

Responses to Questions for RFP #1090
AmeriCorps Formula Pool

<p>New York State Commission of National and Community Resources</p> <p>Programmatic and Evidence Information Session: Recorded Webinar / PowerPoint</p> <p>Technical Requirement Information Session: Recorded Webinar / PowerPoint</p>	
<p>AmeriCorps Resources</p> <p>Technical Assistance Calls and Webinars / Evidence Exchange</p>	
Q1	Please clarify the main differences between the “Formula Pool” and “Competitive” grant programs?
A1	The difference between Competitive and Formula AmeriCorps State and National (ASN) awards are as follows: in a Competitive procurement, applicants compete nationally for funding, whereas Formula ASN applicants are competing against other organizations in a particular state (for a pool of money allocated to that state based on a formula). AmeriCorps, the federal agency, has a bit more administrative oversight with Competitive grants than they do over Formula grants, Formula grants/RFPs are an opportunity for NYS and the Commission to stress state priorities in addition to the nationally determined priorities.
Q2	Is this the first year that a planning grant is available in the Formula Pool funding?
A2	No, planning grants have been included in previous years’ funding opportunities.
Q3	Can planning grants be focused on a project/problem that has resulted as a result of COVID-19 or must it address public health related COVID issues?
A3	Yes, planning grants may be focused on a project/problem that has resulted from COVID-19. The Commission will consider applications for planning grants that will lead to effective AmeriCorps programs that address medium- or long-term NYS needs as a result of COVID-19 or that will address community needs in preparation for public health emergencies. See Section 11.2 Planning Grants.
Q4	I'm looking at pages 42-43 of the RFP where it says, "If the applicant has previously received six or more years of formula or competitive funding for the same project being proposed, the applicant must submit both an evaluation plan and an evaluation report as attachments." I am in my 7th year as a recompetete. Do I need to submit both?
A4	Yes, both an evaluation plan and an evaluation report must be submitted with your application.
Q5	a) My program is currently operating on a 1-year supplemental contract, we are trying to determine if the program would be eligible to submit for a 3-year program cycle under the 2022-2023 Formula pool. b) If we are eligible to submit a proposal, would it be a continuation of the contract or a new 3-year cycle?
A5	a) Yes, you are eligible to submit for a 3-year program cycle under the 2022-2023 Formula pool. b) It would be a new 3-year cycle.
Q6	Could you tell me the main difference between this RFP and the competitive pool RFP that was due in November? It appears that most of the requirements were the same, so I wanted to see if you had any clarification.

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A6	Please see A1.
Q7	Can a small organization apply to this funding opportunity?
A7	Yes, see RFP Section 4.2. Eligible applicants responding to this RFP must budget for a minimum of 10 Member Service Years (MSY) so it comes down to the individual organization's capacity and ability to supervise a host site that provides a meaningful, direct service program; however, if you have partners that you work with or a larger statewide entity like an association, you may want to reach out to them to see if collaboration is needed. The Commission encourages collaborations, intermediaries, and consortium that combine a number of smaller organizations where one of the parties acts as a fiscal agent. In addition, smaller organizations might want to consider applying for a planning grant that will allow them the opportunity to build partnerships and coalitions that can more easily administer ten or more MSYs.
Q8	What were the 2 funding priorities? I saw Covid-19 relief and recovery but missed the other one.
A8	The two funding priorities are 1) COVID-19 Relief and 2) Recovery and Organizations Specializing in Services to the Population Ages 55 or over. Applicants that propose AmeriCorps programs that further these goals may receive bonus points (See Section 5.2 Bonus Points.)
Q9	a) Will grants be awarded outside of the two priorities? b) Is there additional funding in addition to these set-asides?
A9	a) Yes, we anticipate awarding many grants outside of the priorities/"set-asides" referenced in A8. b) Yes. Please see RFP Section 2.3 Purpose and Funding Availability and Section 11.0 Special Funding Information, Instructions and Scoring.
Q10	Our work is done almost 100% in high school educational sector – even though we do not do vaccinations or assist with anything medical, we do information sessions for learners on safety from Covid. Where is the line for that priority?
A10	COVID-19 Relief covers a broad spectrum of services. Bonus points will be determined by independent reviewers' assessments of the application narratives.
Q11	Can you clarify what is due when?
A11	Please see RFP Section 1.2 Calendar of Events for all submission due dates and times.
Q12	Our organization currently holds a supplemental, cost-reimbursement grant. If we apply for this new round of funding, are we eligible to apply under a cost-reimbursement or fixed cost application?
A12	Yes, per page 8 of the 2022 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), your organization is eligible to apply for either a Cost-Reimbursement or a Fixed-Cost grant.
Q13	The slides on eGrants system navigation shared in the technical assistance call, is this standard for federal program or something new?
A13	Yes, this process is standard and has not changed; however, the intent is to advise applicants when beginning their application, the number of different NOFOs listed (currently) and which selection corresponds to the current Formula opportunities (cost reimbursement or full cost fixed amount).
Q14	Once you start the application process, can you revisit the same form, or do you have to do it all in one go?

