



AmeriCorps
New Jersey

Formula Notice of Funding Opportunity
For New Planning Grants
Technical Assistance Session
for 2024/25 Program Year

Thursday, February 15, 2024

Purpose of Planning Grants

The Planning Grant application in this Formula NOFO seeks to support the development of AmeriCorps programs that will engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based interventions to solve community problems in future years. Planning grant recipients are expected to be better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle (2025/26). Planning grant recipients will engage in a year of planning an infrastructure that would eventually support the operations of an AmeriCorps Operating Grant.

Purpose of Planning Grants (cont.)

Planning Grant funds may not be used to support AmeriCorps members. Planning Grants provide funding that allows organizations to hire/designate a staff person/consultant who is responsible for working with the NJ Commission staff and outside consultants to develop a high-quality AmeriCorps program that is designed to meet a community need within the AmeriCorps Focus Areas of Education, Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity, Veterans and Military Families, Disaster Services, and Healthy Futures.

FORMULA NOFO SECTIONS

**SECTION I: NJ COMMISSION GRANT INFORMATION AND
TIMELINE (All Applicants)**

**SECTION II: PLANNING GRANT APPLICANTS (New
Applicants Only)**

*SECTION III: OPERATING GRANT APPLICANTS
(Recompeting Current Formula subgrantees, Formula
Fixed subgrantees, and current Planning Grantees – not
new Planning Grant applicants)*

SECTION I: NJ COMMISSION GRANT INFORMATION AND TIMELINE

ALL APPLICANTS

DATES*	24.25 ACNJ FORMULA GRANT ACTIVITIES
February 5	Dissemination of NOFO flyer announcing the 2024/25 AmeriCorps Formula competition. NOFO goes live on the NJ Department of State (NJ DOS) website
February 15	NOFO Technical Assistance Session - New via ZOOM. Live at 10:00 am. Click title to register and receive link (good for all TA sessions). Mandatory for NEW applicants. (only Planning Grant available for new applicants)
February 15	NOFO Technical Assistance Session - Recompete via ZOOM. Live at 2:00 pm. Click title to register and receive link (good for all TA sessions). Mandatory for RECOMPETING applicants.
February 23	Technical Assistance Session: Evidence, Logic Models and Performance Measures via ZOOM. 11:00 am. Click title to register and receive link (good for all TA sessions). Mandatory for Recompete applicants. Strongly Recommended for New Applicants
March 8	Notice of Intent to Apply due to Commission by 6PM. Click title to submit form (NEW and RECOMPETING applicants only). For information only/not binding.
March 22	Formula applications due to Commission on eGrants by 4:00 pm. (NEW and RECOMPETING Applicants only).
March 25	Staff review of applications and budgets are begun (NEW & RECOMPETING)
March 25	Technical Assistance session for Readers 1P via ZOOM. Independent reader review begins (NEW and RECOMPETING only)
March 28	Formula applications due to Commission on eGrants by 4:00 pm. (Continuation Applicants only).
April 1	Staff review of applications and budgets are begun (CONTINUATIONS ONLY)
April 9	Reader Arena Session 1P via ZOOM. (New & Recompete only) Arena scores & final rankings. Notification of applicants selected pending final Commission Board vote.
April 22	Revisions requested by staff due back from applicants
May 1	Commission board vote on selected applicants and continuations at 11A
May 10	NJ Commission target date for submission of Formula package to AmeriCorps.
May 17	Formula Applications due to AmeriCorps State and National

This Formula NOFO will fund the following types of grants:

PLANNING GRANTS: Planning Grants are available to agencies that are new to AmeriCorps. It provides funds **for one year** of planning and development of an infrastructure and application for an operating grant in the next program cycle. Planning grants do not include funds or slots for AmeriCorps members.

OPERATING GRANTS: Operating Grant funds are Cost Reimbursement Grants or Formula-Fixed Grants.

