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# The 2010–11 AmeriCorps Program Director Manual

A Resource for State Program Directors

March 2011

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# Introduction

**Purpose of This Manual**

**Laws, Regulations and Provisions**

2010 AmeriCorps Provisions

**Grant Agreement**

FY11 AmeriCorps Contract

FY11 Contract Attachment

Competitive & Formula Program Manual/Appendix

## Purpose of This Manual

*The 2010 Illinois AmeriCorps Program Director Policy and Procedure Manual* has been specifically designed by the Serve Illinois Commission as a guide for those who administer Illinois AmeriCorps programs. This manual will assist in detailing the process for monitoring, supporting, and evaluating programs and, above all, for working collaboratively to make AmeriCorps programs in Illinois successful.

Please note that the information contained in this manual does not include all the legal requirements of an AmeriCorps grant. It does not constitute the Corporation for National and Community Service's official interpretation of factual or legal questions. Program directors or individuals with particular questions should consult the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12501 et seq.), the regulations issued under the Act (45 C.F.R. § 2500.1 et seq.), the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions and Grants Policy guidance, and relevant state law and regulations. If there is a conflict between the content of this handbook and the AmeriCorps provisions, the provisions are the controlling authority.

*The Illinois AmeriCorps Program Director Policy and Procedure Manual* has been developed to help those who are newcomers to their positions to gain a general understanding of the management functions for overseeing the AmeriCorps programs/sites and their portfolio. It is intended to:

- Provide a roadmap for AmeriCorps grantee/site management
- Lay out a typical administrator's general work load
- Illustrate legal requirements
- Show where there is both control and flexibility to shape each AmeriCorps program

It is important that sub-grantees become familiar with all the information contained in this manual. *The Illinois AmeriCorps Program Director Policy and Procedure Manual* will be revised as needed. Revisions will be sent to each Illinois AmeriCorps Program Director.

## Laws

- National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended
  - (42 U.S.C. § 12501, et seq.) – Chapter 129 (approx. 95 pages)
- National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
- Serve America Act of 2009  
[http://www.nationalservice.gov/help/serve\\_america\\_act/Serve\\_America\\_Act.htm](http://www.nationalservice.gov/help/serve_america_act/Serve_America_Act.htm)

Please visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) for more information.

## Regulations

- 45 CFR Parts 2500 – 2504     **Corporation for National and Community Service  
Chapter XXV.**

Please visit [http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac\\_sn\\_all/2010\\_Megasearch\\_Site.html](http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/2010_Megasearch_Site.html) for the AmeriCorps Regulations.

## Provisions

- 2010 AmeriCorps Provisions, including revisions/changes.

Please visit [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/manage/index.asp#provisions](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/index.asp#provisions) for the 2010 AmeriCorps Provisions.

## Grant Agreement

Grant Agreement as executed and/or amended by both parties. *Please see the following three attachments and/or websites:*

*\*Please visit:*

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29741> for the State of Illinois, DHS, FY 2010  
Community Services Agreement

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=46959> for the Community Health and Prevention  
CSA Attachment E

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=46993> for the AmeriCorps Competitive & Formula Program  
Manual/Appendix

# Serve Illinois

**A Brief History of National Service**

**National Service Programs**

**National Days of Service**

**Organization**

**Illinois Commission History**

**Illinois Commissioner List**

**State Volunteer Recognition**

Certificate of Appreciation

**Training and Technical Assistance**

Training and Technical Assistance Providers

**Commission Training**

**Collaboration**

## **A Brief History of National Service**

When faced with challenges, our nation has always relied on the dedication and action of its citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) carries on a long tradition of citizen involvement by providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to improve their communities through service.

## **Revival of Interest in National and Community Service**

President George H. W. Bush helped spark a revival of interest in national service when he instituted the White House Office of National Service in 1989. In 1990 Congress passed the National and Community Service Act, which created a Commission on National and Community Service whose mission was to “renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the United States.” Full implementation began in 1992, when the commission awarded \$64 million in grants to support four broad types of state and local community service efforts. These initiatives were the Serve-America programs (now Learn and Serve) which involved school-aged youth in community service and service-learning through a variety of school and community-based activities; Higher Education Innovative Projects aimed at involving college students in community service and at promoting community service at educational institutions; American Conservation and Youth Service Corps, supporting summer and year-round youth corps initiatives that engage both in- and out-of-school youth in community service work; and the National and Community Service Demonstration Models, for programs that were potential models for large-scale national service. The National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a demonstration program to explore the possibility of using post-Cold War military resources to help solve problems here at home, was enacted later as part of the 1993 Defense Authorization Act. It is a residential service program modeled on the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps and the United States military.

## **National and Community Service Trust Act**

President Bill Clinton sponsored the National and Community Service Trust Act, a revision of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which was passed by a bipartisan coalition of members of Congress and signed into law on September 21, 1993. The legislation created a new federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), to administer federally-funded national service programs. The law created AmeriCorps, which was designed to support local, state, and national organizations across the nation, involves Americans in results-driven community service. Individual AmeriCorps participants, known as members, serve for a year, during which they receive a living allowance. After service, members receive an education award, administered by the National Service Trust, and paid as a voucher redeemable for current education costs at colleges, universities, other post-secondary institutions, and approved school-to-work programs, or to pay back qualified student loans already incurred. The legislation drew on the principles of both the Civilian Conservation Corps and the GI Bill, encouraging Americans to serve and rewarding those who do. The new agency also took over management of the programs of two previous agencies, ACTION, which was responsible for running VISTA and the National Senior Service Corps programs, and the more recent Commission on National and Community Service, including the NCCC, forming a new network of national service programs.

## Service in the New Millennium

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to serve their country for the equivalent of two years and announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, an umbrella network for volunteerism. A coordinating council housed at the White House and chaired by the President is working to expand and strengthen federal service programs like the Peace Corps, Citizen Corps, AmeriCorps, and Senior Corps, and to raise awareness of and break down barriers to service opportunities within all federal government agencies. Several bills have been introduced in Congress over the past three years to increase funding for national service and to reauthorize the National and Community Service Act.

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases\\_detail.asp?tbl\\_pr\\_id=1301](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=1301) On April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the **Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act**. The Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency created in 1993. The Corporation engages four million Americans in result-driven service each year, including 75,000 AmeriCorps members, 492,000 Senior Corps volunteers, 1.1 million Learn and Serve America students, and 2.2 million additional community volunteers mobilized and managed through the agency's programs. The Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands the mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service, by: increasing opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve, supporting innovation and strengthening the nonprofit sector, strengthening management, cost-effectiveness, and accountability within said entities.

## Corporation for National and Community Service Programs



The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 initiated the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Corporation supports a range of national and community based service programs, providing opportunities for Americans to serve as full-time and part-time stipend participants or volunteers, and as individuals or as teams. CNCS provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and the nation through three programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. Members and volunteers serve with national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies to help meet pressing community needs. CNCS is part of USA Freedom Corps, the White House initiative to foster a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility, and to help all Americans answer the President's Call to Service. CNCS fosters civic responsibility, strengthens the ties that bind us together as a people, and provides educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. The Board of Directors for CNCS working in collaboration with the field and staff developed a strategic plan in 2006. The focus areas in the strategic plan are:

1. Mobilizing more volunteers
2. Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth
3. Engaging Students in Service
4. Harnessing Baby Boomer's Experience.

For more information, please visit: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/focus\\_areas/index.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/focus_areas/index.asp).



### AmeriCorps\* State and National

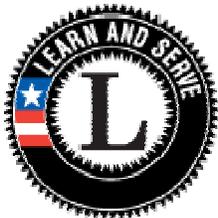
This program's goals are getting things done, strengthening community, and encouraging responsibility. Members receive educational awards in return for service. The AmeriCorps network consists of a wide variety of diverse programs in every state of the nation. Attached to this section is a current list of AmeriCorps\* State and AmeriCorps\* National Direct programs in Illinois. The hotline for the Serve Illinois Commission (SIC) is 1-800-592-9896.