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A14	Yes, once you start an application, you can go back and revisit using the different section tabs (Narrative, Performance Measure, Budget, etc.) on the left side of eGrants system. The final tab is “ <i>authorize and submit</i> ” the application. So, until you submit the application, you can go back in as many times as you need to make revisions.
Q15	Once I have started my application in eGrants and want to resume work at a later time, how do I access my application?
A15	Once logged into your eGrants account, there is a section on the righthand side of your homepage that includes your current and previous applications. There will be a list of open (unsubmitted) applications. Click on the link to access the unfinished application and resume work on narratives.
Q16	Are the requirements for Grants Gateway, Vender Responsibility and supporting documentation applicable for the one (1) year supplemental grants?
A16	Yes, these requirements apply to all grant application types (planning grants, 1 year etc.) One-year supplemental grants are only offered after AmeriCorps has made final funding decisions. They are not offered through this RFP but through a special funding process of AmeriCorps, if they are offered at all. One-year PLANNING grants are subject to the same requirements as any other grant offered through this RFP.
Q17	Our organization is currently working with high schoolers in a specific neighborhood, but we want to start working with middle schoolers in the same schools, in that same specific neighborhood. There’s going to be a slightly different project design and slightly difference performance measures, because of the different age group. Would we have to put in a request for a new project?
A17	Yes, you should submit a request for additional project. as the Commission does not make that determination on behalf of the federal agency. Additionally, there must be significant changes in multiple areas of consideration, to be considered a new or additional project. Please see the 2022 Mandatory Supplemental Instructions for definitions on same, new and additional projects.
Q18	We have many families who spend their summers here and look for summer camps, supervised lake swimming, mountain hiking, and environment-related projects for their children and families. We have not yet prequalified. Can you tell me please if summer activity personnel are eligible for grant money from the above-noted grants for the Catskills since it is a State park?
A18	Yes, per the 2022 AmeriCorps State and National Application Instructions (page 19), Personnel Expenses as well as Personnel Fringe Benefits are allowable program expenses. AmeriCorps is a resource that must enhance or increase services that are provided to a community. AmeriCorps applicants are encouraged to demonstrate “value-added” by bringing AmeriCorps members and programming to their communities. Furthermore, applicants should be advised that Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program, and an employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance. (For more information about nonduplication and non-displacement requirements, see CFR 2540.100.)Please be advised that the recommended date to pre-qualify in Grants Gateway is 4/15/2022, as referenced in RFP Section 1.2 Calendar of Events.
Q19	Section 4.2. D.: Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ States Cost-Reimbursement and Full-Cost (Fixed-Amount) Grantee MAXIMUM is \$28,800 per MSY. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NOFO , Page 7 states Maximum Cost Reimbursement is \$21,600 ○ QUESTION: Which is correct?
A19	For this Formula-funded RFP , the State's Cost-Reimbursement and Full-Cost (Fixed-Amount) Grantee MAXIMUM is \$28,800 per MSY see NOFO page 16.
Q20	<p>In any event, in the past we have submitted our application based on the Maximum Cost/MSY and been awarded at a much lower rate. This reduction resulted in altered scope of our program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ QUESTION: How confident can we be in budgeting for the Maximum Cost Reimbursement?
A20	Total funding awarded to an applicant varies for each funding opportunity. The funding levels are out of the Commission's control and cannot be guaranteed as there are subject to a number of variables.
Q21	<p>Section 4.2. I: National Service Criminal History Check</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ States 'NSCHC consists of a check of the following: 1. National Sex Offender Public website through NSOPW.gov (nationwide check); 2. State criminal history record repository or agency-designated alternative for the individual's state of residence and State of service; and 3. Fingerprint-based check of the FBI criminal history record database through the state criminal history record repository or agency-approved vendor.' ○ We have been told numerous times by the Commission that having our volunteers cleared through Fieldprint fingerprinting covers both the FBI AND State criminal history clearance. ○ QUESTION: CAN YOU PLEASE CLARIFY?
A21	<p>National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) is a baseline screening requirement established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service.</p> <p>NSCHC is required under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act (SAA). The statutory requirement at 42 U.S.C. § 12645g is supplemented by regulatory requirements at 45 CFR §2540.200 through §2540.207 as well as the terms and conditions of AmeriCorps grants. All AmeriCorps members and covered staff must undergo National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) prior to starting service or work on an AmeriCorps grant and the Commission will provide comprehensive training to programs. NSCHC consists of three parts: a fingerprint-based FBI check, a state check (both residence and service), and a NSOPW (National Sex Offender Public Website) check. To obtain NSOPW checks, AmeriCorps programs may use the AmeriCorps-approved vendor Truescreen or go directly to www.NSOPW.gov. For State of Residence and State of Service checks, programs may use Truescreen or go directly to a designated statewide source. In New York, the AmeriCorps designated statewide repository agency is the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (NYS DCJS). For FBI checks, programs may use the AmeriCorps-approved vendor Fieldprint or go directly to NYS DCJS. However, New York State participates in the National Fingerprint File (NFF), an electronic information sharing system maintained by the FBI. When a state participates in the NFF system, an FBI fingerprint check is duplicative of the search of a state's criminal history record repository. Therefore, obtaining a Fieldprint check covers both the FBI and state portions of NSCHC for New York.</p>

