



2010 AmeriCorps State PLANNING GRANT

Request for Applications (RFA)



Connecticut Commission on Community Service
Connecticut Department of Higher Education
61 Woodland Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06105
(860) 947-1827
www.serveCT.ctdhe.org

Applications Must Be Received By 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 22, 2010 to jjohnson@ctdhe.org.

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ATTACHMENT

State Vendor Profile Form

SECTION I: OVERVIEW

A. AMERICORPS AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Unique local needs are the driving force behind AmeriCorps national service programs. In keeping with their motto - “getting things done,” AmeriCorps members engage in direct service and volunteer recruitment. The direct service of AmeriCorps members addresses local problems and provides tangible benefits to communities. Examples of direct service include tutoring, health education outreach, neighborhood watches and clearing park trails.

AmeriCorps programs provide opportunities for participants – called “members” – to contribute a year of their lives in addressing environmental, educational, public safety or other unmet human needs. As long as they follow a set of basic AmeriCorps member eligibility requirements, programs are able to recruit, screen, enroll and train their own members.

National service programs such as AmeriCorps support community volunteers who are meeting pressing needs in their local communities. These national service programs do not replace volunteers, but instead complement their work by engaging members in intensive, extended community service.

B. PLANNING GRANTS

Operating a national service program requires extensive planning and preparation. Successful national service programs have overcome challenges such as managing government grants, raising matching funds, supervising national service participants and designing programs that make the best use of members. AmeriCorps planning grants can provide resources to organizations that face some of these challenges.

The Connecticut Commission on Community Service (CCCS) will target its AmeriCorps planning grants at organizations that see a community need for services and have an idea for meeting that need, but who have not fully developed a plan to provide the needed services. Planning grants will fund program development rather than actual programs, but will prepare organizations to compete for AmeriCorps operating grants that will fund their proposed program. Planning grant recipients are not guaranteed operating grants, but will have time and resources to produce very competitive operating grant proposals.

The CCCS will consider planning grant applications that meet at least one of the following three priorities: programs that (1) involve faith-based and/or secular community-based organizations, colleges and universities, municipal and state government agencies; (2) focus on ensuring students a successful pathway from middle and high school to college, or (3) significantly expand the use of Federal Work Study funds for community service.

C. THE CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY SERVICE (CCCS)

CCCS has two primary purposes. It administers AmeriCorps national service grants and promotes service and volunteerism throughout the state.

CCCS administers AmeriCorps grants in collaboration with the federal Corporation for National and Community Service. In Connecticut, 549 AmeriCorps members serve under the sponsorship of 28 public-private partnerships to meet Connecticut's human, educational, public safety and environmental needs. CCCS provides AmeriCorps programs with extensive training and ongoing technical assistance. Each program works closely with the CCCS program officer to ensure progress towards its performance measures, a meaningful experience for AmeriCorps members, and compliance with applicable regulations. CCCS provides nearly \$2 million in AmeriCorps grants each year.

CCCS supports the larger field of service and volunteerism through policy and other initiatives. Its mission is to foster a vibrant culture of service through volunteerism. This mission is accomplished by securing and granting funds; selecting, training and monitoring high-quality grantees; recognizing the success and effectiveness of volunteer programs and activities; developing and sharing resources; creating networks among volunteer organizations; serving as a bridge between the public and non profit sectors; and supporting and publicly recognizing community service on college campuses. Examples of the Commission's institutional and financial support are:

- **Connecticut Campus Compact Collaborative** - By leveraging state funds, the Commission provides support to Connecticut Campus Compact (housed at Fairfield University). The goals of the compact collaborative are to increase the service, service-learning and community partnerships at institutions of higher education in Connecticut; strengthen the infrastructure on college and university campuses in Connecticut for service, service-learning and community partnership activities; and encourage the recognition of students, student groups and faculty who exhibit exemplary community service.
- **Connecticut Conference on Volunteerism** – The Commission has been a past sponsor and supporter of the largest annual training event for volunteer managers in the state.
- **Connecticut Higher Education Community Service Awards** – a recognition program that highlights the community service being done by students and faculty on Connecticut's college campuses.

D. THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Established in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service. The Corporation supports a range of programs, providing opportunities for participants to serve full-time and part-time, as individuals or as part of a team. The Corporation's three major service initiatives are AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America and the National Senior Service Corps.

Learn and Serve America provides grants to schools, colleges, and nonprofit groups to support efforts to engage more than 3,700 Connecticut students in community service linked to academic achievement and the development of civic skills. This type of learning, called service learning, improves communities while preparing young people for a lifetime of responsible citizenship. In addition to providing grants, Learn and Serve America serves as a resource on service and service-learning to teachers, faculty members, schools, and community groups.

More than 5,900 seniors in Connecticut contribute their time and talents in one of three Senior Corps programs. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to more than 1,800 young people who have special needs. Senior Companions help more than 300 homebound seniors and other adults maintain independence in their own homes. Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers conduct safety patrols for local police departments, participate in environmental projects, tutor and mentor youth, respond to natural disasters, and provide other services through more than 790 groups across Connecticut.

For more information on the Corporation, see their website at www.nationalservice.org.

SECTION II: PURPOSE AND GUIDELINES

A. PURPOSE

General Purpose

CCCS will make planning grants available to applicants who have identified a concept for an AmeriCorps program, but need additional resources to plan, develop and prepare the program for implementation. Planning grants will fund program development from June 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011. The “final” products for planning grant recipients will essentially be an AmeriCorps operating grant proposal that will be due in June 2011.

Applicants must have the capacity to administer government grants. Small organizations that lack the required infrastructure can still benefit from planning grants by partnering with a legal applicant that is able to manage an AmeriCorps planning grant.

This Request for Applications (RFA) focuses on developing AmeriCorps programs that address specific priorities identified by CCCS and the Corporation. These priorities are to support:

- Programs that use AmeriCorps resources to significantly involve faith and/or community-based nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, municipal and state government agencies, including coalitions of small local organizations, in engaging more community members to serve and meet critical local needs;
- Plans to ensure students a successful pathway from middle and high school to college, while providing more opportunities for them to serve their communities; and
- Higher educational institutions that plan to use AmeriCorps resources to substantially increase the use of Federal Work Study funds to support more community-based service placements for students.

Planning grants must incorporate at least one of the priorities, but can incorporate several priorities into their design as part of their strategy to address local needs. For example, a university might use Federal Work Study funds to support students who would recruit students and other volunteers for local community service projects. A collaboration of faith-based

organizations might recruit middle and high school student volunteers as part of a program to meet a critical local need.

Fundable Activities

Planning grants will fund activities that are tied to program planning, development and preparation. Fundable activities include, but are not limited to:

- Consultants or contract staff to assist with planning process projects;
- Compiling community needs-related information to assist with designing a program (for example, an organization has already determined that there is a need to provide services to homeless veterans, but would like to conduct surveys to determine what specific services would be most valuable);
- Organizational assessments (evaluations of an applicants financial systems and other internal processes);
- Travel to CCCS Planning Grant Training and Technical Assistance Sessions;
- Outreach to potential community partners;
- Partnership planning meetings; and
- Training and technical assistance aimed at building an organization’s ability to manage an AmeriCorps program.

2010 AmeriCorps Planning Grant Training and Technical Assistance Sessions

Planning grant recipients are required to participate in the training and technical assistance sessions that will be held from June 2010 through February 2011. These sessions are designed to provide planning grant recipients the building blocks needed to develop a compelling and competitive AmeriCorps proposal. CCCS’s AmeriCorps planning grant recipients may include travel expenses for participation in these sessions as part of their planning grant budget. The tentative schedule for the outreach and training sessions are as follows (please note that dates and topics are subject to change):

All sessions will be held at 61 Woodland Street, Hartford.

June 1, 2010	AmeriCorps, CNCS and CCCS 101
July 13, 2010	Identifying Compelling Community Need and Partnership Development
September 14, 2010	AmeriCorps Members – Recruitment, Training and Responsibilities
October 19, 2010	Developing Measurable Outputs and Outcomes
November 16, 2010	Fiscal and Administrative Systems
January 11, 2011	Plan for Self-Assessment and Improvement – Evaluation Plans
February 8, 2011	Developing Community Strengthening Service Activities

B. AMERICORPS PROGRAM DESIGN

Although planning grant applicants do not need to have a fully developed program, they may wish to keep several elements of AmeriCorps program design in mind as they prepare their proposals. For example, member development and training is a core component of any AmeriCorps program. With this in mind, a planning grant applicant might look for prospective partners with an eye toward organizations that can provide specialized education and training. The points below summarize some basic components of AmeriCorps programs.

