

# AmeriCorps 101: Introduction to AmeriCorps



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## Intended Audience

- Organizations interested in applying for **AmeriCorps State** (single-state) funding in the State of Missouri
- Organizations unfamiliar with National Service and/or AmeriCorps
- Organizations unfamiliar with AmeriCorps State, but have previous experience with the other AmeriCorps streams of service (e.g. AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC)



## Objectives

- To understand key terms and concepts
- To understand the basic concepts of AmeriCorps
- To understand the purpose of AmeriCorps funding:
  - Eligibility information
  - Evidence basis
  - Focus areas and example service activities
  - Prohibited activities
- To understand the definition of an AmeriCorps Member



## Key Terms and Concepts

### Grant Types (Single-State vs. Multi-State):

#### Single State (AmeriCorps State):

An AmeriCorps program operating solely within one state. The organization applies for AmeriCorps funding through the state service commission (Missouri Community Service Commission) per the state guidelines.

#### Multi-State (AmeriCorps National):

An AmeriCorps program operating in two or more states. The organization applies for AmeriCorps funding directly through the Corporation for National and Community Service and consults with the state service commissions in those states in which service activities will take place.

*If you are a multi-state grant applicant, please refer to the CNCS Notice of Funding Opportunity for additional information: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2017>*



## Key Terms and Concepts

### AmeriCorps Grant (AmeriCorps State):

Funding provided to a single-state applicant through the state service commission to operate an AmeriCorps program. There are two processes through which funding is awarded:

#### Formula Grant:

AmeriCorps funding provided through a state grant competition. Available funding is contingent upon a state population-based formula appropriation on the state level.

#### Competitive Grant\*:

AmeriCorps funding provided through a national grant competition. Available funding is contingent upon budget appropriations on the federal level.

*\*In Missouri, the competitive process is "by invitation only", meaning the Missouri Community Service Commission invites current sub-grantees (not first-time applicants) that meet specific criteria to apply via the national funding competition. First-time applicants are considered for formula funding.*



## Key Terms and Concepts

### Applicant:

An organization applying for AmeriCorps funding. The following outlines the type of applicants:

#### New Applicant:

An organization that has not previously received an AmeriCorps grant (first-time applicant).

#### Continuation Applicant:

A current sub-grantee (AmeriCorps program) that has been funded for Year 1 or 2 of a three-year grant cycle and meets the definition of "same project" (no change in program design).

#### Re-compete Applicant:

A current sub-grantee (AmeriCorps program) that is in Year 3 of a three-year grant cycle and meets the definition of "same project" (no change in program design).



## Key Terms and Concepts

### Grantee:

The direct recipient of AmeriCorps grant funds. For AmeriCorps State, the Missouri Community Service Commission (also referred to as "MCSC" or "the Commission") is the direct grantee of the Corporation for National and Community Service (also referred to as "CNCS" or "the Corporation").

### Sub-grantee:

The sub-recipient of AmeriCorps grant funds. For AmeriCorps State, the AmeriCorps program (organization that receives an AmeriCorps grant and operates a service program) is the sub-grantee of the MCSC.

### Service Location:

The places in the community where AmeriCorps Members conduct or complete their service activities (also referred to as "service sites" or "service site locations").



## Key Terms and Concepts

### AmeriCorps Member:

An individual enrolled for a specific term of service with an approved AmeriCorps program; also referred to as "Member" or "ACM".

### Member Service Year (MSY):

One MSY is equivalent to one full-time AmeriCorps Member (1700-hour commitment). AmeriCorps funds are contingent on the number of MSYs requested by the applicant organization.

### AmeriCorps Member Term/Slot Type:

There are five types of AmeriCorps Member terms/slots: 1) full-time, 2) half-time, 3) reduced half-time, 4) quarter-time, and 5) minimum-time. The total MSYs a program requests depends on the number and type of slots included in a particular program design.