## AmeriCorps\* VISTA

With a thirty-five year tradition of working with community groups to help low-income people help themselves, VISTA focuses on capacity building – helping local organizations develop plans, raise funds, coordinate programs, and recruit and train local volunteers to effectively serve those in need. For more information about AmeriCorps\* VISTA in Illinois, contact John Hosteny at the Illinois Corporation for National and Community Service State Program Office in Chicago at (312) 353-3622, or [IL@cns.gov](mailto:IL@cns.gov).

## AmeriCorps\* NCCC

The National Civilian Community Corps involves young people ages 18-24 in performing community service projects. This program is a residential service program in which members are housed and trained together on military bases, and deployed as teams to service sites across the nation. NCCC members conduct service projects with a special emphasis on protecting the environment, promoting public safety, and responding to natural disasters. The campus for Illinois is located in Vinton, IA. For more information about AmeriCorps\* NCCC, Iowa campus, contact (319) 472-9655.



### Learn and Serve America

Learn and Serve integrates service into schools through a method called “service learning,” which enables young people to serve their communities through their classrooms. It provides schools, colleges, and community organizations with grants to meet community needs while improving their skills and learning the habits of good citizenship. For more information about Learn and Serve grants in Illinois, contact Mike Mangan at [mmangan@cntrmail.org](mailto:mmangan@cntrmail.org) or Deb Huffman at [dhuffman@isbe.net](mailto:dhuffman@isbe.net)



### National Senior Service Corps

Or simply “Senior Corps,” engages older Americans – with their great skills, talents, and experience – in addressing urgent issues facing the nation, in one of three programs: *Foster Grandparents*, who serve one-on-one with young people who have special needs; *Senior Companions*, who help other seniors live independently in their homes; and *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)* volunteers, who work with local groups to meet a wide range of community needs. For more information about Senior Corps in the state of Illinois, contact the Illinois Corporation for National and Community Service Office at (312) 353-3622.



**Citizen Corps**

The mission of Citizen Corps is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. For more information about Citizen Corps, contact visit

[www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov)

## National Days of Service

Programs are encouraged to participate in National Days of Service.



**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** “A day ON...not a day off” occurs on **January 17, 2011** (the day of observance of the federal holiday honoring Dr. King’s birth). The Corporation for National and Community Service is responsible for promoting this day as a day of service to honor the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. See [www.mlkday.org](http://www.mlkday.org) for more information.



## Global Youth Service Day

Over the past decade, Global Youth Service Day (**April 15-17, 2011**) has brought together more than 13 million people in thousands of communities nationwide. For more information, visit [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org).



## National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week of **April 10 –16, 2011** as an annual celebration of volunteering. Every President since has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week. National Volunteer Week has become the official time to recognize and celebrate the efforts of volunteers at the local, state, and national levels. For more information, visit [www.PointsofLight.org](http://www.PointsofLight.org).



## Join Hands Day

The goal of Join Hands Day **May 8, 2010** is to begin making connections and friendships across generations that will continue long after the day is over. Developing these relationships is essential to creating healthy organizations, neighborhoods, and communities. For more information, visit [www.joinhandsday.org](http://www.joinhandsday.org).

## Make a Difference Day

Sponsored by USA Weekend and Points of Light Foundation, is held each year on the **fourth Saturday in October**. **October 22, 2011**. See [www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com) for more information.



## National Family Volunteer Day

The Points of Light Foundation launched the Family Matters initiative to encourage and engage families in community-oriented projects. National Family Volunteer Day is held the **Saturday before Thanksgiving (November 19, 2011)** every year and kicks off National Family Volunteer Week as part of an annual public awareness. For more information, visit [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org)

## September 11

### National Day of Service and Remembrance

By pledging to volunteer, perform good deeds, or engage in other forms of charitable service during the week of 9/11, you and your organization will help rekindle the remarkable spirit of unity, service and compassion shared by so many in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. And you'll help create a fitting, enduring and historic legacy in the name of those lost and injured on 9/11, and in tribute to the 9/11 first responders, rescue and recovery workers, and volunteers, and our brave military personnel who continue to serve to this day.

(September 11, 2011) For more information, visit <http://911day.org/>



National AmeriCorps Week (**May 7 – 14, 2011**) provides the perfect opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to shine a spotlight on the work done by members—and to motivate more Americans to serve their communities. Many events are scheduled across the country. Individuals and organizations with a special interest in AmeriCorps—especially, members, programs, and alums—are encouraged to use their creativity to mark the week in any way they see fit. The choice is up to you!

For more information, visit <http://www.americorpsweek.gov/index.asp>

## Organization

### CNCS (headquarters)

As the primary federal source of funding for national volunteer activities, CNCS is obviously the most important “player on the field”. AmeriCorps operates in a decentralized manner that gives a significant amount of administrative responsibility to states and national and local nonprofit groups. CNCS realizes that the many organizations and individuals around the country with which it shares administrative responsibility for AmeriCorps will look to it for assistance on a broad range of issues and problems.

The following table suggests some of the principal support functions that CNCS the office can provide:

OFFICE	AmeriCorps SUPPORT FUNCTIONS
Program	Oversees programmatic aspects of grants and awards. Program officers serve as the primary liaisons with state service commission and the National Program grantees.
Grants	Oversees financial aspects of grants and awards.
Office of Leadership Development and Training	Works with national technical assistance providers and with training and technical assistance coordinators in state service commissions.
Trust	Manages the education awards for AmeriCorps members.
Public Affairs	Oversees media relations, marketing and publications, including the online recruitment website.
Public Liaison	Oversees national initiatives, national service days, and all AmeriCorps awards.
General Counsel	Provides legal counsel for CNCS and can answer legal questions related to AmeriCorps program management.
Office of the Inspector General	Detects and deters waste, fraud, abuse, and violations of law of CNCS funded programs.

There are two main divisions in the AmeriCorps headquarters staff: AmeriCorps\*State and AmeriCorps\*National. Each State Service Commission has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps\*State program officer assigned as their primary liaison at headquarters; each National Program grantee has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps\*National program officer assigned as their primary liaison. CNCS program officers are the frontline support for program staff, assisting with any issues that arise including locating needed information and clarifications of policy. Program officers are also the primary monitors at headquarters of how things are going in the states for which they are responsible. Program officers work closely with other units at CNCS to provide quality support to the field.

### **CNCS State Office**

CNCS also operates offices in each state. These offices are responsible for administering AmeriCorps\*VISTA projects as well as the three Senior Corps programs. The CNCS employees in these locations assist with the monitoring of National AmeriCorps programs sites, solicit and review Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service grants in their states, and participate in cross-program planning initiatives, including development of State Service Plans. One of them, usually the state office director, serves as an ex-officio member of the State Service Commission. For a list of CNCS State officers and contact information, please go to:

<http://nationalservice.gov/about/contact/stateoffices.asp>

## **The Serve Illinois Commission**

The purpose of the Serve Illinois Commission (SIC) is to promote and support volunteerism and community service in public and private programs to address the needs of citizens. The Commission is a 25-member bi-partisan Governor-appointed board. It includes representatives with experience in local government, labor, education, older adults, public health, non-profits, youth, business, volunteerism and national service. It is organizationally located within the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS).

### **Vision**

We see an Illinois where all citizens recognize their ability and responsibility to help strengthen their communities through voluntary service. We see expanded and meaningful volunteerism throughout rural, suburban, and urban Illinois involving people of all backgrounds, cultures, and ages. We see volunteers making measurable differences in their communities because they are well trained, supported, and on the cutting edge of problem solving.