Direct benefit/getting things done: AmeriCorps programs focus on an identified, compelling community need. A program's members must engage in service activities that benefit the community and make a demonstrable impact on the community need.

Partnerships: AmeriCorps programs must develop partnerships with local organizations, including community-based organizations; k-12 schools, colleges and universities; religious institutions; local state and federal government agencies; businesses; foundations; health care organizations and other streams of service.

Strengthening communities: AmeriCorps programs actively support the development of their communities through community events and forums, national days of service and community service opportunities.

Member development: AmeriCorps programs develop the skills, citizenship and service ethic of their members. This includes adequate supervision for members at different service sites.

Members: Full-time AmeriCorps members serve at least 1,700 hours in a year. Their benefits include a minimum living allowance of \$11,800 (with a maximum living allowance of \$23,600), health coverage, and an education award of \$5,350 upon successful completion of service. Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is paid by the National Service Trust. Eligible members also receive childcare benefits. Members can also serve part-time.

Administrative systems: A program's legal applicant should have strong accounting and financial procedures that enable it to administer government funds.

C. PLANNING GRANT PRODUCTS

Grantees will be expected to prepare four documents during the nine months of their planning grant period: (1) a draft partnership form, (2) a draft AmeriCorps member plan, (3) a draft financing plan, and (4) a draft of the program's performance measures and evaluation plans. By preparing these documents, planning grant recipients will be developing many of the major components of an AmeriCorps operating grant proposal. CCCS will provide more information – including sample forms, sample plans and performance measure worksheets – to grantees after final planning grant funding decisions are made. In submitting their planning grant proposals, applicants should articulate a planning process that will allow them to produce the following products:

1. The draft partnership form should describe the proposed program's major partners and their roles. Applicants should include partner contact information, clearly outline each organization's contribution to the partnership (cash, in-kind support, equipment, etc.) and describe each partner's role in the program (service site, training provider, legal applicant, etc.). Grantees are expected to submit their draft partnership forms no later than September 30, 2010.
2. Member plans will provide a blueprint for how a program will recruit, place and utilize its AmeriCorps members. The plan should contain basic information on member

recruitment (who will recruit members and possible sources for members), selection and screening, placement (where members will serve) and activities (service activities and training). Grantees should submit member plans no later than November 30, 2010.

3. Financing plans should describe how a partnership would fund its proposed program. The plan should explain how the partnership would provide the matching funds as required by AmeriCorps operating grants. Plans should identify which of the program's partners are responsible for securing the matching funds. If the partnership is not able to provide the minimum match, plans should state the shortfall, identify potential outside sources and identify which partners will be responsible for pursuing these leads. Grantees should submit financing plans no later than January 31, 2011.
4. Performance measures and evaluation plans should describe the proposed program's primary and secondary performance measures and outline a system for evaluation. AmeriCorps operating programs are required to align at least one set of performance measures in your primary service category. Once they have developed these performance measures, programs are able to conduct evaluations to analyze the success of their program activities. These evaluation results are useful measures of program quality for CCCS, as well as other private/public funders. Performance measures and evaluation plans are due no later than January 31, 2011.

D. GRANT TERMS AND REQUIREMENTS

Grant Period

The grant period for the 2010 AmeriCorps planning grant will be from June 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011 with no renewal opportunities available. Grantees may not invoice CCCS for expenses charged to the planning grant until an executed contract is in place. Once an executed contract is in place, the CCCS will issue a check for 90% of the award. The final 10% will be issued after the grantee has submitted all four grant products described above. All grantees must submit a final report to CCCS detailing grant expenses by line item no later than April 30, 2011. Any grant funds that remain unexpended must be returned to CSSS by May 15, 2011. All grantees must attend all *2010 AmeriCorps Planning Grant Training and Technical Assistance Sessions*.

