Combine your responses from Steps 1 and 4 to create a working performance measure. Since some indicators are not directly tied to the broader effects described
in the logic model, be sure to verify that each performance measure represents significant progress toward your logic model goals.
## Sample Performance Measure Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>END OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-risk teenagers mentored by trained members</td>
<td>Mentored teens will show:</td>
<td>Mentored teens will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved school attendance</td>
<td>- Increase academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved attitudes toward school</td>
<td>- Decrease their high-risk behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved attitudes toward family life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. Identify the result you expect to achieve
- High risk teenagers mentored
- Decreased absences; improved attitudes toward school; improved attitudes toward family life
- Increased grade promotion; decreased high-risk behaviors

### 2. Describe how you will achieve this result
- Members will build on teens' existing interests to keep teens coming back for mentoring sessions
- Members will stress the value of school, helping teens understand how school will help them meet their goals. This will contribute to increased attendance.
- By more consistently attending school and adopting an attitude of more positive engagement, teens will likely increase their achievement and avoid the behavioral problems that can keep them from being promoted to the next grade level.
- Once members gain teens' trust, members and teens will discuss school- and family-related issues. This will help teens develop positive alternatives for dealing with frustrating situations, increasing teens' sense of agency and improving their attitudes.
- By helping teens improve their attitudes in critical aspects of their lives, members will decrease teens' likelihood to “act out” through high-risk behaviors.

### 3. What data and instruments will you use?
- Data- Tutor Hours
- Data- percentage of teens showing these changes
- Instruments- School absence records; Youth Survey (pre- and post-tests)
- Data- percent of teens promoted to the next grade level; percent reporting high-risk behaviors
- Instruments- School advancement records; Youth Index of High-Risk Behaviors (pre- and post-tests)

### 4. What targets do you expect to meet?
- -30 AmeriCorps members spent 120 hours each with 30 high-risk teens
- -60% of teens will decrease absences by at least 25%;
- -67% of teens will report improved attitudes on at least half of the school-related Survey questions; and
- -50% will report improved attitudes on at least half of the family-related questions
- -70% of teens will be promoted to the next grade level
- -95% of teens will show a decrease of at least 10% in each of the three Risk Index categories

### 5. Combine steps 1 & 4 to create your performance measure
- -30 high-risk teens will receive 120 hours of one-on-one mentoring from AmeriCorps members
- -60% of teens will decrease absences by at least 25%;
- -67% of teens will improve their attitudes toward school, as evidenced by improvement from pre-test to post-test on at least half of the related questions; and
- -50% of teens will improve their attitudes toward family life, as evidenced by improvement from pre-test to post-test on at least half of the related questions
- -70% of teens will increase their grade promotion by one grade level
- -95% of teens will decrease their high-risk behaviors, as evidenced by 10% decreases from pre-test to post-test in each of the three Risk Index categories
Managing Through Measurement

As you enter into the actual management of your program, the logic models and performance measures will help you view progress as a series of simple, manageable steps. Performance measures can help programs make necessary mid-course adjustments that will ensure the goals are met. Make sure you schedule and carry out periodic evaluations during the life the program to check program’s pulse based on the performance measures.

Using the tutoring program example, let’s suppose members tutored high-risk teenagers (the output) and that the tutoring lead to improved attendance (one of the intermediate outcomes). After one year into the program, a periodic performance evaluation reveals:

- The tutored teens were still having legal troubles (an end outcome).
- The teens were still asked to repeat grades (an end outcome).

Although the program may have achieved success on one of its intermediate measures, it seems to have fallen short of the “big picture” that was envisioned. The two data sources identified for the evaluation – school absence records and Youth Surveys (pre-tests and post-tests) – may reveal specific areas in which teens’ attitudes needed further improvement (the other intermediate outcome). By evaluating early and periodically during the life of the program, existing strategies can be modified and new strategies can be developed to ensure the program meets its goals.

Performance Measurement Resources

The CNCS provides training and technical assistance for grantees and sub-grantees to enhance their capacity to develop, implement, and report on performance measurements.

Through Project STAR (at www.projectstar.org/), available resources include:

- Performance measurement toolkits
- Training events at state and national conferences
- Online training materials
- Email and phone assistance: star@aiweb.com, 1-800-548-3656

Other recommended resources and publications:

- The Urban Institute: “Key Steps in Outcome Management” Center for Accountability and Performance
- “The Measures Program: Balancing the Scales”
- United Way of America Outcome Measurement Resources
- “Urban Institute Report” on performance measurement at the Corporation for National and Community Service
- The Results & Performance Accountability Implementation Guide
Program Evaluation

Performance measurement and evaluation are related but distinct:

- **Performance measures** are designed to capture ongoing progress towards meeting program objectives. These ongoing program performance assessments should be supplemented with more in-depth, rigorous evaluations that isolate the particular impacts of national and community service programs.

- **Evaluation** refers to an analytic study providing an overall picture of the results that can be attributed directly to program activities. Specifically, evaluations compare the difference between the outcomes for individuals participating in a program to the outcomes for similar individuals not participating in a program.

Designing an Evaluation

At the completion of four years of funding, the CNCS requires you to submit a formal evaluation of your program.

In completing evaluations, the CNCS recognizes that different applicants face different challenges and bring different resources to the table. To allow programs flexibility in addressing these issues, the CNCS does not prescribe a single methodology for evaluation. Instead, we offer a broader set of guidelines based on generally accepted research standards.

Evaluations should include:

- Rigorous, systematic, and objective research methods
- Procedures to collect reliable and valid data relevant to activities and programs
- Experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals or programs are compared utilizing appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random assignment experiments
- Procedures to control for the influence of other factors through the use of control or comparison groups so that any changes in outcomes can be attributed to participation in the program
- Methods presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings
- Reports prepared to be used in feedback loops for program improvement, as well as to distribute to key stakeholders and community

Preparing to Evaluate

Engage an evaluator with expertise in scientifically based research methods at the beginning of the program year. Although evaluations usually are conducted by an independent researcher, other evaluation approaches may meet the standards without using an outside vendor.
Determine an appropriate scope of the activities to be evaluated. Evaluations are intended to investigate program effectiveness as broadly as possible. If your program includes a wide range of distinct service activities, select activities for rigorous evaluation that best represent the services that were carried out as well as the overall mission of the program.

When an organization combines AmeriCorps service with other resources as part of a larger program, decide whether if makes sense to evaluate only the AmeriCorps component or the whole combined program:

- If the AmeriCorps components are integrate with the other program components, it may be acceptable to evaluate the larger program that includes the AmeriCorps activities.

- When AmeriCorps activities are distinct from the other program components (e.g., AmeriCorps runs the tutoring component of a larger effort to promote the welfare of children), assess only the AmeriCorps activities.

Local resources can be helpful for programs in designing and developing a program evaluation. Suggested institutions to contact for assistance include universities/colleges, research firms, or other community organizations that may be using a local resource for their performance measurement and evaluations.

Choosing the “right” local resource to meet your needs is critical.

- Identify the specific tasks you would like the local resource to assist you with (e.g., instrument development, data analysis).
- Stay involved in the evaluation process throughout your program year. **Do not pass the entire task of evaluation to your local resource.**

The cost of having the local resource assist you depends on the amount of effort you would want the local resource to assume. The more involved you are in your evaluation, the less your local resource will need to do.

For a discussion of budgeting and planning for evaluation, see the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (1998). This document includes a process (and a worksheet) for developing an appropriate evaluation budget (remember that these costs can be included in your budget submission).

**Evaluation Resources**

Several resources are available to help you meet the evaluation standards:

- Project Star User’s Guide to Evaluation for National Service Programs
- The United Way of America’s Outcome Measurement Resource Network
- Evaluation of DC Reads
## Program Management

How a program is managed is based on how the program is organized. Some program directors manage sub-grantees and placement sites while others have direct contact with the members performing services. In other words, some programs have more layers that others between the program director and the members.

In addition to differences in the interpretation of a “site”, similar differences exist in the interpretation and role of a “site supervisor.” In practice, many site supervisors function as site coordinators; they never directly interact with the members at the place of service, but rather support the members through other interactions.

### Where are your members placed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where are your sites located?</th>
<th>Single City</th>
<th>Multi City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Agency, Single Site</td>
<td>Program director most likely supervises members directly and is operating at the same site as the members. There is probably limited program staff.</td>
<td>Program director has little member contact and is highly dependent on paperwork received from site supervisors. Site supervisor orientation is most likely not conducted in person and site visits are recommended but may not be feasible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Agency, Multi Site</td>
<td>Program director has some member contact, primarily through site visits. Program director works closely with site supervisors who actually manage the members. Site Supervisor orientation is likely held in person.</td>
<td>Program director almost certainly has no member contact. Again, the program director primarily works with a staff member at each agency (sub-grantee). Sites are probably monitored using the desk-based system (explained later in this document).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Agency, Multi Site</td>
<td>Program director has little member contact, and primarily works with a staff member at each agency (sub-grantee/placement site). This staff member may or may not be the site supervisor, creating an additional layer to the program. On-site monitoring is usually possible through site visits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Program Management Cycle

Program management is a cyclical process designed to ensure that all elements of the program (including member development and site compatibility) contribute to achieving the program’s goals.

Mission and Goals of your AmeriCorps Program

End of Year

Site Selection

Start Up

Review/ Evaluations

Evaluation

Member Placement

Orientation

Mid-year Site Management

Training

Communication and Coordination

Support

Site Selection

The first step in program management is deciding where the program will be housed. Like program management, site selection is an ongoing process – not a one-time task – that should be evaluated and revised every year.

When selecting a program site, consider not only how the members will serve the site, but also how the site will serve the members. Set aside enough time to carefully select the site:

- **Set site criteria.**
  Establish specific criteria outlining what you envision for both the physical and environmental aspects of each site for your program. Include descriptions and characteristics of the ideal site, ideal member position, the ideal site supervisor, and the systems that will support positive experiences for the members. Site criteria should be unique to the needs of your program and its members.

- **Site supervisor position description and criteria.**
  To establish site supervisor(s) criteria, you first need to know what the supervisor position entails. Take time to write a position description that includes the skill-level requirements and ideal qualities of an effective site supervisor. Determine exactly what is expected of someone in the the site supervisor role in your program:
o Establish policy for required attendance at partner and program meetings.

o Decide whether this person will function in a site coordination role (supervising other staff that will have direct contact with members) or a direct supervisory role with the members.

o Identify the amount of time the site supervisor will have to devote to the members.

o Explain how the site supervisors will function as mentors to members. For active site supervisors, you may want appoint another staff member as the “mentor” who provides ongoing and direct emotional and resource support to the members.

Ideally, site supervisors should not be appointed by the site, but instead should be selected carefully based on established criteria.

- **Develop a site application process.**
  
  Design a site application process aimed at determining a potential program site’s “fit” with the program. Use the established criteria as a guideline for the application itself.

  Also, consider developing an Agency Request Form for established sites to request members for subsequent years. Include the Site Supervisor position description with each application.

- **Plan site visits.**
  
  Visit the site! Someone (program staff or a designee) should visit all potential service sites. An initial site visit is like a job interview, and the site is the interviewee. If you would hot hire an employee sight-unseen, do not choose a site sight-unseen.

  See the Initial Site Visitation Guidelines on the next page for more detailed tips.