### **Mission**

The mission of the SIC is to improve Illinois communities by supporting and enhancing volunteerism and community service.

### **Volunteerism**

The Commission supports volunteerism through:

- Working with volunteer managers and volunteer centers to help community based organizations improve their ability to maximize their resources.
- Developing informational materials to increase awareness and to provide assistance to volunteers, volunteer organizations, government agencies and the public at large.
- Administering AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Promise Fellows, and Community Based Learn and Serve programs.
- Enhancing service and volunteerism through awards and other recognition opportunities.
- Assisting in training and professional development for volunteer managers.
- Promoting awareness of, and attendance at, existing volunteer management training and networking opportunities through scholarships, newsletters, websites and promoting technical assistance for effective volunteer management.
- Assisting communities to become involved in homeland security/community safety initiatives, including Citizen Corps.
- Working with volunteer managers to increase the number of individuals volunteering and involved in their communities.
- Encouraging strong partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit agencies.
- Strengthening the statewide network of volunteer support organizations.
- Promoting diverse programs that are representative of individuals and their communities.

## Illinois Commissioner List

- Jill C. Heise, Streeterville Organization of Active Residents (SOAR) - Chicago (Chair)
- Andrew Barbeau, Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) – Chicago (Vice Chair)
- Jane Angelis, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale
- Don Baden, AmeriCorps East St. Louis – Fairview Heights
- Lawrence Benito, Illinois Coalition for Immigration and Refugee Rights – Chicago
- Julian Brown, Nicor Gas – Chicago
- Mary Ellen Caron, Chicago Department of Family Support Services – Chicago
- Jocelyn Cheng, National MS Society, Greater Illinois Chapter – Chicago
- Merri Dee, AARP – Chicago
- Judy Donath, RSVP for Sangamon, Menard and Logan Counties – Springfield
- Kathy Engelken, Illinois Campus Compact – Chicago
- Alvin Goldfarb, Western Illinois University – Macomb
- John Hosteny, Corporation for National and Community Service – Chicago
- Nancy Jameson, West Central Illinois RSVP – Macomb
- Rosemary Keefe, Illinois Tool Works – Chicago
- Christopher A. Koch, Illinois State Board of Education – Springfield
- Howard Lathan, Chicago Area Project – Chicago
- Michael B. Mangan, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning – Arlington Heights
- Bechara Choucair, Chicago Department of Public Health – Chicago
- Bob McCammon, Youth Conservation Corps – Lake Villa
- Arlan McClain, Kreider Services – Dixon
- Frederick D. Nettles, Jr., Illinois Department of Human Services – Springfield
- Kelly Reffett, Illinois State AFL-CIO – LaSalle
- Genita C. Robinson, Lawyers Lend A Hand – Chicago
- Fred Rodriguez, Retired Educator – Western Springs
- Giraldo Rosales, University of Illinois – Champaign
- Cynthia Sims, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale
- John Sirek, McCormick Foundation – Chicago
- Judy Swinson, St. Mary's Good Samaritan Inc. – Centralia
- Albert D. Tyson, III, City Colleges of Chicago – Chicago
- Barbara Tubekis, Volunteer Centers of Illinois – Winnetka
- Gloria Verastegui, Youth Representative – Gilberts
- Jody Weis, Chicago Police Department – Chicago
- Steven Wolfe, DuPage County – Glen Ellyn

*State Volunteer Recognition*

The Serve Illinois Commission enjoys recognizing volunteer efforts in the state. The Commission encourages programs to participate in the following recognition opportunity:

**Certificate of Appreciation:** Use these certificates to honor your volunteers. Space is provided for your agency to personalize this certificate. To order or re-order certificates, contact the Commission by calling 800-592-9896. To view this certificate, see attachment 1. There is no charge for these certificates.

*\*See attached file: 1. Certificate of Appreciation*

## **Training and Technical Assistance**

The Corporation has agreements with 20 national training and technical assistance (T/TA) providers to help meet programs' training and technical assistance needs. The T/TA provider listing is updated regularly and can be downloaded at <http://nationalserviceresources.org/>. Programs are encouraged to contact national T/TA providers directly.

*\* See attached file 2. Training and Technical Assistance Provider List*

## Commission Trainings

The Commission will provide various trainings for programs throughout the year. The following meetings are **mandatory**:

- **Program Director Meeting**
  - **Usually held in April and August.**
  - **All program directors are required to attend these meeting, unless previously authorized by your Program Officer.**
  
- **National Service Recognition Day**
  - **Usually held in October. This is a wonderful opportunity for your members to meet with other members throughout the state.**
  - **It is mandatory that all programs bring as many members as possible.**

The following Serve Illinois/DHS/CNCS sponsored volunteerism and related conferences are encouraged:

Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration ([www.icova.info](http://www.icova.info))

ICOVA is a two-day event designed for those who supervise, manage, or otherwise lead volunteers. ICOVA offers professional development and continuing education through conference workshops and keynote speakers focusing on key areas of a volunteer delivery system. ICOVA also provides that much needed networking experience with peers in the field.

East Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference ([www.ecivc.net](http://www.ecivc.net))

Professional development and training to the area's volunteer leaders from a variety of public and private/nonprofit agencies. This conference provides valuable networking opportunities, as well as quality professional development opportunities focusing on the key areas of a volunteer delivery system. ECIVC began in 2009 through a collaboration of agencies participating in the region's Volunteer Management Network.

Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference ([www.sivc.net](http://www.sivc.net))

Has existed for over 12 years in various forms to provide capacity-building training opportunities to enhance the skills of volunteer leaders and managers in the public, private, and particularly nonprofit, sectors and to provide professional development workshops for volunteers themselves.

West Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference

(<http://www2.illinois.gov/serve/Pages/westcentral.aspx>)

Provides capacity-building training opportunities to enhance the skills of volunteer leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. This conference provides valuable networking opportunities, as well as quality professional development opportunities focusing on the key areas of a volunteer delivery system including personal readiness, organizational readiness, engagement of volunteers, education of volunteers, and sustainability of volunteer efforts.

National Conference on Volunteering and Service ([www.volunteeringandservice.org](http://www.volunteeringandservice.org))

National Conference organized by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the Points of Light Institute each summer with an average of 4,500 participants from around the country with breakout sessions on volunteer management, community collaboration, fundraising/sustainability, financial management, AmeriCorps/CNCS programs, member development, program development and a variety of topics on the nonprofit sector in general.

The Commission will also sponsor various trainings throughout the year based on the needs of the programs for that particular year. A training survey may be sent out to programs seeking input on trainings for the current program year. All trainings provided by the Commission will be mandatory for all programs, unless otherwise noted.

If you have any requests or suggestions regarding training needs, please contact the Commission by calling 800-592-9896.

## Collaboration

Collaboration is an intentional relationship between two or more individuals or organizations that come together to communicate, cooperate, and coordinate for the purpose of achieving common goals. These goals create shared values that enhance sustainable communities and citizen involvement.

The promotion of collaboration between the National Service Programs is a first priority in the process of creating support networks on both local and statewide levels. Creating strong, local CNCS collaborations is an important step toward creating collaborations with and among community agencies. It is especially important that members and staff of the Serve Illinois Commission, the Illinois State Corporation Office, and volunteers and staff of the national service program projects engage with organizations that include and represent low-income and other underserved individuals and communities.

