

Framing the Program

Much work has been accomplished to this point. After reviewing the **Surveying AmeriCorps** section, your organization has decided that an AmeriCorps program will meet the community's needs. You then worked at **Preparing the Ground** by bringing together community members, developing the AmeriCorps work plan, and submitting your grant proposal. As you waited to hear the outcome of your grant proposal, you have been **Laying the Foundation**, completing significant work, to create an optimal environment for an AmeriCorps program.

You have just received notification that your organization is awarded the AmeriCorps grant and will move into grant negotiation. Congratulations! The **Framing the Program** section is designed to lead you through the many aspects of designing your program into the implementation of your program. Review the [*Things To Do Checklist*](#)

Caution: Make sure you completely understand the requirements of the grant. Be sure to be in consistent communication with your Program Officer about what your organization needs to complete before you can draw down funds for your program. It is critical that you have clarity on what your next steps need to be.

At the end of this section, you will be able to

- Identify the next steps upon receiving notification of grant award.
- Learn to incorporate organization capacity building and sustainability into the operations of your program.
- Implement a volunteer recruitment and management plan.
- Access and use a variety of tools and electronic resources to complete all activities in the Tools for Success section.

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Notification and Grant Negotiation

What is notification and grant negotiation?

Notification refers to the official announcement that the Corporation makes to applicants informing them of the funding decision that has been made. If the Corporation approves your AmeriCorps grant application for funding, you will enter into the grant negotiation period. You will not immediately receive the grant funds. Funding will depend upon the results of negotiations. If your application is not approved for funding, your notification letter will explain how to request feedback on your grant application.

Why do you need to negotiate for your grant?

For a grant to be awarded to your organization, you must first resolve issues that were identified during the review process. Even though an application is approved to negotiate, a grant award is not guaranteed. Occasionally the negotiation process ends without a grant being awarded.

How do you do it?

✓	You negotiate your grant with your program officer. A Negotiation Memo from your program officer will outline the negotiation requirements.
✓	Make sure you understand what is required of you. Find out from your program officer what assistance is available
✓	Establish and agree on a timeline to resolve any items that impact the Corporation awarding your grant.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does every grant applicant have to participate in a negotiation process? *Yes. Almost every application that the Corporation determines to be worthy of funding will have questions and/or concerns that were identified during peer review and/or staff review and need to be resolved. These questions/concerns are often categorized as either “**Compliance**” or “**Continuous Improvement**.” **Compliance** issues might include the need to correct budget errors, to submit a budget revision due to being approved for less than requested or clarification regarding a particular program requirement, for instance, a monitoring plan. **Continuous improvement** concerns are less serious and may not need to be resolved prior to the award of a grant.*

When will I receive my grant? *You will receive your grant when negotiations have successfully concluded. There is no set length of time for the negotiation period. How long it lasts depends largely on the number and complexity of the issues that need to be resolved. Organizations applying for AmeriCorps funds through a State Commission have a lengthier process due to the need to complete state contractual processes, in addition to, CNCS awarding.*

When may I begin expending grant funds? *Before you plan a start date for your AmeriCorps members or consider expending funds that you would like to charge to the grant, have a discussion with your program officer. In most cases, you will not be able to charge to the grant any funds expended prior to the date that your grant is awarded.*

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When can my members begin service? *AmeriCorps members cannot begin service prior to the award of your grant. Additionally, your program officer might want you to delay the start-date of your program beyond the award of your grant to ensure that certain program structures are in place.*

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Capacity Building and Sustainability

What is capacity building and sustainability?

The AmeriCorps Guidelines of 2003 defines the sustainability and capacity building of its programs in the following way: *Capacity Building* is a process that helps a program or organization enhance its mission, strategy, skills, systems, infrastructure, and human resources to better serve local needs. Capacity building is essential to the sustainability of programs so they can continue to meet community needs efficiently and effectively, without sole reliance on federal funding. *Program Sustainability* is the ability of an AmeriCorps program to continue to engage a community's citizens in meeting the needs of the community, either beyond the life of a Corporation grant or with diminishing Corporation support. As a result of the process of rulemaking for AmeriCorps, these definitions may be refined. Refer to the Corporation's web site www.nationalservice.org for the most current information.

Why do I need to need to engage in capacity building and sustainability planning?

Enhancing organizational capacity and achieving sustainability enables an AmeriCorps program to continue its community service activities beyond the life of its grant from the Corporation.

How do I do it?