- **Refuse inadequate sites.**
  
  Be comfortable saying: “Not right now.” When a site is not a good fit for the program or its mission, turn the site down.

- **Evaluate program sites.**
  
  Establish an annual evaluation process based on established criteria. Include evaluations for all people involved: site supervisors, site staff, and members. At the end of each year in which a site has participated in your program, re-evaluate the site. Since site dynamics change from month to month as well as from year to year, consider mid-year evaluations in addition to end-of-year evaluations.
Whenever possible, visit potential sites before using them for your AmeriCorps program. The level of familiarity with the site and depth of relationship with the site owners will determine how in-depth the visit should be. Before visiting, develop criteria based on your program and a checklist for things to look for. For example:

- **Mission:** Determine if the mission of the agency is compatible with your program’s mission.

- **Member Safety:** Evaluate if the agency provides a safe and secure environment for the member. If a member might be exposed to violent situations within or in the direct vicinity of the agency, what precautions and assistance are provided for the members?

- **Member Development:** Determine how integrated the member will be into the staff. Try to identify the type of training and mentoring opportunities that might be available to a member.

- **Organization:** Evaluate whether the agency has an organizational structure that is functioning well. For example, assess frequency of staff meetings, written policies and procedures, a clearly defined organizational chart, record-keeping structures already in place, and success in obtaining and maintaining grants.

- **Staff:** To the best of your ability, evaluate the staff’s overall commitment to the program. Try to ascertain commitment to both the agency’s mission and the concept of service.

- **Financial:** If your program expects any sort of financial support of the member, try to determine the agency’s ability to provide that support during the upcoming service year and in subsequent service years.

- **Supervision:** Appraise the staff who are expected to be site supervisors. Pay special attention to experience with your target age group, and willingness and ability to take on the extra responsibilities associated with program participation. Attempt to determine if the individual(s) can “buy into” your program’s mission and philosophy. Also, ask about the turnover rate for that position and others like it.

- **Environment:** Asses the staff’s receptivity to “volunteers” based on current or prior experience. When possible, identify the most difficult challenges for the agency. A couple of examples are: an underpaid staff (financial challenge); a cross-cultural staff (cultural challenge).

- **Technology:** Evaluate how the site’s level of technology will fit with the technology that you have or will need to stay in close contact for communicating and for completing reporting requirements.
**Member Outreach and Recruitment**

Whether you recruit program members from the community or nationally, you are encouraged to target outreach and recruitment activities to as many audiences as are appropriate. Diversity is an important issue in recruitment, and can be represented in many ways: age, gender, sexual orientation, economic, education background, race and ethnicity, skills, and abilities.

Before beginning recruitment, take some time to plan your strategy.

1. Identify and make a list of target groups that may be able to fill the positions
2. Write inclusive position descriptions for your members
3. Make the target groups aware of your organization and the positions available

**Potential recruitment sources**

Our population identifies with too many diverse groups to count, so we’ve provided a list of broad categories and tips on how to reach them. Take a look at the dynamics in your community and apply the tips to formulate your own outreach strategy.

**Recent Graduates/Young Adults**

Recent college and high school graduates, or others from the same age groups who are seeking personal satisfaction through service, are prime candidates for a recruiting campaign. Graduating from college and high school is a transitional time providing many possibilities, including availability for service and possible relocation. Highly motivated and energetic individuals may bring in new ideas and insights.

To access this group, contact these resources:

- Boys and Girls Clubs ([www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org))
- Community colleges
- High schools
- Housing complexes
- Police internship programs
- Universities and colleges
- College career services
- College/university clubs (especially those related to your project, volunteer clearinghouses and service learning centers, campus newspapers and radio stations, service-oriented fraternities and sororities, student centers.
- Vocational schools
- YMCA/YWCA ([www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net), [www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org))
- Youth church groups
- Youth civic groups
- Youth service corps
Retired Citizens

Individuals over the age of 50 make up a sizable portion of people who are committed to service across the country. They represent an extremely valuable resource, offering experience, wisdom, specialized skills, and time.

You can find this population through:
- AARP—local branches (www.aarp.org)
- Area Agencies on Aging (www.n4a.org)
- Associations of retired workers, and retired branches of professional societies
- Businesses that may share your information with retiring employees
- Libraries, especially those with special or early evening programs for seniors
- National Service Senior Corps (http://joinseniorservice.org) programs (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, RSVP); contact the CNCS (http://www.nationalservice.gov/state_profiles/) in your state.
- Senior church groups
- Senior educational programs, such as ElderHostel (http://www.elderhostel.org/welcome/home.asp)
- Senior housing complexes and centers

People with Disabilities

AmeriCorps encourages creating an inclusive service environment and actively recruiting individuals with disabilities. For a comprehensive look at inclusive service, see the Disability Inclusion module.

Use these resources to locate and recruit members with disabilities:
- 4-H (www.fourhcouncil.edu)
- Boy Scouts (www.scouting.org) and Girl Scouts (www.girlscoutusa.com/)
- Campfire programs (www.campfireusa.org)
- Civic Groups such as Civitans, Kiwanis, Lions, and Quota Clubs
- Disability Organizations
  - Arc affiliates (http://www.thearc.org/)
  - Brain Injury Association affiliates (www.biausa.org)
  - Easter Seals affiliates (www.easterseals.com)
  - Independent living centers (http://www.ilusa.com/links/ilcenters.htm)
  - Lighthouses (visually impaired) (http://www.lighthouse.org/)
  - National Association of the Deaf (www.nad.org/)
  - National Mental Health Association (www.nmha.org)
  - Parent resource centers
  - Self advocacy groups
  - Self Help for Hard of Hearing chapters (www.shhh.org)
- UCP affiliates (www.ucp.org)
- Employer Assistance Referral Network (EARN) (www.earnworks.com)
- Job Links
- NICHCY, for a comprehensive listing of organizations that actively recruit people with disabilities (www.nichcy.org)
- Schools, Colleges, University Centers of Excellence and Technical Schools
- State and Local Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies
- State Governors' Committees on Employment of People with Disabilities
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (www.va.gov)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Offices
- Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) (http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/workforc.htm)
- YMCA/YWCA (www.ymca.net, www.ywca.org)
- Youth Organizations

Other Places to Find Members
- Ethnic groups and organizations, such as:
  - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (http://www.naaccp.org/departments/branch/branch_sites.html)
  - League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) (http://www.lulac.org/)
  - National Council of La Raza (NCLR) (http://www.nclr.org/section/network/)
- Local volunteer clearinghouses
- Nonprofit and voluntary organizations
- Offices of social services
- Places of worship
- Referrals from the National Referral Database (see next section)
- Retired teachers organizations and unions
- Tribal governments (http://www.firstgov.gov/Government/State_Local/Tribal_Sites.shtml)
- Vocational and magnet schools
- Vocational rehabilitation agencies
- Waiting lists of other AmeriCorps programs in your area
- AmeriCorps recruitment and placement (http://www.americorps.org/resources/index.html)

Marketing Your Program

Outreach and recruitment involves selling your program to the targeted markets (potential members). When refining your message, consider the question: What would attract an applicant to my program? In almost all cases, applicants want to know what they will be doing and what they will gain from service as an AmeriCorps member.
Once you develop a list of target groups, think of different ways you can market or “sell” your AmeriCorps message to each group. Remember to vary your approach based on the group – different people respond differently to the same message.

Here are a few “selling” points to get your message started:

- The appeal of AmeriCorps and service
- Give back to your community
- Gain job skills and career networks
- Travel/meet new people/adventure
- Deferment for qualified student loans
- Education award to pay off student loans or for graduate school
- Opportunity to use education and experience to help communities

**Pointers for effective contact**

- **Make contact personal.**
  
  Potential candidates are more likely to remember a success story delivered in person than they a phone call.
  
  ✓ Ask your service alumni (or current members on non-service hours) to attend a state fair, a local conference, or a school career day to share their experiences.
  
  ✓ Consider holding an information session with the contacts that you have made.
  
  ✓ Invite your current members, service alumni, and other members in the area to share their experiences and give potential applicants a firsthand account of your program.

- **Respond quickly and follow up.**
  
  Keep a record of people to whom you have sent application and people who have requested further information. Follow up with a postcard, phone call, or e-mail to invite them to take the next step. Offer suggestions for completing the application.

- **Collaborate and ask for help.**
  
  Other programs may be recruiting in your area. Check around and find out how you can combine mailings, or share space at events with other programs. They may even have a list of people they were unable to place who could be perfect for your program.

  Ask your current members for testimonials to include with the outreach materials. Even if you do not incorporate all of their comments, they will likely help you identify useful “selling” points.

  For example: If your project focuses on education, advertise to education majors and emphasize the valuable classroom experience they will gain as AmeriCorps members.
Network.

People often decide to do something because someone they respect or trust has suggested it. Ask local high school counselors, college placement officers, and community leaders to promote AmeriCorps and your program. Again, consider your target audiences and the attraction that your program would hold for them.

In addition, network with other parts of the national service network, including National Senior Service Corps and Learn and Serve programs in your area.

Application Forms

The CNCS encourages the use of a standard AmeriCorps application for your program. You are welcome to use your own supplementary materials. The AmeriCorps application is available on the recruitment resources page.

If your program has its own application, please:

✓ Accept the AmeriCorps application from potential candidates who have called the national AmeriCorps hotline.
✓ Include an area where an individual lists any other AmeriCorps experience.
✓ Make your forms available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities.

AmeriCorps Online Recruitment and Placement System

AmeriCorps has developed a web-based system for the recruitment and placement intended to simplify the application process and improve customer service to staff and applicants.

Potential members can…

· Learn about AmeriCorps programs throughout the country
· Search for programs based on selected criteria
· Apply on-line

Programs can…

· Search for individuals based on select criteria
· Contact individuals via e-mail
· Receive and approve applications on-line

Potential members who do not have Internet access can become system users through contract staff by calling the toll-free number (800) 942-2677.
**Member Orientation**

**Pre-service Training**

A strong start to a program year begins with pre-service training or orientation. This is the first opportunity for members to:

- See the program in action
- Set realistic expectations
- Form partnerships with other members, program staff, and site supervisors
- Begin building a strong sense of team, “esprit de corps”

To feel confident in their roles and effectively serve their community, AmeriCorps members need a foundation: a functional level of general and project-specific knowledge and skills. A strong foundation laid during pre-service training helps to ensure the members are effective and happy; the foundation can be built upon during in-service training throughout the year.

**Preparing for Orientation**

Investing in effective training up front pays off later. Using the Member Orientation Checklist and the tips below will help you prepare for member pre-service training or orientation:

1. **Plan.**
   The better organized you are, the better the orientation will be - even if you make some changes during the session itself. The more you systematically consider possible situations and needs, methods and potential problems, the more confident and flexible you will be able to be.

2. **Make your orientation outcome-based.**
   Begin designing the orientation based on the outcomes you want to accomplish. Choose topics and methods that will generate these outcomes. Often, one activity can contribute to several outcomes. Incorporate ideas and lessons learned from previous trainings (as applicable).

3. **Use interactive and experiential pre-service training.**
Design training activities that engage the members, combining active participation with question and answer periods. Research and experience show that hands-on learning experiences are more effective than primarily lecture-based or show-and-tell type training. To ensure retention, use the experiential learning model shown below, and remember: The greater the active participation of the members, the greater the retention.