### Expectations for Collaboration

- **Each organization will define its own purpose and goals to accomplish, and will seek to develop partnerships that will support and enhance that vision.**
- **National service programs will educate others through their networks, the definition of and expectations for collaboration.**
- **National service programs will host regional community forums to begin the development of networks and collaborative opportunities.**
- **National service programs will create a development of regional networks. Subsequently, there will be an increase in the percentage of national service programs that report working with community partners; such as other volunteer programs, national service programs, and volunteer centers, for the purposes of peer support and collaboration.**
- **National service programs will develop collaborative goals for the community, in partnership with members of their regional network, and work together to achieve those goals. National service programs will continue to participate in networking opportunities or conferences (e.g. ICOVA, SIVC, and Service-Learning Conference).**
- **National service programs will continue to invite and include other national service programs (VISTA, AmeriCorps State/National, Senior Corps, and Learn & Serve) to trainings or conferences, as appropriate**
- **Ensure collaboration will promote growth for each partnering organization.**
- **Be sure to create a unified structure and discuss, in detail, any assumptions or expectations in accomplishing a successful collaboration, such as:**
  - **Any pre-defined goals**
  - **Roles and responsibilities for each partner**
  - **Shared resources**
  - **Keep in mind that not every community or program will find circumstances for collaboration.**

# Start up & Member Recruitment

**Recruitment**

**ADA Accommodations**

**Disability Outreach**

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**Program Start-up Checklists**

Program Start-up Checklist

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Getting Members Started Checklist

## Recruitment

### Community Recruitment:

As an AmeriCorps program, you must actively seek to recruit program members from the community in which the project is conducted. Members of diverse races and ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, both men and women, and individuals with disabilities, unless and to the extent that the approved program design requires emphasizing the recruitment of staff and members who share a specific characteristic or background. However, in no case may you violate the nondiscrimination and non-displacement rules governing participant selection.

### National Recruitment:

To supplement local recruitment efforts, the Commission requires your program to use the web-based AmeriCorps Recruitment and Placement System (AC\*RPS). All programs will be required to have their program on this system by the beginning of their program year. If you have problems or questions about this system, please visit [http://www.americorps.org/for\\_organizations/members/index.asp](http://www.americorps.org/for_organizations/members/index.asp)

## ADA Accommodations

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.), programs must provide reasonable accommodations to the known mental or physical disabilities of members, and all selections and project assignments must be made without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodations. As a Program Director, you may be called upon to make decisions regarding reasonable accommodation. However, the law does not require that you provide reasonable accommodations for any participant who would pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others even if accommodated. For more information, please contact your Program Officer with the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service.

The Serve Illinois Commission shall inform programs and prospective programs about Commission policies and rights to reasonable accommodations for qualified AmeriCorps members. The Commission has established a system to apply for, respond to, and track reasonable accommodation requests for the Commission. The established reasonable accommodation process is for qualified members with disabilities who are enrolled in an AmeriCorps\*State program, unless provision of such accommodation would create an undue hardship on SIC or the AmeriCorps\*State Program. If an AmeriCorps\*State member or applicant needs a reasonable accommodation, please contact the Commission at (800) 592-9896.

\* See attached ADA files:

3. *Medical Review Form*
4. *Reasonable Accommodations Request Procedure*
5. *Reasonable Accommodations Request Form*
6. *Reasonable Accommodation Monitoring Report*
7. *Reasonable Accommodations Appeal of Denial*

## Disability Outreach

The Serve Illinois Commission is partnering with Kreider Services, Inc. to provide planning, organization and technical assistance for the AmeriCorps Disability Outreach Project to recruit and place potential members with disabilities in current AmeriCorps programs in Illinois. The project's focus is on outreach, recruitment, and marketing activities for AmeriCorps programs to the disabilities population. Kreider Services is a not-for-profit, community-based organization that provides services to over 400 persons with physical and/or development disabilities. Kreider Services, Inc. can be contacted at:

Lois Barnhart  
Serve Illinois Disability Outreach Coordinator  
Kreider Services, Inc.  
500 Anchor Road  
Dixon IL 61021  
PH: 815-288-6691 EX 282  
FAX: 815-288-1636  
TTY: 815-288-5931  
[barnhartl@kreiderservices.org](mailto:barnhartl@kreiderservices.org)

The Serve Illinois Commission is working to promote Illinois AmeriCorps programs and develop recruitment activities on college campuses, in conjunction with disability organizations and rehabilitation services agencies. Recruitment brochures, applications, and other program materials adapted for the disabilities population and trainings are provided to Illinois AmeriCorps Program Directors.

For more information on this project please contact the Serve Illinois Commission at: (800) 592-9896.

## Background Checks

The AmeriCorps Provisions read as follows:

Under the Serve America Act (SAA), all grantees must conduct criminal history checks on part participants in AmeriCorps as well as on all employees and others who receive a salary, national service education award, living allowance, or stipend under Corporation grants, even if the activities don't involve service with vulnerable populations.

The new requirements took effect on October 1, 2009. **Beginning April 21, 2011, programs will also be required to conduct FBI background checks on covered individuals who will be working with vulnerable populations.** Detailed information can be found by visiting [http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/manage/history\\_checks.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/manage/history_checks.asp)

The AmeriCorps Provisions further state:

The grantee must ensure, to the extent permitted by state or local law, that it maintains background check documentation for members and employees covered by this provision in the member or employee's file or other appropriate file. The documentation must demonstrate that, in selecting or placing an individual, the grantee or the grantee's designee (such as a site sponsor) reviewed and considered the background check's results.

**All of the grantee staff positions** identified under a regular AmeriCorps grant (competitive, formula, national direct, and others, if created where grantees must identify their program's employee positions on a budget), **are subject to the background check rules.** So are the members, because they receive an education award from the Trust. EAP grant are not subject to the background checks because the minimal fixed level of federal assistance requires the grantee to pay for, outside of the grant, the great majority of program costs, including employee salaries. However, EAP grantees are encouraged to develop a prudent criminal history check policy appropriate to their program design and populations served.

It often takes a long time to get the results of a background check, so **complete this task as soon as possible.**

There are numerous vendors who can perform background checks in Illinois. To obtain information on how to conduct the required background check in your area, **contact the Illinois State Police at (815) 740-5160.**

**Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) also performs a background check for child abuse and neglect for individuals not licensed by DCFS. The DCFS background check alone will not fulfill the AmeriCorps Provisions, however it is recommended by SIC and can be obtained free of charge.** Form CFS 689 is attached to this policy and can also be obtained from the DCFS website:  
[http://www.state.il.us/dcf/library/com\\_communications\\_forms.shtml](http://www.state.il.us/dcf/library/com_communications_forms.shtml)

\* See attached file: 8. DCFS Authorization for Background Check

## **Nondiscrimination Laws**

All programs must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and Regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to, the following law and regulations and all the subsequent amendments thereto:

1. The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5)
2. Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10)
3. The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000a-2000h-6) (as amended)
4. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794)
5. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C 12101 et seq.)
6. Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 (Equal Employment Opportunity)

For further reference, please visit [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov) or <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

## Orientation

Member orientation should prepare members for their year of service. Orientation can help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to “get the job done”. A strong orientation will pay off in program outcomes, with members who know the purpose of their service and have the skills to accomplish program objectives. The AmeriCorps Member Orientation Checklist can be found on the following page.