- **Cost Reimbursement** grants are available for programs that are currently in their third year of a three-year AmeriCorps program cycle. Operating grants are also available to applicants that have a current or prior planning grant. Funds are used for program operations and the living costs of a cadre of AmeriCorps members who will perform service.
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- **Formula-Fixed** grants are operating grants that have completed one full three-year cycle of an operating grant. Formula Fixed grantees do not have to demonstrate a budget and match. However, in order to successfully operate the program, the applicant will need to provide additional resources.

Applicants must read the following corresponding sections to the type of program they are submitting:

NOFO Sections	Planning Grants	OPERATING GRANTS Cost Reimbursement or Formula Fixed
Section I: NJ Commission Grant Information & Timeline	X	X
Section II: Planning Grant Applications	X	
Section III: Operating Grant Applications		X
Section IV: 2023 Mandatory Supplemental Information	X	X
Section V: 2023 AmeriCorps State and National Application Instructions	X	X
Section VI: 2023 AmeriCorps State and National Performance Measures		X
Section VII: Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)	X	X

NOFO Application Focus Areas

- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families
- Disaster Services
- Environmental Stewardship

Economic Opportunity

Improving the economic well-being and security of underserved individuals.

Education

Improving educational outcomes for underserved people, especially children. AmeriCorps is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes.

Healthy Futures

Support for health needs within communities, including mitigating the impacts of COVID19 and other public health crises, access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity, especially in underserved communities.

Veterans and Military Families

Improving the quality of life of veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors.

Disaster Services

Helping individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of disasters and increase community resiliency.

Environmental Stewardship

Supporting communities to become more resilient through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve land and water, increase renewable energy use and improve at-risk ecosystems, address climate change, especially in underserved households and communities.

Organizational Eligibility to Apply

Eligibility is open to:

- Indian Tribes
- institutions of higher education
- local governments
- nonprofit organizations
- state service commissions
- states and US Territories

Estimated Award/Slot Amounts, MSY's and Period of Performance

	Planning Grants	Cost Reimbursement or Formula Fixed Grants
Minimum MSY's	0	8 MSY's
Maximum MSY's	0	15 MSY's (Recompeting programs with 6 yrs. Of continuous funding may propose 18 MSY's
Maximum Funding	Up to \$85,000	\$375,000 (Recompeting programs with 6 yrs. Of continuous funding may apply for up to \$450,000.
Period of Performance	One year – 9/1/24-8/31/25	Three years – 9/1/24 – 8/31/27 *

Electronic Application Submission in eGrants

Applicants must submit applications electronically via [eGrants](#), AmeriCorps' web-based application system. AmeriCorps recommends that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a Word document, then copy and paste the text into the appropriate eGrants field no later than 10 days before the deadline.

The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must use their own eGrants account to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

Applicants should contact the AmeriCorps eGrants Hotline at (800) 942-2677 or via [eGrants Questions](#) if they have a problem when they create an account, prepare, or submit the application. AmeriCorps support hours vary by time of year, please check the site.

Application Content for PG's

Complete applications must include the following elements:

- **Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet:** This is automatically generated when applicants complete the data elements in the eGrants system.
- **Narrative Sections:**
 - Executive Summary: This is a brief description of the proposed program.
 - Program Design
 - Organizational Capability
 - Cost-Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy
- **Performance Measures**
- **Standard Form 424A Budget**
- Continuation Changes – enter N/A in this field
- Clarification – enter N/A in this field
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications

Page Limitations

- There are mandatory page limits to the **Narrative** section.
- Applications must not exceed **10 pages** for the Narrative
- In determining whether an application complies with page limits, the Commission will count the following for the **Narrative**:
 - The application's Executive Summary, SF 424 Facesheet, and The Narrative portions contained in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy sections of the application.
 - The Commission strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the "**Review**" tab prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit.