4. **Carefully choose and thoroughly prepare your facilitators and presenters.**
   Select presenters and facilitators for their training skills as well as content knowledge. Be sure they know what you expect, and review materials and methods before the training. Make sure the presentations are tailored to the needs of the program and its members. When needed, use subject matter experts who are not trainers as "resources" and guest speakers, and facilitate the session yourself.

5. **Emphasize teamwork.**
   Most participants will be working in teams, and the pre-service training is an excellent forum for establishing a team culture. Use icebreakers, small-group activities, teambuilding activities, and community-oriented projects to build mutual trust and esprit d’corps.

6. **Model the service ethic.**
   Bring in role models, build on individual eagerness to serve, and enable the staff, site supervisors, and presenters to reflect the benefits of service. Talk about service directly and honestly, and communicate realistic challenges and expectations.

7. **Use participants as resources.**
   During pre-service activities, assess the participants’ skills and strengths as well as their training needs:
   - Give them opportunities to teach each other through cooperative learning groups and specific peer-to-peer activities.
   - Use them as co-facilitators in areas in which they have special expertise.
   - Identify and recognize strengths.

8. **Link training with the service assignment**
   Train the supervisors with the members. Involving the supervisors in the member training fosters a team culture and gives the supervisors a stake in the service activities. Provide or plan community projects, and include defining the members’ activities as part of the training plan. When the orientation is relevant to the actual assignment, the learning experience will be more interesting and useful for the members.

9. **Monitor, assess, and evaluate.**
   Throughout the session, observe the participants’ behaviors to make sure the activities are on track, and provide time for the participants’ to reflect on the activities:
   - In Q&A periods, ask members for feedback. Open-ended questions (requiring something other than a Yes or No answer) are better than closed questions. For example, ask: “What questions do you have?” instead of “Do you have any questions?”
• Make immediate on-the-fly refinements to the course.
• Assess specific activities and the overall session as a basis for change the next time you schedule pre-service training.
• Follow up to identify which skills have been retained and used.
• Employ more than one evaluation techniques (for example: survey, observation, hands-on application).

10. Use pre-service training as the first step in ongoing learning.
Link in-service sessions, site-based training, and other knowledge and skill development opportunities to the pre-service training experience. Cohesion between training sessions creates an overall organizational culture that values ongoing learning and member support.

Member Eligibility

While everyone can serve their community, not everyone can be an AmeriCorps member. As program director, you are not only responsible for verifying eligibility, but also for maintaining documentation to demonstrate eligibility for every member you enroll.

Minimum requirements

The MINIMUM requirements for AmeriCorps member eligibility are mandated by federal statute. Each member must meet all three of the following:

1. Legal status as a permanent resident

Programs must maintain a copy of the document establishing each member’s status as a US Citizen, National, or Permanent Resident Alien. The fact that someone is legally in the US does not mean they have lawful permanent resident status.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations, the following documents are acceptable to prove citizen, national, or resident alien status. If the individual does not have one of those documents, he or she is NOT eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Citizen or National</th>
<th>Lawful Permanent Resident Alien</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• U.S. Birth Certificate</td>
<td>• Permanent Resident Card, INS I-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• U.S. Passport</td>
<td>• Alien Registration Receipt Card, INS I-551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Report of Birth Abroad, FS-240</td>
<td>• Passport indicating INS approved as temporary evidence of lawful admission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certificate of birth-foreign service, FS-545</td>
<td>• Departure Record, INS I-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certificate of report of birth, DS-1350</td>
<td>• Secondary documentation, CNS approval that other documentation is sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certificate of naturalization, N-550/570</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certificate of citizenship, N-560-N561</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An I-9 is not sufficient, and a Social Security Card or Drivers License does not establish eligibility.
2. **Age requirement**

   Generally, members must be at least 17 years old. Some specific program designs allow younger members. If unsure of the specific age requirement for your program, check the AmeriCorps Provisions.

3. **Education requirement**

   Members must hold a high school diploma or equivalent, or must agree to complete that education level before using an education award. Member must declare status under penalty of perjury (on the CSC-provided form) per the CA Code of Civil Procedure.

**Record-keeping**

Provisions, Section 6b, states, “The program is responsible for maintaining adequate documentation of member eligibility.”

In addition, if the member will be working with children, the elderly, or other vulnerable populations, evidence of an official criminal background check must be documented and on file.

If you have questions about Eligibility, **do not guess at the answers** — the consequences are significant. Always refer to the source of the requirements:


**Monitoring and Compliance**

Monitoring and program management can be challenging for parent organizations, especially for AmeriCorps programs with limited staff capacity or unique program models.

As stewards of public funds, it is critical for parent organizations to ensure program sites and sub-grantees:

- Are aware of contractual requirements, and
- Remain in compliance with the rules, regulations, and provisions governing AmeriCorps funds.

To accomplish this, adequate monitoring systems must be fully implemented and available in writing.

**Components of a monitoring strategy**

An adequate monitoring strategy provides oversight of sites and sub-grantees in an array of areas, including:
• Document reviews
• Compliance reviews
• Program quality and performance reviews
• Member training, supervision, and support
• Reviews of data collection and reporting tools and procedures
• Meetings with staff, members, and volunteers
• Special audits or surveys
• One-on-one technical assistance to support the resolution of issues

Documentation requirements

Parent organizations should monitor site or sub-grantee compliance of member documents and program documents. Some sites develop their own documents with the support and approval of the parent organization, and some parent organizations provide these documents for their placement sites.

1. Member documentation:
   a. Member Files
   b. Member Contract

2. Program Documentation (samples available at www.csc.ca.gov):
   a. Member Handbook
   b. Orientation and Ongoing Training Plan
   c. Grievance Procedures
   d. Prohibited Activities
   e. Data Collection and Evaluation Tools
   f. MOUs, Subcontracts or Host Site Agreements (if applicable)
   g. Staff Timesheets
   h. Progress Toward Meeting Performance Measure Targets
   i. Use of WBRS
   j. Mechanism for Community Input and Collaboration

In addition to program and member documentation, you may wish to collect copies of operational documents (such as brochures and staff handbooks) from each site or sub-grantee. Reviewing these documents early in the program year will help assure that the site and sub-grantee staff clearly understand AmeriCorps and your program. Any needed adjustments are easier to make earlier in the program year than later.
Desk-based monitoring

Desk-based monitoring is a preventive strategy of supervising a program site. When used early in the program, desk-based monitoring can prevent the need for intervention later on to resolve sub-grantee problems. The process supports effective start-up, program implementation, systems development, and compliance.

If the format and content of all documentation are brought into legal compliance in the early stages of desk-based monitoring, at later visits you can simply check that they are being used correctly and have been signed by members and appropriate program staff.

Many program directors also utilize WBRS as a monitoring tool. For instance, WBRS lets you:

- Review each program’s progress on recruitment and retention
- Track member progress toward completing service hours
- Monitor program expenditures
- Review progress toward performance measures
- Check timeliness of program reporting, including member forms and program progress reports
- Conduct member enrollment queries and monitor member hours tables

On-site monitoring

The type of monitoring the parent organization does with its sub-grantees is the same as the monitoring the state commission does with the parent organization. Site visits to programs and affiliates can have many purposes, including:

1. **Learning**
   Finding out about service activities and partnerships

2. **Publicity**
   Hearing success stories of AmeriCorps programs

3. **Compliance**
   Assuring the site follows federal, state, local, contractual, and organization-specific regulations, policies, and provisions

4. **Progress**
   Checking actual outputs and outcomes to the performance measures outlined in a grantee’s contract

5. **Assistance**
   Providing technical assistance to improve the overall quality of programs

Depending mainly on a state or organization’s risk-based monitoring strategy, a site visit may be made to every program or affiliate one time per grant cycle, one time per year, or more often as may be appropriate.
Before the site visit

To prepare for a site visit, the state or parent organization:

- Identifies or develops a specific monitoring tool to use during the on-site visit. At the beginning of the grant year, review the monitoring tools to ensure all questions are still relevant and that new grant provisions are included.
- Schedules the visit with the program/affiliate at a time when the appropriate people will be available for meetings.
- Sends a letter confirming the visit and describing what the visit will entail (including what monitoring tools will be used during the visit).
- Reviews program-related materials, including previously submitted progress reports, program challenges, prior site monitoring reports, and information contained on WBRS (member timesheets, member hours, member enrollment, etc.). If desk monitoring has not already occurred, request and review key program documents (items 2a-f in the Monitoring Checklist above; member files can be reviewed at the site visit).

At a minimum, the program director should bring the following items to the site visit:

- Copy of site visit monitoring tool
- AmeriCorps Education Awards Programs Provisions
- AmeriCorps Program Director Handbook
- Copy of the program’s most recent application (or at least a copy of performance measures)
- Current member roster (downloaded from WBRS)

During the site visit

A typical site visit involves seven steps, or activities:

1. Interview with the Program Director and Site Supervisor

   Meet with the AmeriCorps program director or site supervisor (preferably both) to discuss the purpose of the visit and the overall program. Spend some time getting an overview of the program and site, and some of its successes. Allow the program director or site supervisor to offer and discuss challenges without prompting.

2. Interview with other AmeriCorps program staff

   Interview other AmeriCorps program staff as appropriate and necessary to complete the monitoring tool. Conduct interviews in a conversational style without sacrificing completeness. Make sure written comments on the monitoring tool are legible, and that all questions are either answered or marked “not applicable.”

Help the interviewees understand the purpose of the visit, and assure them that monitoring is not just about compliance but also about improving the overall program.
3. **Review of files and documentation**

   Review member files and program documentation to ensure record-keeping processes are in place and are in good working condition. The file review may be done as a separate desk review prior to the visit, or completed as part of the on-site visit.

4. **Onsite observation where activities are underway**

   Visit at least one site (preferably more) where members are serving. Observe the delivery of service and member interactions, including (as appropriate):
   - Between members and their supervisors
   - Among members
   - Between members and the people they are serving

5. **Field interview with site supervisors**

   Talk with the site supervisor(s) about the program and the members. Focus the discussion on member training and support systems for members. The questions you ask should be designed to assess the adequacy of training and support. Also, give the supervisors plenty of time to ask questions and to voice any concerns.

6. **Field interview with AmeriCorps members**

   Converse with members about their service. Ask members questions related to their background in becoming interested in service, such as: where they are from; why they chose the program; and what they plan to do after their term of service. Most importantly, ask members specific questions about the program that will help you assess whether they see progress being made as a result of their service, and whether they understand what the program is about. Again, provide opportunity for the members to express their questions and their concerns.

   To make sure members feel comfortable discussing issues, choose an interview platform that works for the site. Options include:
   - Interviewing in group or individually, or a little of both
   - Interviewing members without supervising staff present
   - Asking members to complete a written survey

7. **Wrap-up interview with program director and site supervisor**

   Close the site visit with a wrap-up meeting with the program director and site supervisor (as appropriate and available). Discuss observations, findings, issues, resolutions, and next steps. Use the wrap-up meeting as an opportunity to provide technical assistance to ensure a smooth-running program.

**After the site visit**

   Once the site visit has been completed, communicate the results to key staff at the site. There is no standard way to do this, so your organization should determine when and
how observations from the on-site visit will be provided. The most important steps of the process are to:

✓ Identify any compliance issues and the proper remedies and timeline for implementing them.

✓ Maintain copies of all documents related to the site visit in the program’s official files.

Programs are required to respond immediately in writing to any remaining compliance or technical issues identified. In some cases, corrective action plans are required, or issues may need to be addressed in the parent organization’s progress report.