Listed below are items the Corporation **mandates** to be covered in the orientation of members:

- **Member rights and responsibilities**
- **Specific skills and knowledge to perform service**
- **Program’s code of conduct**
- **Prohibited Activities (attachment)**
- **Drug Free Workplace**
- **Suspension and Termination Rules**
- **Grievance Procedures**
- **Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Non-Discrimination activities**
- **Sexual Harassment Awareness Education**
- **Specific Safety Procedures- member security**
- **Sensitivity to the Community**
- **Introduction to National Service and AmeriCorps**
- **My AmeriCorps Portal**
- **Illinois OnCorps Reporting (timesheets and approval process)**

Listed below are items the Commission **strongly encourages** to be included in the orientation of members:

- **National Service: The Big Picture (The AmeriCorps orientation video, “Getting Things Started” is a good tool to utilize)**
- **The History of Service in America**
- **Host Sites**
- **AmeriCorps network of over 75,000 members**
- **Discussion of the AmeriCorps ethic**
- **Importance of Getting Things Done**
- **Meaning of Illinois Community**
- **Responsibilities that individuals have to themselves, their families, their community, and the nation -civic responsibility and civic reflection**
- **Program Rules, Regulations, and Benefits**
- **Member Handbook**
- **Benefits**
- **Allowed Activities (attachment)**
- **Living Allowance**
- **Staff and member roles**
- **Understanding the objectives of the program and how to collect data**
- **Have members fill out National Trust Enrollment Forms**
- **Eligibility of full time members for Health Care/Childcare**

### AmeriCorps Member Orientation Checklist

Program Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Were the following points covered in the member’s orientation?:

- Specific skills and knowledge to perform service
- Member rights and responsibilities
- Program’s Code of Conduct
- Prohibited Activities
- Drug Free Workplace
- Suspension and Termination Rules
- Grievance Procedures
- Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action
- Sexual Harassment Awareness Education
- Specific Safety Procedures
- Sensitivity to the Community
- Introduction to National Service and AmeriCorps
- Background checks
- Member benefits
- Member wage garnishment
- Illinois OnCorps Reporting
  - Timesheets
  - Progress Report
- My AmeriCorps Portal
  - Loan Forbearance Form
  - Interest Accrual Form
  - Education Award

Notes:

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## **Service Gear**

Grant funds may be used to pay for a standard Service Gear package (AmeriCorps T-shirt, sweatshirt, hat, pin, decals, and buttons) for members. The Commission urges programs to provide this package to members. If the standard Service Gear package is not purchased, Programs must provide Members with a comparable package.

Items can be order online at <http://gooddeed.org/americorps.aspx>

## **Material Request**

Grant funds may be used to purchase informational material (brochures, application packets, posters, publications, etc.). On occasion, select items are free of charge.

Items can be ordered online at [www.nationalservicerresources.org/packet](http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/packet).

## **Member Service Agreement**

As described in the AmeriCorps Provisions, Programs are required to have members sign contracts that, at a minimum, stipulate the following:

1. The minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the Program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award;
2. Acceptable conduct;
3. Prohibited activities, including those specified in the regulations;
4. Requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.);
5. Suspension and termination rules;
6. The specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause;
7. The position description;
8. Grievance procedures; and
9. Other requirements as established by the Program.

\*See attached file: 9. Member Service Agreement Template

## Member Status

### Member Commitment:

The process of enrolling new members in My AmeriCorps begins with recording an applicant's commitment into the AmeriCorps Commitment Tracker (ACT). The Corporation for National and Community Service describes a commitment as follows:

*A "commitment" is defined as signing a member service agreement with an individual or otherwise entering into a legally enforceable commitment as determined by state law. For example, a program may sign a letter of commitment with an individual to begin service in two months. State law may also deem other actions to be an enforceable commitment for an individual to serve.*

The Corporation requires the program to enter the person in the ACT **within 30 calendar days of the commitment signing**. This serves to notify the Corporation of the agreement.

### Member Enrollment:

All Member Enrollment Forms must be entered and approved in My AmeriCorps **within 30 days of a member entering or enrolling in the program**. Members must create a My AmeriCorps Portal account in order to complete their enrollment. Programs may enroll members through **October 31** without permission from the Commission. Programs must receive approval from the Commission prior to enrolling members after **October 31**.

To request approval for **enrolling members after October 31**, programs **must** submit a written request stating:

- The number and type of position to be filled
- Expected start and end date of the member
- How the member will be trained
- How many hours per week the member will need to serve to complete service

\*\*\* No full-time member may be enrolled after **December 31**.

### Member Exit:

All Member Exit Forms **must** be entered and approved in My AmeriCorps **within 30 days** of a member exiting the program. Members must create a My AmeriCorps Portal account in order to complete their exit information and to manage their education award. All members must complete their term of service within one year of their start date. This completion requirement is for all members. Members who have had their term suspended, may increase their service agreement by the number of days suspended but not to exceed December 31<sup>st</sup> of the Program Year.

### Change of Status:

Programs **must** have approval from the Commission prior to entering and approving a Change of Status Form in My AmeriCorps. Programs shall submit a written letter requesting approval. Refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions for policy guidance.

**Suspension:**

Programs may halt a member's term of service in case of extenuating circumstances so that the member's term of service may be extended dependent on length of suspension. CNCS regulations states a member may return continue his/her term of service up to two years after suspension (45 CFR § 2522.230 Page 101). However, to avoid Illinois contractual conflicts, the Illinois Commission has adopted a more stringent suspension policy; therefore, the Illinois Commissions policy of exiting all members by December 31 of the following year takes precedence.

Note: If you make any changes to My AmeriCorps, you must add that same information to the member file. The My AmeriCorps system and the member files should include the same information.

\* See attached files:

*10. Member Enrollment Form*

*11. Member Exit Form*

## Member Slots

The allowable slot types and associated FTEs are listed in the table below.

Service Term	Service Hours	FTEs
Full Time (FT)	1700	1
Half Time (HT)	900	.5
Reduced Half Time (RHT)	675	0.38
Quarter Time (QT)	450	0.26
Minimum Time (MT)	300	0.21

## Corrections

Use the slot correction process to make any changes to the distribution of a program's slots.

### Slot Corrections for Refill Slots

Slot corrections on refilled slots require notification to and approval from your program officer. Remember that refill slots don't appear until all awarded slots have been filled. Keep in mind that filled slots include:

- **slots occupied by members who exited with greater than 30% of hours served (shows as an awarded slot that is filled)**
- **slots occupied by active (or suspended) members (shows as an awarded slot that is filled)**
- **slots that have been vacated by a member with less than 30% of their hours, and then vacated a second time (shows as a refilled slot)**
- **refilled slots (shows as a refilled slot)**

\* See attached file: 12. Slot Conversion and Transfer Policy

## Tutoring Requirements

A tutor is defined as someone whose primary goal is to increase academic achievement in reading or other core subjects through planned, consistent, one-to-one or small-group sessions and activities that build on the academic strengths of students in kindergarten through 12th grade, and target their academic needs. A tutor does not include someone engaged in other academic support activities, such as mentoring and after-school program support, whose primary goal is something other than increasing academic achievement. For example, providing a safe place for children is not tutoring, even if some of the program activities focus on homework help.

### **§ 2522.940 What are the requirements for a program in which AmeriCorps members serve as tutors?**

A program in which members engage in tutoring for children must:

- (a) Articulate appropriate criteria for selecting and qualifying tutors, including the requirements in §2522.910 of this subpart;
  - (b) Identify the strategies or tools it will use to assess student progress and measure student outcomes;
  - (c) Certify that the tutoring curriculum and pre-service and in-service training content are high-quality and research based, consistent with the instructional program of the local educational agency or with State academic content standards;
  - (d) Include appropriate member supervision by individuals with expertise in tutoring;
  - (e) Provide specialized high-quality and research-based, member pre-service and in-service training consistent with the activities the member will perform;
  - (f) Curriculum must be consistent with both state academic standards and the instruction program of the local educational agency.
  - (g) Certify that members serving as tutors possess a minimum of a high school diploma.
- Serve America tutor

### **§ 2522.920 Are there any exceptions to the qualifications requirements?**

The qualifications requirements in §2522.910 of this subpart do not apply to a member who is a K–12 student tutoring younger children in the school or after school as part of a structured, school-managed cross-grade tutoring program.

Additional information can be found by searching  
[http://www.americorps.gov/home/site\\_map/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/home/site_map/index.asp)

## Living Allowance

Generally, you must provide a living allowance between \$11,400 and \$22,800 per year to your full-time members.

A living allowance is *not* required for less than full-time members. If you choose to provide less than full-time members with a living allowance, you may use the following chart as a guide.