Size of Grants

Approximately \$150,000 is available to support 2010 AmeriCorps planning grants. Applicants may request \$10,000 to support the work described as fundable activities. **GRANT AWARDS ARE CONTINGENT UPON STATE FUNDING.**

Eligibility

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including labor organizations, faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within the state (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; and partnerships or consortia are eligible to apply for the grants described in this Notice. The CCCS encourages organizations that have never received AmeriCorps funding to apply. Previously funded AmeriCorps programs are eligible to apply. Existing AmeriCorps*State programs must propose a new program that differs significantly from its existing program design to be eligible to receive planning grant funds.

SECTION III: SELECTION TIMELINE, PROCESS OVERVIEW & CRITERIA

A. SELECTION TIMELINE

March 5	RFA available
March 22	Proposals due via e-mail submission to CCCS, jjohnson@ctdhe.org .
March 31	Final 2010 AmeriCorps planning grant decisions are announced
April 5	State contractual paperwork mailed to legal applicant
May 1	State contractual paperwork must be fully signed and received by CCCS.
June 1	Beginning of 2010 AmeriCorps Planning Grant

B. PROCESS OVERVIEW

Applications will be selected using a staff review. Staff will score applications based on a rubric. Staff will screen for strong evidence of partnership commitment and program concept. The staff will develop a recommended portfolio of the planning grants for funding.

C. SELECTION CRITERIA

Program Concept (40%): Well-documented, compelling community need, or well-designed process for documenting need. Potential for AmeriCorps members to make a demonstrable impact on community need.

Planning Process (30%): Well-designed planning process that supports the completion of the required products in a timely manner. Well-defined roles for staff involved in the planning process.

Partnership (20%): Existing partnership, or potential for a strong community partnership to be developed, with well-defined roles for partners. Partnership has, or plans to develop, significant expertise in the need addressed.

Organizational Capacity (10%): Demonstrated ability to manage federal funds.

D. PREFERENCES

Geographic Distribution

In addition to the selection criteria outlined, CCCS may consider geographic distribution of planning grant recipients and existing AmeriCorps programs in its final selection of planning grant awards.

E. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance will be available via phone and email. Applicants with technical assistance or other questions may contact Jaimy Blazynski at 860-947-1827, or jblazynski@ctdhe.org.

SECTION IV: APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Completed applications must be received by CCCS, jjohnson@ctdhe.org by **Monday, March 22, 2010 at 11:59 p.m.** Faxed, courier deliveries and late submissions will not be accepted.

B. INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must submit an application that consists of the following components in the following order.

1. State Title Page: Complete as appropriate.
2. Budget Form and Budget Narrative: Prepare a budget narrative following the instructions provided in this guidance. From the budget narrative, complete the budget form.
3. Program Narrative: The program narrative should cover the information requested below. Applicants must address each of the points below. CCCS will use the narrative and budget to determine how well an application meets the selection criteria above.
4. State Vendor Forms



FOR CCCS USE ONLY

Connecticut Commission on Community Service
2010 Title Page

2010 AMERICORPS PLANNING GRANTS

Program Title _____

Legal Applicant _____

Address _____

Contact Person _____

Contact Person Phone Number _____ E-mail _____

Type of Applicant: Insert Letter in Box

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| A. State | H. Independent School District |
| B. County | I. State Controlled Institution of Higher Learning |
| C. Municipal | J. Private University |
| D. Township | K. Indian Tribe |
| E. Interstate | L. Individual |
| F. Inter-municipal | M. Profit Organization |
| G. Special District | N. Private Non-Profit Organization |
| | O. Federal Government |
| | P. HQ Internal Organizations |
| | Q. State Education Agency |
| | R. Territory |
| | S. Other (specify) _____ |

A complete AmeriCorps Planning Grant application includes, in the following order:

- State Title Page (this page)
- Budget Form
- Budget Narrative
- Program Narrative
- Completed Vendor Profile Form

A complete package must include all items listed above and must be received by 11:59 p.m., Monday, March 22, 2010 to jjohnson@ctdhe.org.