*There is a MSY Calculator in Tab #3 of the MCSC's budget worksheet template.*



## Key Terms and Concepts

### Living Allowance:

The stipend provided to AmeriCorps Members by the AmeriCorps program to support them during a term of service. Thresholds based on the Member term/slot are outlined in the MO Notice of Funding Opportunity.

### Cost per MSY:

Total amount of money requested from AmeriCorps (CNCS share of the budget) divided by the total number of MSYs requested. There is a maximum cost per MSY based on the type of grant requested (outlined in the MO Notice of Funding Opportunity).

### Segal AmeriCorps Education Award:

An award made available to an AmeriCorps Member upon successfully completing a term of service. The education award is provided and maintained by the National Service Trust; not the AmeriCorps program or commission. An AmeriCorps Member has 7 years from the completion date of the term of service to use the education award for qualified educational expenses or to repay qualified student loans.



## Corporation for National & Community Service *About CNCS*



### Mission Statement (summarized):

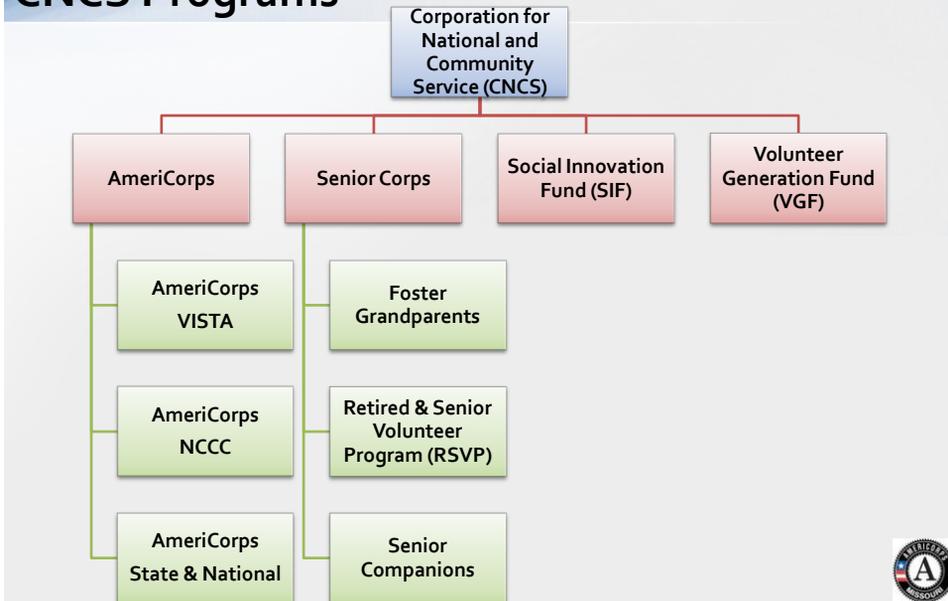
The mission of the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering.

CNCS – through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund – has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

CNCS, created in 1993 through the signing of the National & Community Service Trust Act, is the nation's largest grant maker supporting service and volunteering.



## CNCS Programs



## Missouri Community Service Commission

### *About Us*



### Mission Statement:

The Missouri Community Service Commission (MCSC) connects Missourians of all ages and backgrounds in an effort to improve unmet community needs through direct and tangible service. The MCSC serves as the administrator for AmeriCorps State funding in Missouri by awarding monetary grants and providing oversight, monitoring, technical assistance and support to its sub-grantees.