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Maximum Total Living Allowance	MSY
Full Time	1700	\$23,600	1
Half Time	900	\$12,500	.50
Reduced Half Time	675	\$9,370	.38
Quarter Time	450	\$6,250	.26
Minimum Time	300	\$4,160	.21

Programs occasionally request the ability to deduct amounts from living allowances for absences and other purposes. Programs may make deductions to the *non-federal portion* of living allowances or other payments made to AmeriCorps members. Programs **may not deduct any federal** portion of the living allowance paid by Corporation funds.

Before making any deductions, programs are advised to consider implications related to the treatment of employment laws. Further, programs making deductions in this fashion, it may be required to increase their matching funds. Please contact your Serve Illinois Program Officer for more information.

## Education Award

### Amount of the AmeriCorps Education Award

The amount of the AmeriCorps Education Award depends on the length of a member's term of service. The current amount of the Education Award for each term of service is as follows:

<b>Enrollment Status</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Award</b>
Full-Time	1700	\$5,350.00
Half-Time	900	\$2,675.00
Reduced Half-Time	675	\$2,124.00
Quarter-Time	450	\$1,416.00
Minimum-Time	300	\$1,133.00

Payments made from AmeriCorps Education Awards are considered taxable income in the year that the Corporation makes the payment to the school or loan holder. A member serving in a full-time term of service is required to complete service within 9 to 12 months.

### Eligibility

Members are eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award if they successfully complete their term of service in accordance with the member service agreement with one of the following approved AmeriCorps programs:

AmeriCorps\*State and National  
 AmeriCorps\*VISTA  
 AmeriCorps\*NCCC

As the member uses the AmeriCorps Education Award, they must have received a high school diploma, or the equivalent of such diploma.

### Award Limitations

Under no circumstances will an individual be eligible to receive more than an amount equal to the aggregate value of two full-time education awards. The *value* of an education award is equal to the actual amount of the education award received divided by the amount of a full-time education award in the year the AmeriCorps or Silver Scholar position to which the award is attributed was approved. Each award received will be considered to have a value between 0 and 1. Although the *amount* of a full-time award as defined in § 2527.10(a) may change, the *value* of a full-time award will always be equal to 1.

For more details relating to the Education Award Limitations, please visit [http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac\\_sn\\_all/2010\\_Megasearch\\_Site.html](http://www.americorps.gov/help/ac_sn_all/2010_Megasearch_Site.html)

The National Service Trust does not make payments to anyone other than qualified schools and loan holders. See your financial aid counselor for information on how they handle disbursements and reimbursements of the AmeriCorps Education Award.

If a member withdraws from the school at which you have used the Education Award, the school may be required to refund the National Service Trust. If any refund is owed, it is credited to the member's Education Award "account," and is subject to the seven-year time limit members have for using their awards. For general information on how withdrawing from school may affect a member's student financial aid, go to U.S. Department of Education's Student Guidebook.

Under certain circumstances, members can use the education award to study outside the United States. Contact the National Service Trust at 1-888-507-5962 for further information.

Members have seven years to use the education award from the date of their completion of service. They can divide up their award and use portions of it at different times, as long as it is for authorized expenditures within the specified time period. Members could, for example, apply a portion of it to existing qualified student loans and save the remainder to pay for authorized college costs in the future.

### **Transfer of the Education Award**

Before transferring an award to a designated individual, the Corporation must receive a request from the transferring individual, including:

- (1) The individual's written authorization to transfer the award, the year in which the award was earned, and the specific amount of the award to be transferred;
- (2) Identifying information for the individual designated to receive the transferred award;
- (3) A certification that the transferring individual meets the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (c) of § 2530.10; and
- (4) A certification that the designated individual is the child, grandchild, or foster child of the transferring individual.

Upon receipt of a request including all required information listed in paragraph (a) of this section, the Corporation will contact the designated individual to notify the individual of the proposed transfer, confirm the individual's identity, and give the individual the opportunity to accept or reject the transferred award.

To accept an award, a designated individual must certify that the designated individual is the child, grandchild, or foster child of the transferring individual and that the designated individual is a citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States. Upon receipt of the designated individual's acceptance, the Corporation will create or permit the creation of an account in the National Service Trust for the designated individual, if an account does not already exist, and the accepted amount will be deducted from the transferring individual's account and credited to the designated individual's account.

The Corporation must receive the request from the transferring individual prior to the date the award expires.

**College/University Match**

There are currently 97 colleges and universities that match the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for their students. The complete list may be found by visiting [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/benefits/ed\\_award\\_match.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/ed_award_match.asp).

## Child Care

Programs must make child care available to any full-time member who is eligible for and needs such assistance in order to participate in the program. Member eligibility for child care is based on need. The Corporation pays 100% of the allowance as defined by payment rates of Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

### Member Eligibility:

Members are eligible for child care if they meet any of the following conditions:

- **Their needs are consistent with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990.**
- **Their total family income is within the state median income guidelines, as defined under CCDBG guidelines.**
- **They with and be a parent or guardian of a child under the age of 13.**
- **They are a full-time members (1700 hours in 12 months) or 900 hours in six month period (only with prior approval of the Corporation)**
- **They need Child Care in order to participate in the AmeriCorps Program**
- **They are not receiving child care from another source at the time of acceptance into the program**
- **They have a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines.**

An Eligibility Calculator may be found on the Illinois Department of Human Services website, at: <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/applications/ChildCareEligCalc/eligcalc.asp>

To qualify for payment through AmeriCorps\*CARE, a child care provider must qualify as a legal provider under the CCDBG state plan.

Please visit <http://www.1stfinancialassociates.com/asnprogram.htm> to access the Child Care Application as well as specific information that your Member will find helpful.

\*Please visit <http://www.inccrra.org/find-your-local-crr-homepage> or the INCCRRA Agency Referral list

\* See attached files:

*13. Child Care Checklist*

## Health Insurance

Programs must provide health care coverage to full-time members who do not have adequate health care at the time of enrollment or who lose coverage due to participation in the program. In addition, programs must provide health care coverage if a full-time member loses coverage during the term of service through no deliberate act of his or her own.

If the program already carries minimum benefits at a reasonable cost, they must use existing policies to cover members. If a program is going to use an existing health care policy, a copy of the policy and a summary of its coverage and cost must be sent to the Illinois Commission.

If a program does not have a current policy that carries the minimum health care benefits, using the alternative health care policy administered by Strategic Resource Company/BCS Insurance (SRC/BCS) for AmeriCorps members is required. To obtain this type of health insurance, please contact SRC/BCS directly at (803) 333-1137 or 1-800-359-7475. Once you contact SRC/BCS, they will send you information to set-up a new account.

Programs may obtain healthcare from any provider as long as the coverage provided by the grantee provides the following minimum benefits:

- a. Physician services for illness or injury
- b. Hospital room and board
- c. Emergency room
- d. X-ray and laboratory
- e. Prescription drugs
- f. Limited mental/nervous disorders
- g. Limited substance abuse coverage
- h. An annual deductible of no more than \$250 charges per member
- i. No more than \$1,000 total annual out-of-pocket per member
- j. A 20% co-pay or a comparable fixed fee with the exception of a 50% co-pay for mental and substance abuse care
- k. A maximum benefit of at least \$50,000 per occurrence or cause

*\*see Aetna Affordable Health Choices® Administrative Manual (separate from this manual)*

## Medicaid

Programs must provide health care coverage to all full-time members even if they are eligible for Medicaid. **Medicaid recipients are not waived from health care coverage.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has taken the position that members receiving Medicaid have coverage available to them through AmeriCorps. Because Medicaid “wraps around” other available health care coverage, **Medicaid will pick up only the costs that are not covered under the AmeriCorps policy.** Members who remain on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) will continue to receive Medicaid for their dependents. Members who lose TANF due to the living allowance, usually can continue to receive extended Medicaid coverage for their dependents for up to one year. Members should consult their caseworker before enrolling in AmeriCorps.