If a program or affiliate fails to resolve a compliance issue in a timely manner, action should be taken in accordance with the relevant provisions in the grantee’s contract and program policies and procedures. Actions may include withholding payment on invoices until all issues are addressed, placing the program or site on probation or suspension, or terminating an agreement or the grant. Each case should be handled individually, and consequences should be appropriate to the issues.

Case Study

Communicate results: Within fifteen days after a site visit, a program sends a letter detailing all outstanding compliance issues and necessary corrective actions.

Identify compliance issues and remedy timelines: Four weeks after the compliance letter is sent, a site visit report is sent and it:

✓ Outlines the program’s strengths and continuous improvement issues
✓ Identifies outstanding compliance issues
✓ Specifies follow-up actions necessary

Grievance Procedures

Grievance procedures should be reviewed to ensure that they include the components required by statute for AmeriCorps programs, including:

- A grievance hearing and binding arbitration
- Grievances can be used by members, labor unions or any other individuals who may have an unresolved dispute with a program
- The subject matter that a grievance may address cannot be limited

Many programs include an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process as a first option, and it could include mediation or conciliation. When a program includes ADR in its grievance procedure, the ADR must be selected within 45 days of a formal dispute. If ADR does not
resolve the matter within 30 calendar days, the neutral party must notify the aggrieved party of his or her right to request a hearing.

**Arbitration costs**

The grievance procedure must specify:

- The cost of arbitration will be divided evenly between the parties, unless the aggrieved party prevails
- When the aggrieved party prevails, the program must pay the total cost of arbitration, as well as the prevailing party’s attorneys’ fees
- A lawsuit to enforce an arbitration award may be brought in any federal district court having jurisdiction over the parties

**Grievance procedure timeline**

The following timeline for the required components of a grievance procedure must be observed:

- Grievances must be filed within one calendar year of the alleged occurrence.
- Within 30 days of the filing of a grievance, a hearing must be held.
- Within 60 days of the filing of the grievance, a decision must be made.
- If no decision is made within the 60 days of the filing of the grievance, or if the decision is adverse to the aggrieved party, the aggrieved party may request binding arbitration.
- Binding arbitration must be held no later than 45 calendar days after the request for arbitration.
- If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS will appoint one within 15 calendar days after receiving the request from one of the parties, in which case the arbitration must then be held within 30 days of the appointment of an arbitrator.
- An arbitration decision must be made within 30 calendar days after the commencement of the binding arbitration hearing.

**Multi-Site Management**

Managing a program that has multiple sites can be challenging for many reasons, such as:

- Different organizational structures, schedules, and busy-season trends
- Spread-out locations
- Diverse cultures, expectations and language
- Varied target populations
- Different management and supervision skill levels
• Differing levels of technology and communication capabilities
• Dissimilar goals of partner organizations and AmeriCorps
• Various levels of commitment to AmeriCorps

Although the phrase has been used many times in other contexts, it cannot be stressed enough here: Your best offense is a good defense. Planning and communication are your most reliable tools in ensuring that a multi-site program is a success. Your site supervisors are your most reliable information sources in monitoring the program's day-to-day operations.

Planning and communication

Anticipating challenges and making sure the communication channels are clearly open with the program sites is the first step in avoiding problems.

• Maximize “buy in” of partners and appropriate member placements by carefully selecting sites through a competitive application process whenever possible.

• Set expectations early on. Develop site agreements or contracts that clearly detail the expectations of members, site supervisors, and AmeriCorps program staff. During orientation (before beginning service), thoroughly review the document with members and site supervisors and have all parties sign and date the agreement.

• Prepare site supervisors for their role. Host an orientation session designed for site supervisors, and carefully review all requirements for participation in AmeriCorps. Address questions and concerns at the outset of your partnership to establish a cooperative relationship with the supervisors. Tip: Refreshments in a relaxed environment will help to promote a positive association with AmeriCorps.

• Educate staff about AmeriCorps. Work with site supervisors to ensure that other staff at placement sites understands AmeriCorps and the role of its members, including a review of prohibited activities.

• Maintain open and regular communication with site supervisors. Open and frequent communication creates a sense of inclusion in the AmeriCorps network, and encourages the site supervisors to communicate in return, for both good news and potential problems.

• Address issues quickly, directly and fairly. Procrastination intensifies problems, and contradicts an open communication culture.

• Keep your commitments and appointments with sites. If you set an expectation to appear, meet that expectation. Reliability is a key ingredient for establishing credibility with your team.

Leadership and Community

When working with a program that is spread out geographically or culturally (or both), it is important to instill a sense of unity within the program and within the community. Making sure the community knows about the program and the benefits it provides
requires some external exposure and recognition; making sure the various sites understand their connectedness to other sites requires internal exposure and recognition. Use these tips to give the program and its participants the exposure and recognition:

- Include site supervisors and staff in community events, such as National Service Days and other corps-wide functions.
- Post AmeriCorps signs at all service sites for visibility and awareness.
- Recognize successes whenever you can to give partners, members and volunteers a sense of ownership in their association with AmeriCorps.
- Provide Certificates of Appreciation to site supervisors at the end of a member’s term of service.
- Acknowledge people (or organizations) that you feel have contributed significantly to your members’ experience.
- Facilitate site supervisor meetings (in person) or conference calls to maintain mutual trust and collaboration in finding solutions to issues.
- Send a letter from AmeriCorps and your college (if applicable) to the site supervisor’s board and direct supervisor commending the site supervisor’s contributions. Be sure to share all the publicity and good news that they helped your program garner.
- Share the “National Service News” with site supervisors throughout the year. Highlight nominations as motivation and inspiration for sites to succeed.
- Invite site supervisors to serve on an advisory committee for your AmeriCorps program. Convene the group several times throughout the year to seek management insights, such as suggestions for improvements and enhancements, ways to unify the program, and ways to ease the administrative burden on sites.
- Give each site a copy of AmeriCorps members’ pledge, and invite community partners to the “swearing in” ceremony at the start of the term of service. At the end of the term of service, invite the community partners to the “graduation” party.
- Remind yourself of why you chose to be a part of AmeriCorps, and share this inspiration with others in your program.

**Orientation and training**

Although orientation and training are required aspects of the program, the challenges presented by managing and unifying a multi-site program makes preparation and planning training events much more important.

**Orientation:**

The parent organization usually provides an initial Orientation (3-5 days) to new members, supervisors and partners. Site supervisors are encouraged to attend the
Orientation to receive the same training as those they will be supervising, to meet the entire corps, and to begin building relationships with members who will be placed at their site.

Orientation includes:

► Comprehensive training for knowledge and skills
► Information about AmeriCorps, its philosophy, role of members and its guiding concept of “Getting Things Done”

Orientation may or may not include site-specific information.

**Site-specific training:**

No matter what is included in the initial Orientation, site-specific training should take place directly at the program site. As a required element in the program design, member development strategies must include specific skills training and civics training. To satisfy the skills portion of the training, each placement site needs its own orientation course and ongoing training schedule for its members.

Before the start of a program year, the parent organization will need a copy of the orientation agenda and ongoing training schedules for each placement site.

Generating ongoing training schedules before the year begins helps site supervisors make certain that all areas are covered and available at accessible locations and appropriate times. Training plans may change throughout the year to accommodate new or immediate member needs.

**Training topics should include:**

- Program mission and goals
- Expectations and requirements
- Explanation of policies and procedures
- Skill and leadership development for effective service provision
- Information on program resources
- Program staff to contact for support

AmeriCorps Training and Technical Assistance can help you develop relevant workshops that would be a benefit to site supervisors.

**Mid-year training needs:**

Develop a plan for orienting new supervisors and members who begin after initial orientation. For staggering member start dates, some programs hold 2-3 complete
 Orientations during the program year. For multi-site programs, geographic considerations can also influence the location for the Orientation session (i.e., one in each geographic region).

**Involvement and information-sharing**

Members who are actively involved in information-sharing processes have a stake in the program beyond their immediate service duties; a sense of ownership in the processes makes them active program advocates. To involve members in the program's processes, employ these tips:

- Determine what information you need to collect from sites before program begins.
- Work with site supervisors to ensure data collection is manageable, and that the data is meaningful representation of members' activities.
- Involve members in collecting the data. Educate them about what you need and why you need it so they can assist site supervisors in collecting the pertinent data throughout their service terms.
- Collect information from the sites before you need it. This gives you time to seize opportunities to educate members and to clarify information before submitting it to management.
- Make it as easy as possible for site supervisors to give your program the attention and time it needs. Simplify formats for for information, clearly articulate program needs, and streamline responsibilities as much as possible.
- Identify opportunities when site supervisors have planned meetings or other communication events, and piggyback other events with them (for example, school board meetings or community meetings).
- When the opportunity presents itself, utilize members as liaisons for your communication with site supervisors.
- Be aware of the sites' timelines and schedules (such as “busy seasons”, office closures, holiday schedules) and reflect this in the timing of your requests for information.
- Use email often to communicate successes and request feedback from partners. The immediacy of email demonstrates the importance of the message sent.
- Make phone calls to sites and to members, as appropriate.
- Chart the communication streams between you and the site, as well as within the site, to identify preferred communication methods (by person, team or site).

**Efficient Emailing**

- Establish an e-mailing list for regular updates and announcements
- Remember to mail copies of all emails to sites or members who are not online.
☐ Enable and demonstrate open and clear communication so issues and challenges can be resolved quickly.

**Introduction to WBRS**

Parent organizations (and some placement sites) use the Web Based Reporting System (WBRS) to store and tracking program records.

WBRS is used for three primary purposes:

1. Enroll members, change their status, manage their hours, and exit them from programs
2. Submit progress reports to state commissions and the CNCS
3. Compile and submit Financial Status Reports to state commissions, parent organizations, and CNCS

Throughout the program year, parent organization program directors manage a Web Based Reporting System (WBRS) account. Areas that require program director attention include:

- Requesting staff (user) access
- Requesting slot corrections and conversions
- Overseeing member enrollments, timesheets and exit forms
- Submitting help desk requests
- Approving performance measures
- Reviewing and approving programmatic and fiscal reports

**WBRS access**

Once those who need access to WBRS have been issued user names and passwords, they can log onto the secure WBRS site. To speed up the log on process later, the URL can be added it to the browser’s Favorites list.

To obtain access WBRS, follow these steps:

1. Submit the WBRS User Access form to your state commission Program Officer (who will give you the blank form). Fill out the form with the names and contact information for all those whom you would like to have WBRS access, identifying the level of access for each user.

2. Once your program officer has established access and assigned passwords for each WBRS user, you will receive an email with the user names and passwords.

3. Inform all WBRS users of their user names and passwords.

Don’t forget: You are required to keep hard copies of certain documents, such as eligibility and enrollment.
To log in to WBRS:
1. On your browser, go to http://wbrs.net
2. Click “AmeriCorps State” button.
3. When the list of states displays, click the CA link.
4. When WBRS presents the login page, add it to the Favorites list on your browser. Next time you log in, select the page from the Favorites list and go right to step 5.
5. On the login page, key your user name and password, and click on “Login”.

WBRS Help Manual

Once in WBRS, you will find an online Help Manual. Use this resource to get started using WBRS, or as a reference tool.