Notice of Intent to Apply

Submission of a Notice of Intent to Apply is requested and is due **Thursday, March 8, 2024**. Please complete the online form: [Notice of Intent to Apply for 24/25 AmeriCorps NJ Formula Funding](#)

You will need to answer the following questions

- Address
- Contact Name
- E-mail address
- Phone Number
- Focus area your organization plans to address

- Applications must be submitted electronically on **eGrants**

NO LATER THAN

Tuesday, March 22, 2024, 4:00 p.m.



Additional Documents

- Applicants are required to submit the following additional documents by the application submission deadline:
 - Online Financial Management Survey – all applicants
 - Optional – letters of support from partnering site organizations, stakeholders or matching partners. These would need to be submitted on the application submission due date and e-mailed to AmeriCorps.NJ@sos.nj.gov

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants must register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the SAM Quick Guide for Grantees.

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

Applications must include an Employer Identification Number.

Applications must include a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is generated as part of the SAM registration process.

SECTION II: PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

NEW APPLICANTS ONLY

Performance Goals or Expected Outcomes

In order to receive funding, Planning Grant staff/consultants must agree to engage in the following during their year of planning:_____

- Be committed to developing a high-quality Operating Grant application during the Competitive and/or Formula NOFO periods in 2024/25.
- Meet virtually with a designated NJ Commission staff member who will act as their program liaison on a regular basis, typically once a month.
- Attend all NJ Commission events, i.e., Starting Strong, Launch, Career Day, End of Year, National Service Conference and any other NJ Commission-sponsored events during the planning year.
- Participate in all NJ Commission scheduled monthly Program Director calls.

Performance Goals or Expected Outcomes (Cont.)

- Participate in all NJ Commission scheduled trainings for Program Directors throughout the planning year.
- Agree to visit a minimum of one or two existing AmeriCorps programs which will be selected by the NJ Commission staff.
- Agree to meet with staff from the Center for Research and Evaluation in Education and Human Services (CREEHS) located at Montclair State University to develop an evidence informed program design including Evidence, Logic Model and Performance Measures that will be used as part of the 2025/26 operating grant application. A minimum of \$10,000 needs to be budgeted for this training.
- Provide a minimum match of at least 24% cash and/or in-kind and seek commitments for match in the operating grant application.
- Submit quarterly progress and fiscal reports in the NJ Commission's On Corps system.

What Can a Planning Grant Fund?

Planning Grants can provide funding for staff/consultant time, travel and other costs related to work developing the program design, the grant application itself, develop stakeholder commitment, and participate in training related to AmeriCorps program management. This would result in the potential program applicant to have a stronger application and program than had they not had the planning grant.

Examples of grant line item/expenses (there may be others):

- ☐ Staffing, consultants, benefits, office space, travel
- ☐ Training sessions/conferences (NJ Commission requires planning grantees to send 1 staff person to all events/trainings; participate in director meetings, etc.)
- ☐ Allow use for planning program stakeholder meetings (room, supplies, lunch, etc.)

Planning Grant Selection Criteria

Categories/Subcategories	Percentage
Executive Summary	0
Program Design	50
Problem to Be Addressed	10
Theory of Change Vision Statement and Description	15
Future Use of AmeriCorps Members in an Operating Grant's Intervention	10
Planning Activities Timeline	15
Organizational Capability	25
Organizational Background and Staffing	20
Commitment to AmeriCorps Requirements	5
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	25

I. Program Design (50 percent)

I.a. Problem to Be Addressed (10 points)

1. Describe the existing problem you would address in an AmeriCorps operating grant. Explain why the problem is prevalent and severe in communities where the program plans to serve.
2. Provide cited relevant studies and data supporting the problem.
3. Identify causes of the problem including the role current or historical inequities faced by underserved communities may play in contributing to the problem.

I. Program Design (50 percent)

I.b. Theory of Change Statement (15 points)

Identify an initial Theory of Change that includes the Problem, Intervention (activities to be carried out by the future AmeriCorps members) and Anticipated Outcomes.