*\* See attached file: 15. Health Insurance Enrollment Questionnaire*

## Loan Forbearance

AmeriCorps members who are earning a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award are uniquely eligible for one type of postponement of the repayment of their qualified student loan called forbearance. During the forbearance period, interest on the principle amount of the loan continues to accrue. If a member successfully completes their term of service and earns an Education Award, the National Service Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that has accrued on the qualified student loans during this period. This accrued interest paid by the Trust, like the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award itself, is subject to income [taxes](#).

AmeriCorps members enrolled in an AmeriCorps project are eligible for forbearance for most federally-backed student loans. For other types of student loans, members must ask their loan holder if their AmeriCorps service qualifies for a deferment or forbearance.

This postponement of the student loan payment (forbearance) is not automatic. Members must request it from their loan holders by completing the National Service Forbearance Request Form. Members may complete the Forbearance Request Form online by accessing their My AmeriCorps Portal.

The National Service Trust does not grant forbearances. Loan holders do. The Trust merely verifies membership in AmeriCorps and forwards the documents to the loan companies. The Trust is able to verify membership only when it has proof from a project that the individual is an AmeriCorps member.

## Interest Accrual Payments

AmeriCorps members who have earned a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award are eligible to have the Trust pay up to 100% of the interest that accrued on their qualified student loan during their service. To have the Trust pay all or a portion of the interest accrued on a qualified student loans, the Trust must receive verification from the Program indicating the member has completed their service and are eligible for an award. A member and their lender also must complete the Interest Accrual Form, which indicates the amount of interest accrued during your service period. The loan holder sends this completed form to the Trust for payment.

For further information regarding Interest Accrual Payments, visit:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/benefits/benefits\\_ed\\_award\\_repayment.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award_repayment.asp)

## Defaulted Loans

Most student loans that are in default are not eligible for forbearance. If a member has loans that have gone into default before they begin their AmeriCorps service, they can attempt to negotiate an arrangement with the loan holder or collection agency to bring the loan out of default so forbearance can be granted and interest paid.

\* See attached files:

*16. Loan Forbearance Request Form*

*17. Interest Accrual Form*

## Prohibited Activities

The Corporation acknowledges that religious and political activities play a positive role in healthy communities, that religion and politics are defining characteristics of many community organizations (faith-based and secular), and that religious and political belief and action are central to many AmeriCorps members lives.

However, it is important that AmeriCorps programs and their members do not appear to be taking sides religiously or politically. Consequently, a number of limitations on the activities that AmeriCorps programs can support and in which members can engage while earning service hours, or when otherwise, representing AmeriCorps must be imposed. AmeriCorps members are free to pursue these activities on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-AmeriCorps funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn by members when participating in prohibited activities.

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, members accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities, and the grantee may not use grant funds to support the following activities:

- a. Attempting to influence legislation.
- b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- c. Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- d. Impairing existing member service agreements for services or collective bargaining agreements.
- e. Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- f. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- g. Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.

- h.** Providing a direct benefit to:
- i.** A for-profit entity;
  - ii.** A labor union;
  - iii.** A partisan political organization;
  - iv.** An organization engaged in the religious activities described in the preceding sub clause, unless grant funds are not used to support the religious activities; or
  - v.** A nonprofit entity that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of U.S. Code Title 26.
- i.** Voter registration drives by AmeriCorps members is an unacceptable service activity. In addition, Corporation funds may not be used to conduct a voter registration drive.
- j.** Activities relating to abortion services or referrals.
- k.** Other activities as the Corporation determines will be prohibited, upon notice to the grantee.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the above activities on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn while doing so.

\* *See attached file: 18. Memorandum Regarding Prohibited Activities*

## Allowable Activities

After reading the list of prohibited activities there may still be questions about what kind of service work can be credited to AmeriCorps Education Awards hours.

***The most important piece of information to relay to the members is that at least 80% of their time must be spent doing direct service and the other 20% can be credited to education and/or training that they receive that relates to their work or to AmeriCorps.***

Direct service is work that addresses human need, the environment, public safety, and/or education in one form or another. It is working directly with people to make change, or doing work that is involved in making that direct change. It can be outreach, case management, training, teaching, tutoring, mediating, cleaning, counseling, recruiting volunteers, catching up on paperwork related to clients, preparing for class, coaching, listening, cooking, serving, providing health care, food, clothing, etc. Direct service hours should constitute 80% or more of an AmeriCorps member's total hours served. The remainder will be *indirect* service hours.

Indirect service hours, or education and training, hours are only applicable when they reflect the AmeriCorps service that the member credits to the education award he or she will receive. Any on-the-job training that refers to direct service would be part of this category. All orientations, including the AmeriCorps orientation, would be included, as well as any state or regional trainings, seminars, or workshops pertaining to issues related to direct service. Examples would be conflict resolution seminars, teacher development days, team-building exercises or a class on training techniques. Only 20% of all of the member's credited service hours can be dedicated to education and training, even if more hours have been spent in this area.

Members may raise funds directly in support of service activities that meet local, environmental, educational, public safety, homeland security, or other human needs. Examples of fundraising activities that members may perform include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Seeking donations for books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers tutor children to read;
- b. Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers;
- c. Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals;
- d. Securing financial resources from the community to assist a faith-based organization in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the members of the community and is delivered, in whole or in part, through the members of the faith-based organization; or
- e. Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members.

All AmeriCorps service activities will take place within the State of Illinois only.

Any activities that are not applicable to a member's education award hours are listed on the Prohibited Activities sheet. The hours that a member may spend doing those activities should not be recorded. For instance, if a member is teaching six classes a day and two of those are religion, only the four other classes (let's say in math, English, history and science) would be acceptable to record on her/his weekly tracking tool, and ultimately on her/his quarterly report.

All member questions should be directed to program directors.

## **Checklists**

\* *See attached files:*

- 19. Program Start-up Checklist*
- 20. Administrative and Financial Systems Checklist*
- 21. Getting Members Started Checklist*

# Member Supervision

**Grievance Procedure**

Grievance Check List

**Drug Free Work Place**

**Wage Garnishment**

**Timesheets**

Sample Timesheet

## Grievance Procedure:

All programs must establish a grievance procedure for members who believe that they have been unfairly released from the program and for other grievances filed by members or other interested parties. This grievance procedure should be attached to the AmeriCorps member's service agreement. The procedure must include an opportunity for a hearing and binding arbitration within statutory deadlines.

To ensure all AmeriCorps programs are in compliance with federal regulations regarding grievance procedures, member files will be reviewed during monitoring site visits to ensure members have signed a grievance policy. Grievance procedures will be submitted at the beginning of the program's three-year grant cycle, and will be reviewed for quality and compliance using the Grievance Procedure Review Checklist. Programs will be notified in writing of any required changes and given an appropriate time frame to complete those revisions.

Additionally, the Commission encourages programs to establish an alternative dispute resolution procedure, such as mediation. While a member is going through the grievance procedure, be sure to make it very clear what stage they are in, what the time-line is, and what the next steps are (i.e. whether they are in a mediation, grievance hearing or binding arbitration).

The following exhibit illustrates the timeframe that **must** be addressed in an AmeriCorps grievance procedure. Not every requirement is shown, but all major milestones are noted:

Grievance procedures are part of the member contract.

Members are **required** to read and sign a copy of the grievance procedures.

Commission ensures that grievance procedures address each of the following required components:

- Grievance filed within one year of alleged occurrence.
- Grievance hearing within 30 calendar days of filing a grievance.
- Decision made within 60 calendar days of filing a grievance.
- Hearing by person not involved in previous decisions on the issue.
- Grievant can request binding arbitration if decision is adverse to grievant or if decision is not reached within 60 calendar days.
- Binding arbitration hearing is held within 45 days after request for arbitration or within 30 days after CEO appoints arbitrator.
- There is a decision within 30 days of the binding arbitration hearing.
- Remedies include the applicant's selection or reinstatement and other changes in the terms and conditions of service.