To locate the online manual go to the BASICS tab in WBRS and click the menu link to for Help Manual.
Reporting progress in WBRS

On a quarterly basis, parent organizations submit progress reports to the Commission through WBRS. Although there are four quarters in the year, when the program year ends after September, an organization may need to submit five reports (such as for programs implemented for Jan. - Dec. each year).

Quarters and reporting timeframes:

- Cover three-month periods
- Must be dated with the last date of the third month in the reporting period
- Are due to the Commission by the end of the month following the reporting period

For example, this is the progress report schedule for the 2004-2005 Program year (months/days apply to all years).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Report date</th>
<th>Due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 15 – December 31, 2004</td>
<td>December 31, 2004</td>
<td>January 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This first report covers program start-up through December 31st. If a program has not yet started during this quarter, the report will reflect planning activities.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January – March 2005</td>
<td>March 31, 2005</td>
<td>April 30, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – June 2005</td>
<td>June 30, 2005</td>
<td>July 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July – September 2005</td>
<td>September 30, 2005</td>
<td>October 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - December 2005</td>
<td>December 31, 2005</td>
<td>January 31, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>An additional December 31st report is needed for programs that end between October 1 and December 31, 2005 (the previous report covered activities through September).</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction to Financial Management

AmeriCorps is a federal program authorized by the 1993 National and Community Service Trust Act.

Programs of the Corporation for National Service

Congress appropriates funds to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administers AmeriCorps.

CNCS provides funding to state commissions to enable states to administer AmeriCorps at the state level. CNCS also provides funding directly to large, national AmeriCorps programs, such as City Year, Habitat for Humanity, and Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

In addition to AmeriCorps, the Corporation for National and Community Service administers many other service programs, including Learn and Serve, VISTA, and SeniorCorps. The Department of Education or the Corporation’s “State Office” in California distributes funding for these programs.

California Service Corps

The California Service Corps (http://www.csc.ca.gov/index.asp) is the state commission that administers AmeriCorps in California. The Commission’s job is to:
• Advise communities in California of AmeriCorps funding opportunities
• Review applications for funding
• Make funding decisions
• Prepare AmeriCorps funding recipients (sub-grantees) for the task of operating an AmeriCorps program
• Monitor those sub-grantees for compliance with the federal AmeriCorps Provisions

The Provisions

The AmeriCorps Provisions (http://www.csc.ca.gov/gcentral/login.asp) are the rules for administering an AmeriCorps program. They encompass specific aspects of running an AmeriCorps program, such as:

• Recruiting members
• Determining eligibility
• Appropriately training members

The Provisions also include the federal Financial Management rules and specific instructions on other financial areas of AmeriCorps program management, such as financial reporting and matching requirements.

Office of Management and Budget

An AmeriCorps program is also governed by the general rules of the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB rules, called Circulars, provide general guidance on how to spend, account for, and report on federal funding.

California Service Corps directs funding to its sub-grantees using a state contract. This document contains the specific rules that California requires its sub-grantees to follow in addition to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

The ten areas discussed in this Financial Management Module provide a full understanding of the financial obligations inherent in administering a federal AmeriCorps grant. The topics are:
- Grant Life Cycle
- Electronic Grant Management: eGrants/WBRS
- The Rules (OMB/Provisions/CA Service Corps)
- AmeriCorps Budget
- Contracting Process
- Reimbursement Process
- Financial Reporting
- Audits
- Close-Out
- Financial Management Principles


**Grant Life Cycle**

The Grant Life Cycle is a nine-stage process that involves:

1. **Grant Availability**
2. **Competitive Submission**
3. **Contracting Process**
4. **Notice of Grant Report**
5. **Program Management**
6. **Reimbursement**
7. **Reporting**
8. **Audits**
9. **Close-out**

The following pages introduce each stage, and provide links to resources and more detailed information.

**Grant availability**

The cycle for AmeriCorps funding begins with an organization’s opportunity to address unmet needs in their own community. Funding for the proposed program is made available through a grant process that recurs as frequently as annually and as infrequently as once every three years. The frequency of the process depends on the level of funding available from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).
The CSC website advises the public, through a Request for Proposals (RFP), on the availability of funding and the application process, which may change slightly from year to year. The organization proposing a program submits an application for grant.

**Competitive submission for federal funding**

Federal funding for AmeriCorps is divided into three categories:

- Competitive
- Formula
- National Direct

State commissions have access to competitive and formula funds. National Direct funding is available for national programs that apply directly to the Corporation (e.g. City Year, Habitat for Humanity, and Big Brothers, Big Sisters).

**Submission and eGrants**

The process of competing for funds at the national level is referred to as *competitive submission*.

1. After grant readers in the service field review a grant application, the applicants usually are invited to staff interviews.
2. When an applicant scores well in the overall grant review process, their application may be forwarded to the Corporation.
3. At this stage in the process, the applicants compete for federal funding with other proposals from across the country.

Competitive submission used to involve the actual, physical submission of California’s applications. Since 2003, the CNCS has been using an integrated, secure, web-based grant management system called “eGrants”. eGrants allows for grant management from the initial federal application (the competitive submission) through renewals and eventual closeout. Applicants who are invited to be part of the Competitive Submission receive assistance for the use of eGrants from California Service Corps staff.


**AmeriCorps State Formula Allocation**

The CSC may decide to fund a program with a source of funding over which the CSC has complete grant-making control – our AmeriCorps State Formula Allocation. This funding is provided to each state according to a population-based formula.

Formula submission, also using eGrants, occurs after Competitive decisions are announced.
The Contracting Process

Once funding decisions are made, the contracting process begins. This process involves finalizing a program's design, program narrative, performance measure, and budget.

A fully executed contract is the result of the contracting process.

Program officer

Each program is assigned a specific California Service Corps (CSC) program staff person – a Program Officer – who works with the program to finalize design decisions and secure the required contract documentation.

Fiscal assistant

Each program is also assigned a specific CSC fiscal staff person. The Fiscal Assistant reviews the submitted budget and budget narrative and identifies any unallowable costs or insufficient match issues.

Notice of grant award

The Notice of Grant Award (NGA) is the official document notifying you that a grant has been awarded to your organization. The NGA will reference your approved application and budget, and will contain information about:

- Grant project and budget periods
- Number and type of AmeriCorps slots awarded
- Amount of funds awarded
- Any special conditions
- Relevant version of the grant provisions

A program’s Notice of Grant Award (NGA) date is the first date on which a member may begin service.

When given pre-award spending approval, a program may begin its activities and incur operating expenses before the state contract is finalized and the formal grant award is released. However, a program may not enroll members prior to the issuance of the Grant Award. The CSC staff advises all programs when the grant is awarded.

Governing Body Resolution

The Governing Body Resolution:
- Demonstrates the Governing Body accepts responsibility for the grant award
- Acknowledges the contract for the grant award
- Approves the term and dollar amount of the contract
- Appoints individuals to act on the behalf of the Governing Body

For each person or position appointed by the Governing Body, submit the following information, with the resolution, to the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism on the applicant’s letterhead:

- Name
- Title
- Address
- City
- Zip Code
- Phone Number
- Fax #
- E-mail address

Program management

Program Management is the essence of an AmeriCorps program and includes:

- Member recruitment
- Selection
- Training
- Supervision

These tasks can have serious financial repercussions if not handled appropriately. For example, member support costs and education awards may not be approved if a member is ineligible to participate in the program. Program and financial staff should work together to ensure that a program’s risk of disallowed costs is minimized.
Reimbursement

As a program begins its activities, it will begin to incur costs and will need to be reimbursed. In essence, a sub-grantee will submit a request for reimbursement for allowable expenses incurred as part of the AmeriCorps Program.

See Reimbursement later in this module for more information.

Reporting

The next phase in the Grant Life Cycle is Reporting, which includes both programmatic and financial reporting. Financial Reporting is accomplished through eGrants/WBRS and is required on a quarterly basis.

Financial Reporting is covered more fully in Financial Reporting section of this module.

Audits

While not exactly a phase of the Grant Cycle, the reality of Audits permeates every federal award. Office of Management and Budget Circulars govern when a recipient of federal funding must have specific types of audits performed.

- A133 – this is the most common federal audit and is required for all entities that receive over $500K in federal funds in one calendar year.
- Annual financial audit – this audit may be required in addition to the A133 audit.
- State and Federal compliance audits – these audits also occur regularly.

Audits are covered more fully later in this module.

Close-out

Close-Out is as the name implies: the closing out of the grant. Specific programmatic and financial tasks must be accomplished in order to fully close out each grant, including ensuring that:

- All final reports and reimbursement requests are submitted, and
- Document retention requirements are fully understood by the sub-grantee.

Step-by-step close-out procedures are provided later in this module.

Electronic Grant Management

Since 2003, the CSC has “eGrants,” an integrated, secure, web-based grant management that simplifies grant management. eGrants allows for grant management from the initial federal application through renewals and eventual closeout.

eGrants makes requesting continuation funding much easier by populating continuation applications with data from the original application. It also eliminates the need for sending
voluminous amounts of paper to Washington, D.C. The system includes electronic signatures that take the place of signed originals.

All submissions through eGrants go first to the California Service Corps. Applicants submit their requests under a California Service Corps eGrants application, called a Prime Application. Each Prime Application for a competitive, formula or continuation submission is given a specific number.

To use eGrants, you will need to create a personal user account. This account is linked to your organization through the its employer identification number, which is needed to set up the user account.

eGrants login page: https://egrants2.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp

**Web-based reporting system (WBRS)**

Another on-line training tool making AmeriCorps program management easier is the Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS). The WBRS, created in 1998, enables programs to communicate directly with the Corporation and the National Service Trust (the division of the Corporation that issues Education Awards to members who have completed their terms of service).

Currently, WBRS is free-standing and is accessible at http://wbrs.net. Programs use WBRS to complete programmatic and fiscal tasks, including:

- Member enrollment
- Member service hour submission (timesheets)
- Member exit
- Slot conversions
- Programmatic reporting
- Financial reporting
- See Introduction to WBRS for additional information

**WBRS security measures**

The legal applicant of a sub-grantee must designate an individual to act as the WBRS Liaison with the California Service Corps (CSC). The WBRS Liaison then identifies those program staff members who will have access to WBRS and the levels of access for each user. The access roles assigned must correspond to the user’s level of programmatic and fiscal responsibility.

The process for establishing users and access roles is critical to WBRS security.

1. WBRS users must not share user accounts or passwords. Shared access and passwords create an unnecessary liability risk for both the sub-grantee and program staff.
2. The WBRS system maintains an auditable trail of all information keyed into the system, clearly showing which user entered, altered or approved member or program information.

3. The user listed in the audit trail is the user with ultimate responsibility for that action, regardless of whether that user ever allowed another staff member to “borrow” his user access and password to enter data.

4. To prevent misplaced responsibility and liability, all program-designated WBRS users must be given their own user access and must then maintain password privacy.

**WBRS user access and support**

The WBRS Liaison establishes user access for program staff by submitting the WBRS User Access Request Form to the assigned CSC Program Officer.

The front page in the WBRS – which shows some interesting statistics about Member Applicant Commitments -- provides a menu loaded with useful tools. Click the Help Manual link for the tutorial menu.
The Help Index is a comprehensive list of online tutorials.

WBRS pages, such as this example, provide useful information and links.

Grant Initiation in WBRS

At the beginning of each grant, the new GIPs are uploaded to WBRS. If you're at the program or site level, you should review your GIP to make sure the data is correct (see 1 below). If you're at a State Commission or Parent Organization, you may need to assign users to their new grant, or add operating sites. Please see 2 and 3 below.