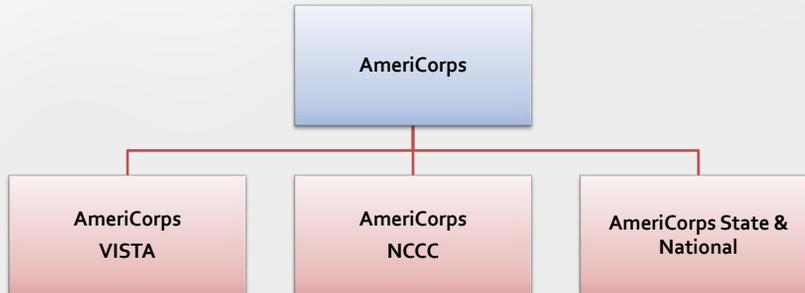
**MCSC, created in 1994 in response to the National & Community Service Trust Act of 1993, is the Governor-designated state service commission that administers AmeriCorps State funding in Missouri.**



## AmeriCorps

### About the Program

- AmeriCorps is an umbrella consisting of three distinct programs (or streams of service).



## AmeriCorps

### Streams of Service

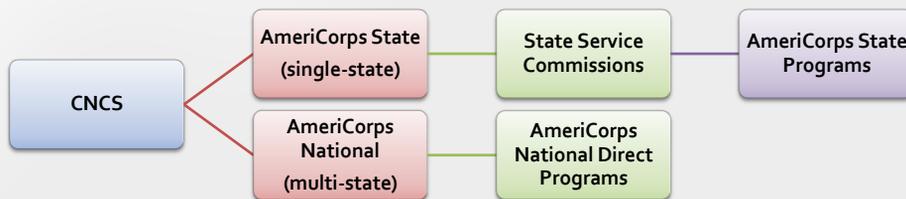
- **AmeriCorps VISTA (*Volunteers in Service to America*)**
  - Provides full-time AmeriCorps Members to non-profits, faith-based and other community organizations, as well as public agencies to create and expand programs (capacity building) that bring low income individuals and communities out of poverty.
  - <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-vista>
- **AmeriCorps NCCC (*National Civilian Community Corps*)**
  - Full-time residential program for individuals, ages 18-24, who engage in short-term service projects (direct service) across the country.
  - <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-nccc>



## AmeriCorps *Streams of Service*

- **AmeriCorps State & National**

- Provides grants to eligible organizations in order to provide opportunities for individuals (AmeriCorps Members) to serve communities through direct service.



The remainder of this presentation will focus on AmeriCorps State (single-state) programs. If you are interested in operating an AmeriCorps program in multiple states (AmeriCorps National Direct), please apply directly to CNCS for funding.



## AmeriCorps Grants *Purpose of Funding*

- AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps Members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. The AmeriCorps grant:
  - Provides partial funding to support AmeriCorps programs. Grant recipients must contribute cash or in-kind match funds;
  - Is solely for program-related expenses; not for general organizational expenses; and
  - Includes an allotment of AmeriCorps Member positions and funds directly tied to the number of AmeriCorps Members.

AmeriCorps funds cannot supplant resources that 'organically' exist in a community.



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Eligibility*

#### Eligible organizations include:

1. Institutions of higher education
2. Local governments (includes school districts)
3. Nonprofit organizations
4. State agencies

#### Eligible organizations should have the following:

- Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Duns & Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number
- Active System for Awards Management (SAM) registration

#### Ineligible organizations include:

1. Organizations convicted of a federal crime.
2. Organizations engaged in lobbying activities.
3. Organizations with delinquent federal debt.



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Evidence Basis*

- Evidence basis (***evidence-informed or evidence-based***) refers to an organization's demonstration of why it is proposing a particular intervention (service activity) to address the identified community problem. Evidence demonstrates the likelihood an intervention will produce positive outcomes.
- Evidence for the intervention could be supported by one or more of the following:
  - Results from impact evaluations
  - Research studies
  - Past performance measurement outcome data



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Focus Areas*

- AmeriCorps State grants aim to focus funding in six areas identified by the Serve America Act:
  - Disaster Services
  - Economic Opportunity
  - Education
  - Environmental Stewardship
  - Healthy Futures
  - Veterans and Military Families

Example activities will be noted on the subsequent slides.  
Organizations will propose performance measures (outputs and outcomes) that align with proposed service activities.



