



FIVE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STARTING AN AMERICORPS PROGRAM

1. Is My Organization Ready for AmeriCorps?

An AmeriCorps program must be administered by eligible nonprofit organizations, schools, or divisions of government, and must engage members in full-time or part-time direct service activities in the areas of education, public safety, environment, disaster services, or other human needs. Your organization should have the capacity to support a team of full-time AmeriCorps members who will directly serve the community's designated needs. AmeriCorps members cannot serve as a replacement for staff positions. You should begin your application process by answering the following questions:

- What critical needs does your program address? How?
- How will your program recruit, train, and engage AmeriCorps members?
- Who are your potential community partners for collaboration with your program?
- How will your members be placed?
- How will you meet the matching requirements? (First year single match requirement is 24% cash or in-kind)
- How will you measure direct and demonstrable results of your project?

To further aid you in assessing your organization's readiness to administer and support a high quality AmeriCorps program, the Kansas Volunteer Commission (KVC) has created a Readiness Assessment Tool that can be downloaded at www.kanserve.org.

Once you have a clear vision of what you want to do with AmeriCorps, you should be ready to address the more specific aspects of the AmeriCorps Application.

2. What Type of Support Will I Need from the Commission and How Does Funding Work?

There are two types of grants which organizations can consider:

- **AmeriCorps Program Operating Grants; or**
- **Education Award Only Grants**

The KVC contracts with successful applicant organizations to manage all aspects of operating an AmeriCorps program. To assist successful applicants through both the AmeriCorps Program Operating Grant programs and the AmeriCorps Education Award Only programs, the KVC will provide training for program staff in all aspects of program management. In addition, the Commission conducts site visits, provides ongoing training and technical assistance, and assists programs in developing linkages with community resources.

It is important to understand that the Commission does not:

- Recruit and place members for individual programs
- Provide program specific or required training for members (other than statewide training events for members which are supplemental to their specific program oriented training)
- Raise matching funds for individual programs
- Complete the required program reports for individual programs

In addition, the Commission cannot support any program which:

- Engages AmeriCorps members in prohibited member activities (including lobbying, labor organizing, political advocacy, religious instruction, or serving for-profit organizations)
- Allows AmeriCorps members to be used to displace paid staff or exiting volunteers to fill in for vacant or defunded staff positions

3. How Many Members Can My Project Support?

Applicants proposing an AmeriCorps Program Operating Grant should be designed to support five member service year (MSY) members. However programs, particularly those in rural areas may make a case for a smaller program (minimum three) by demonstrating why a smaller program is necessary or appropriate to a specific circumstance.

4. What If I Don't Need Multiple AmeriCorps Members?

Many organizations do not have the need, or the capacity to support, a program of five MSYs. The KVC strongly encourages organizations to collaborate with other organizations in their geographic area, or in their issue area, to form a partnership based program. Some AmeriCorps programs have a structure wherein one organization takes the lead responsibility in organizing and managing the program, but multiple organizations host AmeriCorps members (and often contribute to the match). Successful programs of this model should have common goals (for instance: serving at risk youth), and, if geographically diverse (such as statewide programs), should have a plan for maintaining esprit de corps across the program as a whole.

Alternatively, there are several other national and community service programs that may better assist your organization, depending on your needs. Contact the KVC for details.

5. What Are the AmeriCorps Funding Priorities in Kansas?

Provided the applicant makes a strong statement of need either through a community needs assessment or independent research and documentation, the KVC would consider funding any high-quality program that addresses education, environment, public safety, disaster services or other human needs. All AmeriCorps Kansas programs must develop an ethic of civic responsibility in those who participate and strengthen communities by actively recruiting and managing volunteers.