1. Review the information on the GIP

Once you've received notification that new GIPs have been uploaded to your database, take a few minutes to review them. After reviewing and editing (if necessary), an ED or PTOD should approve them. Here's a checklist to help you get started.

- If the GIP or Budget was uploaded to WBRS in error, notify your Grants Officer and file a help request that includes your Grants Officer's authorization to remove the GIP from your database. (See Removing a GIP from WBRS)
- Review the dates. Make sure that the Budget Dates and Member Enrollment Dates (which determine the limits of Members’ start dates) are correct prior to enrolling members. These dates can be corrected by State Commission or Parent users and approved by your Grants Officer. (See Changing Budget and Member Enrollment Periods)
- Review address and contact information. These fields are editable. Contact information appears in the All Programs By State view (on the WBRS Central page). (See Making Changes to a GIP)
- Review the number of slots listed. Since the information is uploaded from eGrants, the slots listed should be consistent with what the program was awarded. Nonetheless, please confirm that the number and types of slots are correct. If there's a problem, an ED or PTOD can submit a Slot Correction through WBRS, or discuss it with your Corporation officer.

2. Assign users

If the program is beginning a new three-year grant, an ED or PTOD will need to assign users to it. State Commissions and Parent
The Rules

The rules and regulations governing an AmeriCorps program are multi-layered. As the legal applicant of an AmeriCorps program you determine the final layer of rules and regulations. Within the confines of AmeriCorps Provisions, the legal applicant can add on other layers of rules as long as they are consistent with the OMB and other governing provisions.

Grant provisions

Grant Provisions are specific rules regarding program administration. By accepting a grant, you agree to comply with all of the requirements outlined in the provisions.

Different provisions may exist for different programs. For example, an Education Award Program (with a fixed award amount of $400 per full time equivalence) has a separate set of Provisions than a regular AmeriCorps program.


Office of management and budget (OMB)

Finally, all Corporation grants are covered by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars. In cooperation with federal agencies and non-federal parties, OMB
uses circulars and common rules to establish policies for government-wide grants management. Each AmeriCorps grant must comply with three circulars related to Cost Principles, Administrative Requirements and Audits. The specific circulars depend on the type of organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Cost Principles</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Audits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State and Local Gov't Entities</td>
<td>A-87</td>
<td>A-102</td>
<td>A-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>A-122</td>
<td>A-110</td>
<td>A-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>A-21</td>
<td>A-110</td>
<td>A-133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A-21: Cost Principles for Educational Institutions
A-87: Cost Principles for State and Local and Indian Tribal Governments
A-102: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments
A-110: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations
A-122: Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations
A-133: Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations

For full text of Circulars, see http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.

Cost principles

Cost principle circulars describe the type of expenses that programs can charge to a federal grant. In addition, OMB circulars on cost principles explain how to allocate costs between funding sources.

These circulars address two basic issues: whether the cost is allowable and whether it is allocable to the grant. Different Cost Principle Circulars exist for different types of organizations:

- Non-profit organizations - OMB Circular A-122
- Institutions of higher education - OMB Circular A-21
- Government agencies - OMB Circular A-87

Administrative requirements

Circulars on administrative requirements provide consistency and uniformity among federal agencies and their grant recipients in the management of federal funds.
Administrative Circulars specifically address the adequacy of financial internal controls, income and expense documentation, and written cost allocation policies. They cover the following issues:

- Financial management
- Federal grant payments including advance payments
- Requirement to deposit grant funds in an interest-bearing account
- Obligation to return interest earned on grant funds to the federal government
- Equipment purchases, inventory, and disposal
- Matching funds, including in-kind contributions
- Program income
- Products produced with grant funds
- Financial reporting and recordkeeping requirements
- Close-out procedures
- Remedies for non-compliance

Administrative requirements for non-profit organizations and higher education institutions are contained in OMB Circular A-110. Administrative requirements for government agencies are contained in OMB Circular A-102.

For CNCS grants, these circulars are codified in 45 CFR Chapter 25. That chapter is the specific citation in the Code of Federal Regulations that governs how the Corporation operates its grants.

**Audits**

OMB Circular A-133 provides the standards for obtaining consistency and uniformity among federal agencies for the audit of organizations expending federal funds. It is applicable to organizations that expend $500,000 or more in federal funds in a given fiscal year ending after December 31, 2003.

**AmeriCorps Budget**

The AmeriCorps Budget is divided into three sections and is funded by two funding streams: the federal funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the matching funds from the sub-grantee. Knowing and understanding the three sections and their respective line items is extremely helpful in ensuring that only appropriate expenditures are charged to an AmeriCorps grant.

The following pages provide brief information and an image of each section. For detailed information on the forms, see the Financial Management module, AmeriCorps Budget section.

**Program operating costs**

Section I includes eleven line items:

1. Personnel
2. Personnel Fringe Benefits
3. Staff Travel
4. Member Travel
5. Equipment, Supplies
6. Contracts/Consultants
7. Staff Training
8. Member Training
9. Evaluation
10. Other

## SECTION I: PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Personnel (list each staff position)</td>
<td>Annual Salary</td>
<td>% Time Spent on Program</td>
<td>Total Program Cost</td>
<td>Corporation Funds Requested</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal - Personnel**

<p>| Section I |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-----------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

B. Benefits (includes FICA, Worker's Comp, Leave, other Fringe, etc.)

C.1. Staff Travel

C.2. Member Travel

D. Equipment (not greater than 10% of total CNS budget costs)

E. Supplies (includes Member Service Gear)

F. Contracts & Consultants (Consultant daily rate NTE CNS maximum $540/day)

G.1. Training-Staff

G.2. Training-Member

H. Evaluation (Consultant daily rate NTE CNS maximum $540/day)

I. Other (includes CNS-sponsored meetings)

(Grantee Funds minimum 33% of total Operating Costs)

Subtotal SECTION I.

To calculate the federal share:

\[ \text{CNCS share} \div \text{Section I Subtotal} = \text{Federal share} \]

The federal share for Section I cannot exceed 67%.
Section II includes Living Allowances and Member Support Costs. The Corporation share for this section cannot exceed 85%. The federal share for Section II cannot exceed 85%. To calculate the federal share, divide the CNCS share of Section II by the Subtotal of Section II.

To calculate the federal share:

\[
\text{CNCS share} \div \text{Section II Subtotal} = \text{Federal share}
\]

The federal share for Section II cannot exceed 85%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION II: MEMBER COSTS</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Living Allowance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year FT 1700 hours</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year PT 900 hours</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded PT 675 hours</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter Time 450 hours</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Time 300 hours</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal - Living Allowance/FTE</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. FICA (7.65% of Total Member Living Allowances)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Worker's Compensation (or other Death &amp; Dismemberment coverage)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Health Care (required for FT members, optional for PT; must meet CNCS reqs.)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Other Member Costs</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal (add items A through E above, total not to exceed 85% CNS funds and provide minimum 15% Grantee Funds - Cash Match Only)  
(Grantee Funds minimum 15% of total Member Costs) Subtotal

SECTION II.

Subtotal (add items A through E above, total not to exceed 85% CNS funds and provide minimum 15% Grantee Funds - Cash Match Only)
**Direct or indirect administrative costs**

Section III includes administrative costs. AmeriCorps sub-grantees can choose to use one of two methods to calculate allowable administrative costs:

**Option A: CNCS Fixed Percentage Method**

---

**Option B: Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Method**

Both options are subject to the federal funding cap on all administrative costs equal to 5% of total federal CNCS funds actually expended under this award. This cap was imposed by the 1993 National and Community Service Trust Act.

**Maximum Federal Share**

To calculate the Maximum Federal Share of Administrative Costs, multiply 5.26% (i.e., .0526) by the sum of the Subtotals of Sections I and II. The result of this calculation is the maximum amount the applicant may request from the CNCS for this budget category.

\[(\text{Section I Subtotal} + \text{Section II Subtotal}) \times 0.0526 = \text{Maximum Federal Share}\]

**California Service Corps' Share**

The CSC’s share of administrative costs is 20% of the Maximum Federal Share.

\[\text{Maximum Federal Share of Admin Costs} \times 0.20 = \text{CSC's Share}\]

**Sub-grantee's Share**

The sub-grantee’s share of administrative costs is 80% of the Maximum Federal Share.

\[\text{Maximum Federal Share of Admin Costs} \times 0.80 = \text{Sub-grantee’s Share}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION III: ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Grantee Administrative Costs</td>
<td>CNS provided: (Total of CNS Section I + Section II) * 0.0526 * 0.80</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grantee Match: Up to 10% Match allowed without approved Indirect Cost Rate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2 CSC's Share of Administrative Costs</td>
<td>(Total of CNS Section I + Section II) * 0.0526 * 0.20</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

California Service Corps withholds 1% of the Maximum Federal Share of Administrative Costs for administration and grant processing costs.
Administrative costs defined

The term “administrative costs” refers to general or centralized expenses of overall administration of an organization that receives Corporation funding. For organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs mean those costs that are included in the organization’s indirect cost rate. Such costs are generally identified with the organization’s overall operation and are further described in Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122.

What is included

For organizations that do not have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs include:

- Financial, accounting, auditing, contracting, fidelity bonds, disbursing services, or general ledger services except in unusual cases where they are specifically approved in writing by the Corporation as program costs
- Internal evaluation, including overall organization management improvement costs (except for independent and internal evaluations of the program or project evaluations that are specifically related to creative methods of quality improvement)
- Rent, utilities, and legal services (for administrative staff, not program staff)
- General liability insurance that protects the organization(s) responsible for operating a program or project, other than insurance costs solely attributable to the program or project. Programs must have sufficient liability insurance to protect the organization, employees, and members. Members who are engaged in both on- and off-site program activities must be covered. Sub-grantees decide how much liability coverage is sufficient, given the specific risk factors the program presents. General liability insurance is an administrative cost which can be charged against the grant (subject to the grant’s administrative cost limit) or included in the program’s match. If the cost of member liability insurance is included in the approved budget, it may be charged as a direct program cost. For additional information on insurance issues, refer to “Insurance Basics for Community Service Program,” a publication by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, (202) 785-3891.

Administrative costs do not include specific program or project costs.

Administrative costs may also include that portion of salaries and benefits of the Program Director’s and other administrative staff not attributable to the time spent in support of a specific program or project.
The principles that pertain to the allocation and documentation of personnel costs are stated in the OMB Circulars that are incorporated in the CNCS regulations (45 CFR 2541.220 (b)).

What is not included

Administrative costs do not include expenses directly related to a program or project (including their operations and objectives), such as:

- Allowable direct charges for members, including living allowances, insurance payments made on behalf of members, training, and travel
- Costs for staff (including salary, benefits, training, and travel) who recruit, train, place, or supervise members or who develop materials used in such activities, if the purpose is for a specific program or project objective
- Costs for independent evaluations and internal evaluations of the program or project that are related specifically to creative methods of quality improvement
- Costs, excluding those already covered in an organization’s indirect cost rate, attributable to staff that work in a direct program or project support, operational, or oversight capacity, including, but not limited to: support staff whose functions directly support program or project activities; staff who coordinate and facilitate single or multi-site program and project activities; and staff who review, disseminate, and implement CNCS guidance and policies directly relating to a program or project
- Space, facility, and communications costs that primarily support program or project operations, excluding those costs that are already covered by an organization’s indirect cost rate
- Other allowable costs, excluding costs that are already covered by an organization’s indirect cost rate, specifically approved by the Corporation as directly attributable to a program or project.