**INSTRUCTIONS:
BUDGET FORM**

Legal Applicant _____
Program Title _____

TOTAL

A. Staff

Salaries

Benefits

Other (please specify in Budget Narrative)

SUBTOTAL A

B. Other Planning Costs

Travel

Supplies

Local Transportation

Other (please specify in Budget Narrative)

SUBTOTAL B

C. TOTAL BUDGET (SUM A + B) = \$10,000

The budget should be sufficient to perform the tasks described in the proposal narrative. Do not include unexplained amounts for miscellaneous or contingency costs or unallowable expenses such as entertainment costs. Round all figures to the nearest dollar. Do not request cents.

Please type budget form or recreate comparable form for submission. Please attach a budget narrative to the budget form.

Legal Applicant/Program Title

From the state title page, copy the name of the Legal Applicant and title of the Program.

Item A. Staff

Salaries. Include the portion of staff costs that are attributed directly to the planning process. You may include consultants.

Benefits. Include costs of fringe benefits for staff working on the planning process.

Other. Include any other staff related costs

Subtotal A. Add each row to arrive at subtotal.

Item B. Other Planning Costs

Include costs that are directly related to the planning grant process. Examples follow.

Travel. Costs associated with transportation, lodging, subsistence and other related expenses for staff.

Supplies. Include the funds for the purchase of supplies and materials, including equipment that does not fit the definition below. You must individually list any single item costing more than \$1,000.

Local Transportation. Costs associated with traveling locally such as mileage reimbursement for use of a car, etc.

Other. Include in this line item Internet costs up to a maximum of \$400. Allowable costs in this section also may include utilities, and telephone and Internet expenses that are directly and specifically used for the planning grant process. List each item and provide a justification in the budget narrative.

Subtotal B. Add each row to arrive at subtotal.

Item C. Total Budget

Add Items A and B for total budget. The total budget for Items A and B should equal \$10,000.

**INSTRUCTIONS:
AMERICORPS PLANNING GRANT BUDGET NARRATIVE**

It will be easier to complete the budget narrative first, using the line items on the form as a guide, and then transfer the totals to the budget form. You should organize the budget narrative in the same order as the Budget Form.

Applicants are not required to match planning grant funds.

Budget Items A-B – Planning Cost

Clearly identify the number of staff, position titles, annual salary, and the percentage of staff time that will apply to the grant. You must include a brief statement of responsibilities for each position.

Narrative Sample:

A sample of a budget narrative for some of the cost categories follows:

A. Staff	Total
1 Project Manager: 10% @ \$50,000 = \$5,000 (Overall project management)	\$5,000
2 Project Interns: 5 hours/week @ \$15/hour each = \$4,500 (30 weeks)	\$4,500
B. Other Planning Costs	
Travel: mileage reimbursement (1000 miles x .50/mile) = \$500 (travel to all training sessions as required by grant)	\$500
TOTAL	\$10,000

INSTRUCTIONS: AMERICORPS PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM NARRATIVE

Program Concept (40%):

Concept: Describe how your program meets at least one of the planning grant priorities. Describe the community need you plan to address. If you have already performed a community needs assessment, describe the results. If you have not, you must provide (1) evidence to support the need for your proposed project, and (2) plans for conducting a community needs assessment.

Service activities: Describe the type of service activities that members may perform under your program. Explain why the program requires AmeriCorps members rather than volunteers or paid staff to provide services.

Planning Process (30%):

Timeline: Provide a timeline for your planning process. Include milestones toward assembling each of the grant products. For example, include dates for partnership outreach meetings prior to drafting the partnership form.

Roles for staff: Describe the roles that staff will play in the planning process. Do you have adequate staff to support the planning process? If not, describe how you will secure additional staff/consultant support.

Partnership (20%):

Current Partnership: Is your partnership an existing collaboration? Who are the key partners? If the partnership is an existing collaboration, how long has it been in existence, and what are its primary activities? What expertise do partners have?

Partnership Development: How will you conduct outreach and bring in new partners through your planning process? How will you integrate new organizations into the structure of your partnership? Briefly describe the organizational structure of the new partnership.

Organizational Capacity (10%):

Capacity to administer federal funds: Has the current legal applicant ever managed government funds? Are any of the partners a part of an existing AmeriCorps program? Has the partnership identified a potential legal applicant that would be capable of administering an AmeriCorps operating grant?