It's important to incorporate capacity building and sustainability planning into the design of your program. You need to begin developing strategies early to address how services will be carried on after Corporation funding ends. This planning will avoid critical gaps in the services provided to your community.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can AmeriCorps members assist grantee organizations in capacity building activities? *Yes. The Corporation encourages AmeriCorps members to engage in certain capacity building activities. For example, AmeriCorps members may recruit and manage other volunteers. They can write training materials that will be used to instruct the public about disaster preparedness. AmeriCorps members may assist in raising funds and securing resources to support service activities. They may conduct outreach to expand the number of individuals served by the nonprofit organization. AmeriCorps members may develop community partnerships that are intended to strengthen communities.*

What are examples of sustainability? *Examples of sustainability include getting your funding from various sources, earning income from your organization's services, improving the quality and efficiency of your program's services, and recruiting volunteers to help you deliver your services.*

Is there a resource that is highly recommended? *Yes! The Corporation's Sustainability and Capacity Building Toolkit is filled with useful information important to your program design process.*

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Resources

Resource	Description	Contact
Sustainability and Capacity Building Toolkit	A Corporation resource for applicants and grantees that explains the Corporation's expectations and includes strategies for capacity building, steps to develop a program sustainability plan, sample sustainability plans, and listings of additional resources	http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (This link is year-specific. Change the year in the link to reflect the current year.)
CNCS' Website	A Corporation-sponsored source of information on sustainability.	www.nationalservicerresources.org/
AmeriCorps Guidelines	This document outlines the Corporation's requirements of organizations applying for funding.	http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (This link is year-specific. Change the year in the link to reflect the current year.) <i>If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link.</i>

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Volunteer Recruitment and Management Plan

What is a volunteer recruitment and management plan?

A volunteer recruitment and management plan outlines how you will utilize volunteers in your AmeriCorps program. The involvement of volunteers in your organization should not be a burden, but should help you to achieve your mission and goals. The plan should address finding, training and supervising the volunteers. Volunteers are not AmeriCorps members. Instead, they are community members who choose to help your organization without receiving payment. They may volunteer just once, or they may volunteer regularly for an extended period of time.

Why do I need to recruit and manage volunteers?

Volunteers will allow your organization to increase the impact of its programs on the community without necessarily having to increase the size of its staff. If properly trained and managed, volunteers can commit to your organization for an extended period of time. They can help you to expand your organization's capacity, maintain its programs over time, and to serve the community.

How do you develop a volunteer recruitment and management plan?

Your plan for recruiting and managing volunteers should be incorporated into the program design and into your AmeriCorps member position descriptions.

Many organizations make the mistake of not putting much thought into the recruitment, selection and support of their volunteers. This will often lead to the selection of inappropriate volunteers and high volunteer turnover. Below are some helpful tips.

✓	Review the Checklist for Volunteer Management .
✓	Develop volunteer position descriptions.
✓	Screen volunteers to ensure that the volunteers you select are a good fit for your organization and the project.
✓	Place volunteers in positions that match their skills and interests.
✓	Assign a supervisor to the volunteers.
✓	Orient your volunteers to the organization and project.
✓	Train your volunteers and recognize and express appreciation for their contributions.
✓	Review the guiding questions for the Volunteer Management Plan .

Frequently Asked Questions

I heard that AmeriCorps members had to be engaged in direct service. Is it okay for them to coordinate volunteers? *Yes. While AmeriCorps members on the whole are still primarily engaged in direct service (such as tutoring or construction), the Corporation recognizes their potential value to your organization if they also engage in less direct, capacity building types of activities such as coordinating volunteers. You should be clear about the roles of your members in you application.*

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Does my AmeriCorps program have to include a volunteer recruitment and management component? Refer to your application instructions to determine if this is the case.

Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Contact</i>
State Commission RFP or application instructions	If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, the relevant commission, rather than the Corporation, issues the RFP or instructions you should use as a guide when applying for funding.	http://www.nationalservice.org/about/family/commissions_pick.html
Volunteer Recruitment and Management Toolkit		www.nationalserviceresources.org
AmeriCorps Guidelines	This document outlines the Corporation's requirements of organizations applying for funding.	http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html (unfortunately this link dates the document because it is year-specific) If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link.
Application Instructions	The application instructions give very specific guidance of what to include in your application.	http://www.americorps.org/resources/guidelines2004.html Select the appropriate instructions for the grant for which you are applying. If you are applying to a state service commission for funding, contact the commission rather than using this link.
Charity Channel	The Charity Channel's <u>Volunteer Management Review</u> contains useful articles on managing volunteers.	http://www.charitychannel.com/enewsletters/vmr/
Creating an Inclusive Environment: A Handbook for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in National and Community Service Programs	A comprehensive handbook designed to assist national service programs fully and meaningfully include individuals with disabilities.	http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/index.php#disability