Cost per FTE (Member Service Year)

A full time equivalent (FTE) position – often called a Member Service Year – is defined as 1,700 hours of service during one calendar year. For part-time or reduced part-time member slots, the number of slots comprising on FTE depends on the hours of service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slot type</th>
<th>Service hours per year</th>
<th>Full Time Equivalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>full-time</td>
<td>1,700 hours</td>
<td>1 slot = 1 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part-time</td>
<td>900 hours</td>
<td>2 slots = 1 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduced part-time</td>
<td>675 hours</td>
<td>2.66 slots = 1 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduced part-time</td>
<td>450 hours</td>
<td>4 slots = 1 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduced part-time</td>
<td>300 hours</td>
<td>5 slots = 1 FTE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Total CNCS Program Operating Budget is calculated by adding the subtotals for the CNCS share of Sections I, II, and III.

Dividing this figure by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) slots listed in Section II results in the CNCS Cost Per AmeriCorps Member FTE.

\[(\text{CNCS Shares Subtotals from I, II and III}) \div \# \text{ of FTEs} = \text{CNCS cost per FTE}\]

Full text of AmeriCorp’s Cost per FTE Policy is available at Grantee Central: http://www.csc.ca.gov/gcentral/login.asp

AmeriCorps funding maximum per FTE

The 2005-2006 maximum CNCS Cost Per AmeriCorps Member FTE in California is $15,675.

Based on the belief that existing programs should receive increasing levels of local community support over time, the maximum amount of funding that CSC provides per AmeriCorps FTE decreases overtime according to the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entering Year</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>$15,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$15,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$14,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$14,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$13,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>$13,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>$12,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>$12,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>$11,995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each previously existing program will have a different Maximum Cost Per FTE based on its total years of AmeriCorps funding. CSC typically provides three-year grants. Thus, a program that is applying for a second, three-year grant could request up to the maximum amount for a four year-old program (or $15,675).

Once the program has received an approved cost per member for its fourth year, it may request up to that amount for each of the remaining years of its three-year grant. Should the sub-grantee opt to request funding for a third 3-year grant, it may only request up to the amount listed in the table above for a seven year-old program.

Programs are advised to improve their sustainability by continuously developing sources of local community support, because the maximum amount of funding allowable by CSC will decrease significantly between three year grants. Under exceptional circumstances, CSC will consider requests for funds that exceed the schedule for programs five years and older.
Member benefits not included in the AmeriCorps Budget

The Member costs included in the AmeriCorps budget represent only a portion of the in-service benefits members receive. Child care and loan forbearance are two in-service benefits for AmeriCorps members that are not included in the AmeriCorps budget.

- **Child care payments** for eligible AmeriCorps members go directly from the Corporation for National and Community Service to the child care provider. Specific rules apply regarding both provider and member eligibility. See AmeriCorps Provision 11 (f) for more detailed information.

- **Loan forbearance** is the postponement of repayment of qualified student loans (principal and interest) for AmeriCorps members serving in an approved national service position. In order to have a loan placed in forbearance, the AmeriCorps member (the borrower) must request the forbearance of their loan holder (generally, the lender or the loan servicer). The loan holder has the ability to grant forbearance. In the forbearance process, the role of the National Service Trust verifies whether the individual is in an approved national service position. The California Service Corps is not involved in this process and the cost involved is not a part of the program budget. The member fills out the standard Federal Education Loan Forbearance form (included in the Program Director’s Handbook—Link to PD Handbook) and gives the form to the Program Director for submission to the National Service Trust.

Post-service member benefits

The primary post-service awards include the education award:

- $ 4,725 for a full-time term of service
- $ 2,362.50 for a part-time (900 hour) term of service
- Part-time service awards are pro-rated for terms shorter than 900 hours

The National Service Trust, which is a fund established by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, is used to pay for education awards and interest that accrues on qualified student loans for those who have completed approved terms of national service. The money is kept in an account with the U.S. Treasury and is invested in Treasury securities. The Office of the National Service Trust is the office within the Corporation for National Service that manages all the various functions related to the AmeriCorps education award.

An education award can be used to:
• Repay qualified student loans
• Pay all or part of the cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education
• Pay expenses incurred while participating in an approved school-to-work opportunities program

Members may receive a post-service education award only for the first two terms of service. See AmeriCorps Provision 12 for more detailed information.

The Contracting Process

The California Service Corps begins the contracting process as soon as the Corporation announces funding decisions and earlier for continuation programs. This process begins with the CSC advising sub-grantees of the documentation needed to finalize a contract. Requirements may change from year to year, but the following programmatic and financial documents were required to enter into a contract for the 2004-05 program year.

Programmatic Documentation

• From eGrants, the SF 424, Application for Federal Funds Title Page;
• From eGrants, the finalized Program Narrative;
• From eGrants, the finalized Performance Measures;
• CLASP forms (California Local Area Service Partnership) submitted via the internet;
• Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with all partners who have made cash commitments to the program or who are supporting unstipended members;
• WBRS (Web-Based Reporting System) Access Request Form;
• Program Directory Information, submitted via the internet;
• Program Start Date (the date the first AmeriCorps member is enrolled);
• Program End Date (12 months after the Start Date); and
• Last Date to Enroll each of the various slots: Full time, Half Time, and (if a sub-grantee has an afterschool program and/or recruits college students) Reduced Half Time, Quarter Time and Minimum Time AmeriCorps members. The sub-grantee must estimate the last date the program could accommodate enrollments of new members in each slot applicable to the program.
Financial documentation

CSC Program Staff need eight business days to review and edit completed contract materials submitted by sub-grantees and seven business days to generate contracts from the contract materials and to approve contracts. Submission of inaccurate or incomplete contract materials adds time-consuming corrective steps and transmittals.

Required documentation:

- From eGrants, the finalized Budget Form
- From eGrants, the finalized Budget Narrative
- Financial Management Survey (link here to form) including submission of the most recent A-133 audit, if applicable
- Payee Data Record Form (link here to pdf form), required for all sub-grantees, despite the form’s exclusion for federal, state, and local governments, and school districts. Submission of this form ensures that the sub-grantee’s reimbursement check is sent to the correct address.
- Address List (Roster) for Board of Directors, if a non-profit organization
- Evidence of 501 (c) 3 status, if a non-profit organization
- Council or Board Resolution or certified meeting minutes accepting fiduciary responsibility for the grant award, if a non-profit organization or local government agency.
- Evidence of Liability Insurance coverage or Self-Insurance Statement

Two unexecuted contracts are sent to sub-grantees for signature and must be returned to CSC. A fully executed contract is returned to the sub-grantee when all parties have signed the document and the CNCS grant award is authorized in eGrants.

Reimbursement Process

California Service Corps reimburses sub-grantees for approved, budgeted expenditures that have already been incurred. The sub-grantee may not request funds for expenses that have not yet been paid. Sub-grantees may submit invoices for reimbursement for expenses on a monthly basis. Quarterly invoicing is allowed, but programs must submit a separate Periodic Expense Report (PER) for each month included in the invoice to facilitate monthly expenditure tracking. For a complete explanation, see Reimbursement Process in the Financial Management module.

Financial Reporting Requirements

As specified in AmeriCorps Provision #16, Reporting Requirements, programs must submit Financial Status Reports (SF 269A, or FSR), during the grant period. These reports must be filed electronically using the web-based reporting system (WBRS).
The Provisions specify that three aggregate FSRs are required from the California Service Corps (the Grantee) and delegates authority to the Grantee to determine the number of FSRs required from the Sub-grantees (Programs).

The California Service Corps requires that its sub-grantees submit five Financial Status Reports (FSRs) during the program year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FSR Period</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contract Start Date through December 31st</td>
<td>First Quarter</td>
<td>January 31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1st through March 31st</td>
<td>Second Quarter</td>
<td>April 30th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1st through June 30th</td>
<td>Third Quarter</td>
<td>July 31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1st through September 30th</td>
<td>Fourth Quarter</td>
<td>October 31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1st through December 31st</td>
<td>Final Quarter</td>
<td>March 30th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sub-grantee meets financial reporting requirements when reports are submitted in WBRS within the approved time frames. Extensions of reporting deadlines will be granted only when:

- The report cannot be furnished in a timely manner for reasons legitimately beyond the control of the sub-grantee
- The CSC receives a written request explaining the need for an extension before the deadline passes. Extensions of deadlines for FSRs (SF 269a) may only be granted by the CSC Fiscal Office.

For a more information, see Reporting Requirements in the Financial Management module.

**Audits**

Acceptance of a grant obligates the program to allow employees and/or agents of the California Service Corps unrestricted access to all sub-grantee books, documents, papers, and records, including confidential client records, for inspection, copying, and audit.

Sub-grantees may be audited by the CSC or an independent agency to determine whether:

- Financial operations are properly conducted
- Financial reports are fairly represented
- The sub-grantee has complied with all applicable laws, regulations, and administrative requirements that affect the expenditure of program funds

**Monitoring visits**

In addition to comprehensive audits, the CSC may conduct monitoring visits of a sub-grantee or Invoice Validation Reviews by phone. The CSC’s goal in monitoring is to support sub-grantees and help them achieve their goals and avoid any future disallowed costs.

A monitoring visit will cover all areas of program operation. Source documentation to be reviewed may include:
- Data collection sheets
- Member files
- Financial documents
- Any other documents that will substantiate data in progress reports

Achievement of program objectives will be verified by examining source data on several separate objectives.

Federal audit requirements

OMB Circular A-133 was revised in 1997 and updated in 2003 and applies to all grantees of federal funds. Some of the more significant points contained in the revised A-133, which is effective for fiscal years ending December 31, 2003, or later, are:

- State and Local governments are now covered by the A-133.
- All A-133 audits must be performed annually. In some situations, under old regulations, audits could be performed every two years.
- The audit threshold was increased from $300,000 to $500,000. Only non-profit organizations and state and local governments that expend federal funds of more than $500,000 or more in a year must be audited. Organizations or sub-recipients whose expenditures range between $300,000 and $500,000 are required to have an A-133 audit performed for all fiscal years which began before January 1, 2003.

Audit submission

As a sub-recipient of federal funds, sub-grantees must submit their complete audit reports (including Financial Statements and Independent Auditors Reports) to the CSC within the earlier of:

- 30 days after receipt of the auditor's reports
- 9 months after the end of the audit period (OMB Circular A-133 Section 320)

Sub-grantees must correct identified weaknesses or findings.

Grant Close-Out

Under the administrative requirements, grantees have up to 90 days from the project period end date to close their grants.

The CSC program closeout process involves:

1. Closing out program activities
2. Finalizing fiscal issues, including final payment request and record retention

Program closeout procedures include successfully documenting member service terms and program progress toward stated objectives.

Fiscal closeout procedures include submission of final invoices within 60 days of grant termination date and submission of final FSRs within 90 days of the grant termination date.