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	<p>(For more information, review the AmeriCorps National Service Check History Check Manual effective May 1, 2021.) For additional information, please see the NSCHC Manual at https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check.</p>
<p>Q22</p>	<p>Section 4.2. F: Cost Reimbursement Grants: Alternative Match</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Refers us to NOFO page 10-11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From NOFO: <i>‘Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations. 7 To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. Applicants who plan to request an alternative match schedule must submit a request at the time the application is submitted. Programs applying through State Service Commissions must submit requests for alternative match to the Commission, who will submit it to AmeriCorps on their behalf. Commissions and National Directs will submit requests to directly to ACAlternateMatchRequests@cns.gov.</i> <p>We have submitted Alternative Match Requests in the past but have never received a response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We were not concerned as it was during that time in our current (ending) grant cycle that all match was waived due to the pandemic. ▪ I will be submitting an Alternative Match Request again with this application. I know I must submit it to the COMMISSION, not CNCS directly. <p>QUESTION: What is the timeline for notifying applicants if their Request has been granted?</p>
<p>A22</p>	<p>Please see ASN FY22 ApplicationInstructions Final (americorps.gov) (Attachment G: Alternative Match Instructions, p. 33) in RFP Section 4.2 F under Alternative Match. The Commission will complete the initial review and provide responses during the post evaluation clarification period. If approved the request will be sent to AmeriCorps for final approval, and we expected AmeriCorps will proceed with the process layout in the AmeriCorps PY2022 Application Instruction:</p> <p><i>“If your program is located in one of these areas, see the instructions below for applying for this alternative match schedule. You must submit your request to the alternative schedule per the information contained in the Notice. AmeriCorps will review your request and notify you within 30 days if you qualify for the alternative schedule and provide instructions for entering your budget into eGrants under the Alternative Match Schedule.</i></p> <p><i>If approved for the alternative schedules, programs will base their budget in the upcoming application on the approved alternative match. The alternative match requirement will be in effect for whatever portion of the three-year project period remains or if applying as a new grantee, for the upcoming three-year grant cycle.”</i></p>
<p>Q23</p>	<p>QUESTION: Are we expected to submit our proposed budgets based on the 35% ‘cap’ or on where we would fall on the Grantee Share Requirements schedule, which would put us at 42%?</p>

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A23	Please submit a budget based on the regular Grantee Share Requirement schedule. If Alternative Match Schedule is approved by AmeriCorps, further instruction will follow for an opportunity to revise the budget.
Q24	<p><i>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy/Clarification Information: Applicants should make a heading in the Clarification Section of their application, entitled "FY 2022 Match replacement." If your agency is not able to meet its required match threshold, enter the dollar amount of federal dollars your program would like to designate as "match replacement." The amount cannot result in your program being above the maximum cost per MSY. Should your application go to clarification, this field will also be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.</i></p> <p>QUESTION: I am unfamiliar with 'match replacement'. I have highlighted a section above. Does this mean we can INCREASE our federal (Commission) share? I am very confused by this option. Please clarify.</p>
A24	Yes, you can increase the amount of federal commission share if you are unable to raise the required cash match. Please note the additional money will be factored into the cost per MSY and may not exceed the maximum of \$28,800. Please see Section 5.1.H for applicability to this RFP.
Q25	a) Our organization has several contracts with a different NYS agency, so we already have our prequalified status, is there anything specific we have to submit to AmeriCorps for tomorrow's deadline to identify our prequalification status. b) I would like to apply for the Developmental Support Funds - Planning Grants, however after creating an egrants account, the only planning application available is for FY 2022 Americorp Tribes Planning Grants, which has a due date listed on 05/04/2022. Is there another category I should select to apply? c) And is there a recording of the informational webinar that I can use as a reference for these technical questions?
A25	a) As per RFP Section 1.2 Calendar of events, the deadline you referenced is a recommended due date. The deadline for the submission of proposal in eGrants and NYS supporting documents is 5/6/22 by 12:00 PM noon EST. b) The applicant will apply under Cost-Reimbursement Application ID: 22AC246537 (this is noted on bidder's notice) in eGrants. c) Please refer to the link at the top of this document.