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VOLUNTEER NH
NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
 2024-2025 AmeriCorps Planning Grants

CFDA/Assistance Listing Number: 94.006

Volunteer NH NOFO Contacts:

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Important Dates

Date		Notes
Thursday, February 22	Concept Paper Due by 5pm.	Link to Submit Concept Paper
Friday, March 1	Notification of approval or rejection of Concept Paper.	Applicants with Approved Concept Papers will be invited to submit a full application.
Friday, March 22:	Approved Organizations' applications due in eGrants by 5pm.	

Please note that adherence to the above timeline is required. If any above date needs to be changed, VNH will give as much advance notification as possible.

Accompanying Guidance:

When developing an AmeriCorps grant, organizations should take the [applicable CFR Laws](#) and [AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions](#) into consideration.



PLANNING GRANT DESCRIPTION

About Volunteer NH

Volunteer NH (VNH) is a nonprofit organization that envisions our state as a place where people volunteer together to build strong and connected communities. We bring our vision to life by engaging those communities to solve local challenges through volunteerism.

As New Hampshire's State Service Commission, Volunteer NH administers its own AmeriCorps State selection process and submits the applications it selects to compete for final review by AmeriCorps.

Purpose of AmeriCorps Planning Grants

AmeriCorps brings people together to tackle some of the country's most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. AmeriCorps helps make service a cornerstone of our national culture. AmeriCorps program grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions/practices to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position.

The purpose of a **planning grant** is for an organization to spend up-to a year in supporting the development of an AmeriCorps program that will engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based interventions to solve community problems. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.

Planning Grant Activities could include:

- Develop specific member activities
- Create a recruitment plan
- Recruit host sites and partners
- Create a data collection and training plan
- Develop required AmeriCorps documentation

Planning grant recipients are generally expected to be prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in a future grant cycle.



AmeriCorps Focus Areas

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. In order to maximize the impact of investment in national service, AmeriCorps has the following focus areas:

Disaster Services

Grants will support increased and improved disaster services for individuals and communities to prepare and adapt to disasters, including but not limited to, climate change events. Activities will provide support to increase preparedness for disasters, improve readiness to respond to disasters, support recovery efforts from disasters, and/or assist in the implementation of pre-disaster mitigation and adaptation measures. Grants will support communities and individuals in planning for disasters, in particular engaging disadvantaged communities in the planning process.

Economic Opportunity

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students' preparation for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

Environmental Stewardship

Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging climate and environmental circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive events: programs that conserve natural habitats; protect clean air and water; maintain public lands; support wildland fire mitigation and sustainable forest management; cultivate individual and community resilience; and provide reforestation services after floods or fires, such as nature based solutions.



Healthy Futures

Grants will provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition with the purpose of reducing obesity.

Veterans and Military Families

Grants will improve the quality of life of veterans and improve military family well-being; increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their caregivers, families, and survivors served by AmeriCorps programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps programs.

Volunteer NH Funding Priorities

Volunteer NH Priorities, as identified in the State Service Plan, are programs that would seek to address:

- **Affordable Housing**
- **Access to Mental Health Resources**
- **Food Security**

Please see the [AmeriCorps 2024 Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) to view AmeriCorps' 24-25 Funding Priorities.

To receive priority consideration, applicants must show that the priority area is a significant part of the planning grant focus and intended outcomes. Planning grants that propose to address one of the above priorities does not guarantee funding.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Disclosure: *Publication of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (Notice) does not obligate Volunteer NH to award any specific number of grants or to commit any particular amount of funding. The actual level, timing, and process of grant funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations.*

Period of Performance

Planning grants are for a maximum of **one year**. Grants should start on **August 1, 2024** (unless the program requests a different start date).



Volunteer NH reserves the right to end the Planning Grant early in certain situations, including but not limited to poor performance, the planning grantee opting not to apply (or not receiving) a program grant, or lack of timely communication with Volunteer NH staff.

Maximum Award Amount

Applicants may apply for a maximum of **\$75,000**. This funding is mainly for personnel or contractor costs to work on the planning grant, relevant travel costs, and other planning-grant related supplies. Applicants should ensure that they only request what they reasonably expect to be able to spend.

Planning Grantee Expectations

- **Planning Grant Staffing:**
 - It is required that all planning grant staff have at least **two points of contact** for VNH staff to communicate with (programmatic & fiscal).
 - These points of contact should also have their own eGrants accounts.
- **Planning Grantee Meetings:**
 - Planning grantees will be expected to report periodically through in-person and virtual meetings, phone conferences, and emails throughout the grant award with their VNH Program Officer.
 - Typically, VNH schedules at least one virtual check-in meeting per month.
 - Additionally, planning grantees may be asked to participate in VNH events and meetings. It is expected that all grantees send at least one relevant staff to these meetings/trainings. However, having more than one staff member present is recommended.
- **Reporting Deadlines:**
 - VNH requires planning grantees to submit **quarterly progress reports** to help them self-assess their progress throughout the year.
 - VNH may require document drafts as well as program application drafts at different points through the year.
 - In addition, there are also required **monthly financial reimbursement reports** in the OnCorps system. All reports must be submitted on time. Any requests for an extension on the deadline should be made well in advance.
 - Additional data may be asked for (as applicable).
- **Communication:**
 - As good communication between Volunteer NH staff and planning grant staff is crucial for the successful completion of the planning grant year, it is expected that all staff **respond to requests from VNH** in a timely manner (i.e. within two business days, unless otherwise indicated).