Describe how the proposed intervention is responsive to the identified community problem.

Describe how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the Theory of Change.

Describe how the expected outcomes articulated in the application narrative represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem you have identified.

I. Program Design (50 percent)

I.c. Future Use of AmeriCorps Members in an Operating Grant's Intervention (10 points)

Describe the role of AmeriCorps members in a future operating grant and (if applicable) of leveraged volunteers.

Describe the rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver the intervention(s).

Describe how the service role of AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.

Provide an estimated number of AmeriCorps members who will deliver the intervention.

I. Program Design (50 percent)

I.d. Planning Activities Timeline (15 points)

Identify an estimated initial timeline of activities you would undertake to develop an infrastructure for a future application and operating program. Elements of the timeline should include at a minimum the following elements. These elements do not need to be developed at the time of planning grant submission, just during the planning grant phase:

A finalized **Theory of Change and Logic Model**. Include time to be spent flushing out these elements with the Commission's contracted Center for Research and Evaluation in Education and Human Services (CREEHS) at Montclair State University.

Evidence-based **core activities** that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:

- The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
- The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
- The target population for the intervention.

I. Program Design (50 percent)

Identification of **Performance Measures** as a strategy to measure program impact.

A plan for **data collection** to report progress in performance measures.

Plan for creating an **advisory board or stakeholders** who will provide input on the planning process.

Plan for identification of potential **community partners and service sites**, or at least the criteria by which they will be selected.

Plan for **organizational capacity**, site supervisor training, oversight and program evaluation.

Plan for recruitment, selection, orientation, content training, supervision, support and retention of members.

Plan for inclusion and diversity in members and beneficiaries including participation in the Commission's Diversity Council or development of a host agency diversity council.

I. Program Design (50 percent)

Plan for career building and leadership development of members.

Creation of an operating budget and detail.

Plan for securing in-kind and cash match for 2024/25 planning grant and 2025/26 operating year.

Plan for development of forms and templates to support program operations (member service agreement, site agreement, AmeriCorps policies and procedures).

Completion of draft application for the Formula (Winter/Spring of 2025) NOFO.

Incorporate the following in the planning timeline:

- Monthly check-in calls with Commission staff
- Monthly Program Manager calls with the Commission
- Commission and ASC trainings and Events as outlined in the NOFO.

Timelines for activities are reasonable and feasible.

II. Organizational Capability (25 points)

II.a. Organizational Background and Staffing (20 points)

Detail the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps planning grant as well as providing for its oversight and management.

Describe your agency's experience and expertise in addressing the focus issue to produce an AmeriCorps Operating Program application.

Provide a statement about the status of your agency's SAM registrations, Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) numbers, and NJ Charities Registration.

II.b. Commitment to AmeriCorps Requirements (5 points)

The organization agrees to adhere to all AmeriCorps rules and regulations included in the AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions, Prohibited Activities and Criminal History Check policies.

III. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)

Budget is submitted without mathematical errors.

Proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.

Budget does not include costs for AmeriCorps members.

Budget includes costs for all NJ Commission and ASC required meetings and events.

Budget includes a minimum of \$10,000 for cost of training on Evidence, Logic Models and Performance Measures.

CREATING YOUR APPLICATION IN EGRANTS

Planning Grant Applicants will need to refer to the **SECTION V: 2024 AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS** in order to create the application.

Follow the instructions listed in the Table of Contents for NEW applicants with the following exceptions:

- **Logic Model** – Planning Grant applicants will not need to fill out this section. Enter N/A into all of the fields in this link.
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- **Budget** – Planning Grants do not require costs for AmeriCorps members. Only fill out Sections I and III. Do not enter costs for Section II which are the member costs.
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- **Performance Measures** – Planning Grants do not require Performance Measures. However, applicants will need to enter information into this section or eGrants will not approve submission of the application. Applicants will need to follow the instructions below **“Performance Measures for Planning Grants.”**
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CONTACT INFORMATION

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