Closing out program activities

The California Service Corps reserves the right to withhold final payment on a program’s outstanding invoices until we receive the following documents or have assurance that a program has performed the following procedures:

1. Verified accurate and complete entry in WBRS of all member time logs for each AmeriCorps member in WBRS
2. Verified that Exit Forms have been entered into WBRS for all AmeriCorps members
3. Printed out a program member reconciliation report from within WBRS and verified that all members enrolled in WBRS by your program have exited with appropriate educational awards
4. Reviewed all member files and submitted the Member Grant Closeout form (sent to the program prior to the end of the program year) assuring the CSC that all required member documentation is in the member files. Remember, the file must include all time sheets documenting member service hours and supporting WBRS time logs
5. Completed a final APR in WBRS
6. Printed and submitted a final progress report that is reviewed, signed, and dated by the Program Director
7. Submitted a cover letter indicating that tasks 1 through 6 are completed including a statement indicating where the files will be stored and procedures indicating how documents can be retrieved by the CSC in the event of an audit of your program

The assigned Program Officer will notify the CSC Fiscal Unit when a program has successfully completed the program closeout procedures by sending a final letter to the sub-grantee.

Final reimbursement request

A program is given a longer timeframe – 60 days of the end of the grant award – to submit the final reimbursement request. The final Reimbursement Request must be submitted within 60 days of the end of the grant.

If the sub-grantee does not submit a final invoice within 60 days of the end of the grant award period, California Service Corps reserves the right to consider the last invoice submitted as the final invoice and to close out the grant award. Once California Service Corps has processed the final claim, the grant will be closed and no further payment activities against the grant will be permitted.

The final Reimbursement Request will be held until the California Service Corps Program Officer assigned to the sub-grantee has verified that all requirements of the
grant award have been met. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in the reduction or termination of the grant award or the withholding or disallowance of grant payments.

The final Periodic Expense Report (PER) and corresponding Financial Status Report (FSR) is due in WBRS 90 days following the end of the grant award period. Upon successful submission of all required closeout documents, the sub-grantee will receive a letter from the California Service Corps Fiscal Unit advising the sub-grantee that all requirements have been satisfied and the grant is formally closed out. Click here for details on the Close-out.

**Retention of financial and member records**

Sub-grantees must keep all financial records, supporting documentation, member information, statistical records, evaluation data, and personnel records for three years after the submission of the final fiscal report. The records must be available to the Corporation for National and Community Service and the California Service Corps at any time during that period. Sub-grantees must make reasonable efforts to protect the confidentiality of members by disposing program records in such a way as to protect the identity and privacy of members.

**Financial Management Principles**

A sound financial management system is essential to operating a successful AmeriCorps program. A weak system jeopardizes control over federal resources by placing a program at risk for theft, fraud, and waste.

The following ten elements form the basis of a sound financial management system. Follow these recommendations and you will build a strong foundation for your fiscal activities.

1: **Know Your Regulatory Requirements**

Regulatory requirements provide the guidance and foundation for your financial management systems. For AmeriCorps programs, the following requirements apply:

- OMB (federal Office of Management and Budget) Circular Requirements
- State Requirements
- AmeriCorps Provisions
- Award Letter

OMB circulars describe a wide variety of financial management issues including administrative requirements, cost principles, and audits. Specific circulars apply to educational institutions, non-profits and state and local governments. The full text of all OMB circulars can be found on the Internet at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/.
2: Document Policies and Procedures

Documented policies and procedures are important because they establish the standards for an organization’s operations and maintain information that is crucial to operations. Maintaining written policies and procedures also helps in orienting new employees and substitutes if the customary personnel are absent.

Examples of policy and procedural documentation are:

- Identification and description of the principal accounting records (i.e., general ledger, budgets, Financial Status Reports (FSR’s), etc.)

- Assignment of responsibilities, delegation of authority, etc.

- Explanations of documentation and approval requirements for expenditures.

- Instructions for reoccurring tasks such as:
  - Preparing monthly reports
  - Bank reconciliations
  - Completing FSR’s
  - Reviewing budgets and match requirements
  - A Chart of Accounts

- Key Personnel Policies such as:
  - Acceptable standards of conduct
  - Vacation, sick leave, overtime and holidays
  - Probation period
  - Performance reviews, etc.

- Key Accounting Policies such as:
  - Procurement (purchasing) standards
  - Requisition and check request approvals
  - Check signer limits
  - Disposal of company assets
  - Travel
  - Personal use of company supplies
  - Preparation and review of financial reports
3: **Adequate Source Documentation to Substantiate Expenditures**

Design a filing system to group grant activities and documents. Include items such as:

- Grant letter, amendments, and original grant application
- Documents from sub-grantees
- Expenses/vendors, consultant agreements, etc.
- General correspondence
- Monthly financial reports (e.g., budget to actual expenditure reports)
- Lease agreements
- General liability insurance policy
- Cash/In-kind contributions documentation
- Other relevant documents

All expenditures should contain documentation (i.e., brief descriptions, agendas, reports, etc.) that support why the transaction is allowable for AmeriCorps purposes. All financial reports should lead clearly back to the ledgers and source documentation. Equipment records must be maintained for all equipment in use should include at a minimum:

- Description and funding source (including grant number)
- Manufacturer’s serial number
- Title holder’s name and address
- Acquisition date and cost
- Percentage of federal financial participation

Note: All equipment and supply purchases with a cost greater than $1,000 need prior approval from the California Service Corps and the Corporation for National Service. At the end of a program, equipment with a fair market value of $5,000 or more may be retained for non-federal program use if the Corporation is compensated.

- Source documentation for other costs such as: purchases, travel, and contract payments;
- Source documentation for all in-kind and other matching contributions, including grant award documents and receipts form other funding sources.

4: **Effective Cash Management**

Take steps to ensure that cash is managed effectively by instituting the following practices:
• Deposit federal funds in an interest-bearing account

• Ensure that the accounting system tracks interest earned on federal funds (Retention of interest earned is allowed up to $100 for educational institutions (per OMB A-102) and $250 for non-profit organizations (per OMB A-110).

• Maintain separate general ledger accounts for each award (federal, state, or private) for each program year

• Prepare monthly bank reconciliations

• Prepare a schedule of all bills to be paid

5: **An Efficiently Designed Accounting Structure**

Design an efficient accounting structure that:

• Accounts for each award/grant separately

• Maintains federal/non-federal matching funds separately from grant funds

• Records in-kind contribution as both revenues and expenses.

For example, if personnel services valued at $40,000, supplies and equipment valued at $6,000, and equipment valued at $12,000, were donated to a sub-grantee during the program year, those values must be included under Revenues as Contributions and under Expenses as the respective objects of expenditure (i.e., salaries, supplies, equipment).

An effective accounting structure should facilitate easy transaction input and report generation. Accounting records should be complete with all AmeriCorps expenditures and local match amounts entered into the general ledger system. The general ledger should form the basis for the preparation of the Financial Status Report.

Financial statements should reflect the receipt and use of cash and in-kind contributions. The accounting system must include the account structure, accounting records, and procedures that define how and by whom the funds are handled. Accounting records must identify the receipt and the expenditure of California Service Corps funds. The accounting system should conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP, found at http://www.fasab.gov/accepted.html).

The accounting system must:

• Fully record the amount and disposition of all program funds

• Show receipt of funds and expenditures by source (e.g., federal, state, or local) and program year

• Identify the Sub-grantee-provided match funds and related expenditures in the general ledger.
- Identify all California Service Corps income and expenditures separately from non-California Service Corps funds. Financial institutions used for the deposit of grant funds must be insured by either the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC).

- Provide accurate and current financial reporting information.

- Provide a clear audit trail for all accounting records and supporting documentation.

- Establish and maintain a system of internal accounting control adequate to safeguard

- Grant assets

- Review the grant accounting and financial data for accuracy and reliability

- Promote operational efficiency.

**General ledger accounting structure**

Expenditures of grant funds must be recorded in categories that mirror the grant award. All general ledger account entries must be supported by subsidiary records with the understanding that the program must be able to show with documentation (i.e., work sheet) that general ledger entries can be reconciled (traced) to the reimbursement claim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost basis: cash, accrual, and modified accrual</th>
<th>Accounting systems for California Service Corps programs may be on a cash, accrual, or modified accrual basis. However, reimbursement requests submitted to California Service Corps can only be made on a cash basis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash basis</td>
<td>Revenue is recognized as earned when payment is received. Similarly, costs are recognized as expenses when the bills are paid, not when the bills are incurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrual basis</td>
<td>Revenue is recognized as earned when the transaction occurs regardless of the period in which the related cash is collected. Costs are recognized as expenses and matched with the revenue of the period to which they relate, regardless of when the actual bills are paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified accrual</td>
<td>A compromise between the cash and accrual systems and is used by most governmental units. Revenues are recognized either when they are received in cash (e.g., licenses or fines), or when collection of the amounts can be reasonably estimated to be received in the near future (e.g., property tax.) Expenses are generally recognized in the period in which goods and services are received or a liability is incurred.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6: Effective Budgetary Controls

The budget is a central part of fiscal control which, when compared to actual spending, can provide important information about variances from the original spending plan. To produce useful budgetary information:

- Design an effective accounting system
- Set up the budget control process
- Accumulate monthly expenditures
- Compare actual expenditures to budget
- Make appropriate revisions

7: Documented Time and Activity Reporting

All salaries and wages charged to AmeriCorps grants must be supported by signed Time and Attendance records. Sub-grantees must maintain written cost allocation procedures and individual time distribution records which allow sub-grantees to identify and segregate costs chargeable to the grant. Exceptions to time and attendance recordkeeping apply for State, Local, and Indian Tribal governments and educational institutions, which must comply with OMB A-87 and OMB A-21, respectively.

Required documentation includes the following:

- After-the-fact monthly activity report for each employee and member, signed by the employee or member and approved by a supervisor or other official of the organization;
- Time distribution records are required for those programs allocating an employee’s salary between an AmeriCorps grant and other funding source;

8: Meet Match Requirements and Properly Document In-Kind Contributions

All contributions, both cash and in-kind, must be properly valued and clearly identifiable from the grantee’s records, have adequate supporting documentation, and meet the criteria established by the appropriate circular (A-110 or A-102 implemented by 45 Code of Federal Regulations 2541).

9: Submit Accurate Reports On Time

Report in-kind contributions in financial statements and Financial Status Reports (FSRs). Submit, via the Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS), quarterly FSRs no later than 30 days after the end of the quarter and the final FSR no later than 90 days after the close of the grant. Prepare all financial reports with actual information drawn from the sub-grantee’s accounting system.
10: Maintain Good Internal Controls

Internal Controls make organizational operations more efficient by:

- Protecting organizational resources from waste, fraud, liability, and inefficiency
- Ensuring accuracy and reliability in accounting and operating information
- Securing compliance with company policies
- Evaluating the level of performance in all divisions of the organization

### Examples of good internal controls

- Maintain adequate segregation of duties. The same employee should not authorize a purchase, record the purchase, sign the check, and reconcile the bank statement in the accounting system. Utilize the Separation of Duties Worksheet (Attachment 19) to ensure that your organization has adequate segregation of duties.

- Employ a tiered approval process for disbursement of funds. Set differing levels for approving purchases by, for example, requiring two signatures on checks for purchases over $1,000.

- Maintain documented policies and procedures.

- Establish an adequate review process for financial reports and budgets.

- Maintain adequate cash management procedures, such as monthly bank reconciliations.

- Ensure the physical safety of assets by insuring, maintaining, and tracking property.

- Establish and maintain a system to track a members’ and employees’ time and activities; and

- Establish a system to follow-up on problems identified to ensure resolution.