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Focus Areas (Example Service Activities)*

#### **Disaster Services:**

- Training individuals in disaster preparedness
- Responding to disaster events
- Providing disaster recovery or mitigation

#### **Economic Opportunity:**

- Improving the housing situation for economically disadvantaged individuals
- Providing financial literacy services to economically disadvantaged individuals
- Providing job training and/or other skill development services to disadvantaged individuals

#### **Education:**

- Improving the school readiness of pre-kindergarten children
- Improving the academic performance or engagement of K-12 students
- Matching economically disadvantaged youth to mentors for a period of at least 6 months (school-based) or 11 months (community-based)



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Focus Areas (Example Service Activities)*

#### Environmental Stewardship:

- Improving the environmental condition of distressed public lands and waterways
- Improving the energy efficiency of low-income housing through weatherization or retrofitting
- Training, certifying, and/or placing AmeriCorps Members in green jobs

#### Healthy Futures:

- Enhancing the quality of life for homebound or older adults and/or individuals with disabilities
- Providing nutrition education to children and youth to reduce childhood obesity
- Increasing access to food resources for economically disadvantaged individuals

#### Veterans and Military Families:

- Engaging veterans and military families in service as AmeriCorps Members or volunteers
- Repairing housing units made available to veterans
- Assisting veterans in pursuing educational opportunities



## AmeriCorps Grants

### *Note: Prohibited Activities*

- The following are activities that staff, Members, and volunteers of AmeriCorps programs **may not** engage in while charging time to the AmeriCorps program:
  - Political activity and advocacy
  - Religious activity
  - Benefitting for-profit entities
  - Voter registration
  - Abortion services

AmeriCorps staff, Members, and volunteers also **may not** recruit individuals to engage in these prohibited activities.



## AmeriCorps Members

### *Definition*

- An individual enrolled for a specific term of service with an approved AmeriCorps program.
  - AmeriCorps Members are not volunteers or employees. They have a unique role in the community or organization.
- AmeriCorps Members may be eligible to receive in-service and post-service benefits including:
  - Living allowance
  - Health care coverage
  - Child care assistance
  - Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

Organizations are responsible for developing a plan and screening process to recruit AmeriCorps Members.



## AmeriCorps Members

### *AmeriCorps Members vs. Volunteers*

- AmeriCorps Members have a contract (service agreement) with the AmeriCorps program.
- AmeriCorps Members must receive adequate supervision.
- AmeriCorps Members must receive extensive, program-specific training.
- AmeriCorps Members must commit to a specific term of service based on the slot type (e.g. full-time, half-time, etc.)

Organizations are responsible for a developing a plan for Member training and supervision.



## AmeriCorps Members

### *Eligibility*

- AmeriCorps Members must be:
  - U.S. citizens, U.S. Nationals, or lawful permanent residents of the U.S.;
  - At least 17 years of age (no upper age limit for AmeriCorps State);
  - High school graduates or GED recipients (or working toward this goal); and
  - Subject to a National Service Criminal History Check including NSOPW sex offender registry check, state of residence and state of service checks, and FBI fingerprint check.

AmeriCorps programs may add program-specific requirements to these minimum eligibility requirements.



## AmeriCorps Members

### *Terms of Service*

Member Term	Member Service Year (MSY)	Minimum Hours Served	Maximum Length of Term
Full-time	1.00000	1,700	12 months
Half-time	0.50000	900	12 months
Reduced half-time	0.38095	675	12 months
Quarter-time	0.26455	450	12 months
Minimum-time	0.21164	300	12 months

The AmeriCorps program may use one or multiple types of Member slots, provided the total requested MSY adheres to the requirements outlined in the MO Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The organization should review the intensity of proposed interventions as well as the variety of Member responsibilities to determine the number and type of Member positions needed to effectively impact the community/communities in which the program will serve.



## Technical Assistance

Review the grant materials available on the MCSC Grants Page:

<http://movolunteers.org/grants.htm>

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