Failure to meet these requirements may result in the loss of the planning grant or in the organization’s eligibility to apply for a program grant.

General Planning Grant Timeline

Below is a general guideline of when milestones should be completed during the planning grant year. In the application narrative, organizations should discuss how they have the necessary staffing and buy-in from leadership to achieve these goals.

Time	Activities	Documents Completed
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly 1:1 Meetings with VNH Program Officers • Monthly financial reimbursement reports 	
Quarter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take assigned On3Learn Webinars on essential AmeriCorps topics. • Do research on proposed community need and areas affected (to determine best service areas) • Research organizations in the area doing similar work • Based off research, start determining best interventions for AmeriCorps members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft “Community Need” section of Program Application • Q1 Progress Report
Quarter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue community and stakeholder engagement • Determine AmeriCorps member activities and slot types • Continue determining host site (if applicable) • Start identifying possible performance measure targets and data collection methods. • Start solidifying possible sources of match • Start completing a member recruitment plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Intervention” section of your AmeriCorps Program Application • Q2 Progress Report
Quarter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend AmeriCorps Budget & Grant Writing training • Complete draft policies on data collection, member eligibility, code of conduct, stipend payments, etc. • Submit program application to VNH’s Formula Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete program application for submission to VNH. • Q3 Progress Report • Draft Member Recruitment Plan • Draft Data Collection Plan (and tools) • Draft Member/Site Supervisor Training Agenda • Draft Member Handbook



<p>Quarter 4 <i>(If the organization applies and receives a full program grant)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidify all program components, including host sites, activities • If selected for program funding, complete all necessary program documents and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized (or almost finalized) Member Service Agreement, Member handbook, program policies, member recruitment plan, timekeeping, data collection plan and tools, member training materials • Create accounts with Criminal History Check vendors
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ELIGIBILITY & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Applicants

The following types of non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#)) are eligible to apply:

- Institutions of higher education
- Local & state government
- Nonprofit organizations

All Planning Grantees funded through this competition must intend to serve New Hampshire communities.

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.

SAM registration must be renewed annually. Applicants must use their SAM registered legal name and physical address on all AmeriCorps grant applications.

The legal applicant’s name and physical address in eGrants must match the applicant’s SAM-registered information EXACTLY (including hyphens, capitalizations, etc.).

Applications must include an **Employer Identification Number (EIN)**.



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

You can learn more about Sam.gov (and how to register) [here](#).

Previous Funding Prerequisite

Previously receiving funds from AmeriCorps or another federal agency is **not** a prerequisite to apply to this Notice.

Organizational Capacity Requirements

Volunteer NH typically requires that the applicant organization have annual **independently audited/ reviewed financial statements** or a **Single Audit** (if applicable). If an organization does not have audited financial statements, they must certify their intent to complete this requirement during the planning grant year in order to apply for an AmeriCorps operational grant. The applicant organization will also certify whether they have experience in managing state and/or federal grant funds.

In addition, to help VNH determine an applicant's capacity to manage AmeriCorps funding, all Planning Grant applicants must fill out the **Operational and Financial Management Survey**. Volunteer NH Staff will review these documents to determine an applicant's capacity to receive a planning grant.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Planning grants are cost-reimbursement based and have a match requirement (**24%** of the overall budget). The applicant's match can be non-AmeriCorps cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must indicate whether the match is proposed or secured. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission.

Law requires that grantees that use other Federal funds as matching funds for an AmeriCorps grant to report those amounts and sources to AmeriCorps on a Federal Financial Report.¹ Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout.

¹ Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. §12571(e)).



Content and Form of Concept Paper

Order of Submission

Organizations will first submit a Concept Paper in SurveyMonkey Apply, which will be reviewed by Volunteer NH staff. If approved, organizations will be asked to submit a full application in eGrants, AmeriCorps' web-based application system. Instructions on how to create an account and submit the final application will be given upon approval (if any) of the Concept Paper.

Required Training Pre-Requisite

Before submitting the Concept Paper, applicants will be required to watch a short training that gives an overview of AmeriCorps, planning grants, and program grants. You can view the training [here](#).

Concept Paper Content

Due Date: February 22nd

Submission Platform: SurveyMonkey Apply (<https://volunteernh.smapply.io/>)

The Concept Paper will consist of the following sections:

- Contact Info
- Demographics & Capacity
- General Project Info
- Proposed Program Design
- Organizational Chart (*upload required*)

View all the **Concept Paper Questions** in advance [here](#).

View the instructions on how to **register and submit** an application in SurveyMonkey Apply [here](#)

Late Concept Papers

All concept papers and/or applications received after the submission deadline published in this Notice are presumed to be non-compliant. Organizations can request extensions before the due date, but Volunteer NH reserves the right to deny the request. Applicants must email Andrea Johnston (andrea@volunteernh.org) with a request for an extension on their concept paper.



If Concept Paper is Approved

If your Concept Paper is approved by Volunteer NH, you will be invited to submit a full application (along with additional documents, which will be outlined in the application instructions) in the eGrants system. Please note that planning grant funding is **not guaranteed**. You can view the full application instructions [here](#), but Volunteer NH will not accept a full application from any organization that has not been approved.