TOOLS
for
SUCCESS



Things To Do Checklist

YOU HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED BY CNCS, WHAT NOW?	
	<p>Review the letter, e-mail or notes from phone call carefully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions—many questions—if you don't get answers or you don't understand answers...ask again. • Get answers in writing to ensure that all parties have the same information.
	<p>Find out from your Program Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be in negotiation? • Is there a plan? • Who manages it?
	<p>Find out what the timeline is from CNCS to get your grant, to receive funding. That means the ability to draw down funds to your account.</p>
	<p>Continue checking or keeping informed with your stakeholders or people involved with the planning committee/work group.</p>
	<p>Make sure your financial department is on point with carrying out the grant responsibilities. Read the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions.</p>
	<p>If you are an independent AmeriCorps program inform all stakeholders that you have received the AmeriCorps grant. If you are a parent organization/or multi-site, inform them of the process. Set in measures to ensure everyone is informed.</p>
	<p>Begin to put together a 3-6 month work plan to execute starting your program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a recruitment plan. • Secure enough funding to start your program—this funding should not include CNCS money—to be blunt this should be money in hand. • Hire your staff/or train staff members about the initial start-up plan.
	<p>What are the benchmarks? Identify them—make sure everyone responsible for executing them is on the same page.</p>
	<p>Begin to create a training plan for the site supervisors. Bring them together for a preliminary meeting.</p> <p>In that meeting discussion working relationships, roles, and responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss expectations. • Discuss preliminary service description (job descriptions for AmeriCorps members. • Required paperwork, deadlines, and expectations for submission. • Management systems • Design preliminary Service Site Agreement.
	<p>Email, call to check-in with your assigned program officer. Share concerns, improvements, and progress. Make sure you know the timeline and the expectations.</p>
	<p>Start planning your pre-service orientation for AmeriCorps members.</p>
	<p>Identify recruitment areas and start recruiting make sure interviewees are aware of the timeline.</p>

Checklist for Volunteer Management

Rating *	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities				
E	1. The organization has a clearly defined purpose of the role that volunteers have within the organization.			
E	2. Job descriptions exist for all volunteer positions in the organization.			
R	3. The organization has a well-defined and communicated volunteer management plan that includes a recruitment policy, description of all volunteer jobs, an application and interview process, possible stipend and reimbursement policies, statement of which staff has supervisory responsibilities over what volunteers, and any other volunteer personnel policy information.			
E	4. The organization follows a recruitment policy that does not discriminate, but respects, encourages and represents the diversity of the community.			
E	5. The organization provides appropriate training and orientation to the agency to assist the volunteer in the performance of their volunteer activities. Volunteers are offered training with staff in such areas as cultural sensitivity.			
R	6. The organization is respectful of the volunteer's abilities and time commitment and has various job duties to meet these needs. Jobs should not be given to volunteers simply because the jobs are considered inferior for paid staff.			
R	7. The organization does volunteer performance appraisals periodically and communicates to the volunteers how well they are doing, or where additional attention is needed. At the same time, volunteers are requested to review and evaluate their involvement in the organization and the people they work with and suggest areas for improvement.			
R	8. The organization does some type of volunteer recognition or commendation periodically and staff continuously demonstrates their appreciation towards the volunteers and their efforts.			
A	9. The organization has a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, comments and perceptions from volunteers.			
A	10. The organization provides opportunities for program participants to volunteer.			
A	11. The organization maintains contemporaneous records documenting volunteer time in program allocations. Financial records can be maintained for the volunteer time spent on programs and recorded as in-kind contributions.			

Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area.

Volunteer Management Plan

Many elements of your planning for members can be applied to your planning for volunteers. Ask yourself the following questions. Your answers to these questions will determine the role volunteers will play in your organization and form the basis for your plan.

- What types of skills do you want your volunteers to have? (Tutoring, construction, nursing, marketing, etc.)
- What types of volunteers do you need? One-time (for a one-day service project), episodic (every once in a while), long-term, professional (skilled nurses, engineers, etc.), or a combination of these types?
- How and where will you recruit to ensure you get the volunteers that you need?
- What criteria and process will you use for screening and selecting volunteers?
- What training will the volunteers need and who will conduct it?
- What level of support is needed?
- Given the tasks you plan to assign to the volunteers, what level of supervision will be needed?
- What staff member will be responsible for the volunteers? What percentage of his/her time will be dedicated to managing the volunteers?
- What role will your AmeriCorps members play in the recruitment and management of volunteers? Some or all of your AmeriCorps members can take much of the responsibility from staff regarding volunteers, assuming this responsibility is reflected in the members' position descriptions. AmeriCorps members may:
 - Recruit, train and coordinate volunteers;
 - Develop an effective volunteer management system (volunteer position descriptions, screening techniques, volunteer policy and procedure manuals); and
 - Provide ongoing support to volunteers to ensure that they have a high quality experience and continue to serve.
- Given your answers to the questions above, how many volunteers can your organization manage?