Commission maintains records of its review of subgrantees' grievance procedures.

**Commission holds subgrantees accountable for making any needed revisions in their grievance procedure.**

In formatting your own grievance procedure, a sample can be found in the CNCS Program Director's Handbook. In addition, please see the AmeriCorps Provisions to make sure your grievance procedure follows appropriate guidelines.

**NOTE:** Programs are **required** to contact the Commission if a member starts a grievance procedure process. The written grievance should be sent to the Commission and any correspondence with the member should also be included.

### Grievance Procedure Review checklist

Program/Program Year: \_\_\_\_\_

The following items are **mandatory** for program staff to have as part of their program:

- Grievance procedures are part of the member service agreement.
- Members are required to read and sign a copy of the grievance procedures.
- Commission ensures that grievance procedures address each of the following required components:
  - Grievance filed within one year of alleged occurrence.
  - Grievance hearing held within 30 calendar days of filing a grievance.
  - Decision made within 60 calendar days of filing a grievance.
  - Hearing conducted by a person not involved in previous decisions on the issue.
  - Grievant can request binding arbitration if decision is adverse to grievant or if decision is not reached within 60 calendar days.
  - Binding arbitration hearing is held within 45 days after request for arbitration or within 30 days after CEO appoints arbitrator,
  - Within 30 days of the binding arbitration hearing, there is a decision
- Commission maintains records of its review of sub grantees' grievance procedures.
- Commission holds sub grantees accountable for making any needed revisions in their grievance procedure.
  - Other

Notes:

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## **Drug-Free Workplace**

In accordance with the AmeriCorps Provisions, programs are required to give notice about the Drug-Free Workplace Act to members and to conduct a drug-free awareness program.

If a member is arrested for or convicted of a drug offense, he or she must notify the Program Director in writing within five (5) days. Appropriate action must be taken including suspension and referral to a drug rehabilitation program, or release for cause consistent with the Corporation's rule on termination and suspension of service.

The conviction **must be reported to the Commission**, in writing, within ten (10) days. The Commission will then notify the Corporation in writing.

## **Wage Garnishment**

The Corporation has concluded that the federal portion of the living allowance is not subject to involuntary garnishment because it is protected under the doctrine of sovereign immunity. The term, "sovereign immunity", means that the United States, as the sovereign, has to consent before any federal funds can be garnished. It has not done so in the case of the federal portion of a member's living allowance. In addition, the federal portion of programs' staff salaries may not be subject to involuntary garnishment.

The non-federal portion/program match of living allowances and staff salaries may be garnished, in accordance with state law.

## Member Timesheets

The Serve Illinois Commission will conduct random reviews of member timesheets. If problems are found during the initial review such as inconsistent calculations, unauthorized timesheets, prohibited activities, etc., it will be considered a compliance issue and may require a complete review of all member timesheets.

The review of timesheets will include the following:

Do all timesheets include:

- Is there a submission document that has the member's original signature on it?
- Is there a secure connection for the member to submit timesheets?
- Are the guidelines for submitting timesheets noted on the sheet?
- Are member service activities listed on timesheets in line with the approved objectives and are not prohibited activities?
- Are members on target to attain their intended number of service hours?
- Do the timesheets clearly track the service activities to ensure adherence to the 20% rule relating to training?
- Do the timesheets clearly track the service activities to ensure adherence to the 10% rule relating to fundraising?
- Are timesheets current in OnCorps?

\* *See attached file: 22. Sample Timesheet*

# Public Assistance Programs

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP)**

**Public Housing**

**Unemployment**

**Public Assistance**

TANF

Medicaid

**Supplemental Social Security**

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP)

A member's SNAP benefits are not affected because a member receives the AmeriCorps living allowance. This means that a member's benefits should not be decreased, increased, or terminated because he or she receives the living allowance. This is a federal rule and is the same in all states.

\*Please visit <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30357> for information regarding SNAP Benefits

## Public Housing

AmeriCorps members' benefits do not affect a member's eligibility for federal, need-based housing assistance, such as Section 8 housing and other federally subsidized housing. This means that the living stipend cannot be taken into consideration when a member applies for or if a member's eligibility for public housing is being re-examined. This is a federal rule and is the same in all states.

\*See the attached file: 23. Federal Register, DOCID fr20ap01-79

## Unemployment Benefits

AmeriCorps members are **not entitled** to unemployment benefits. The Corporation for National and Community Service has interpreted federal legislation to mean that there is no employer-employee relationship between members and programs. Illinois has chosen to agree with this interpretation and denies unemployment benefits to members; hence, programs are not required to pay unemployment taxes.

\*See attached file: 24. Illinois Administrative Rules, Section 2732.215

## Public Assistance Programs

### Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

A member's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits are affected by the AmeriCorps living allowance. For TANF purposes, the living allowance is considered non-exempt earned income. This means that for every \$3.00 a member earns before taxes and other payroll deductions, the TANF grant is reduced by \$1.00. For example, the TANF grant of a member that makes \$600 per month before payroll deductions would be decreased by \$200 (one-third of \$600).

Serving as an AmeriCorps member is considered an allowable work activity as long as a member serves at least 30 hours per week (effective October 1999). This means that the lifetime benefit clock for members serving at least 30 hours per week will be stopped.

Federal legislation allows each state to determine how AmeriCorps benefits will affect TANF grants and if serving as an AmeriCorps member is an allowable work activity. The information above is for Illinois only and will vary by state.

### Medicaid

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) AmeriCorps Provisions, dated 9/6/05, states that programs must provide health care coverage to all full-time AmeriCorps members. In addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recognizes that AmeriCorps members, who will receive AmeriCorps health care coverage, also may be receiving Medicaid coverage. **DHHS has stated that AmeriCorps Medicaid recipients are not waived from AmeriCorps health care coverage.**

Because Medicaid "wraps around" other available health care coverage, **Medicaid will only pick up the costs that are not covered under the primary AmeriCorps policy.** Medicaid is always a secondary form of coverage when there is another health care policy in place.

Members who remain on TANF will continue to receive Medicaid for their dependents. Members who lose TANF due to the living allowance may still qualify for Medicaid or Family Health Plan, and may usually continue to receive extended Medicaid coverage for their dependents for up to one year.

\*Please visit <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=15215> for information regarding TANF

## Supplemental Social Security

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are: under the age of 22, are not married nor the head of a household are eligible for the student earned income exclusion. This excludes them from countable earned income of \$1,290 per month and up to \$5,200 per year (amounts as of January 1, 2001). This may be combined with existing SSI work incentives and other “income disregard” rules.

In addition, any portion of the Education Award that is used for paying tuition, fees, or other necessary education expenses is excluded from countable income for SSI recipients. This exclusion does not cover amounts used or set aside for room and board or to repay qualified student loans. Any portion of the Education Award that is not used for tuition, fees, or other necessary educational expenses counts as income in the month that it is used.

\*See attached files:

- 25. Changes in Supplemental Security Income Memorandum
- 26. CNCS Letter Regarding the HEART Act

\*Please visit

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/manage/commcenter\\_detail.asp?tbl\\_pr\\_id=1114](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/commcenter_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=1114) for information regarding Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (HEART Act)

# Reporting and Records Retention

## **General Information**

### **Match**

Member Support Cost Match

Operating Cost Match

Overall Cost Match

Administration Cost Match

### **Budget Modifications**

### **Fiscal Reports**

### **Progress Reports**

### **Final Reports**

### **Deductions**

### **Sustainability**

### **OnCorps**

Member Reporting Dates

OnCorps Due Dates

### **Record Retention**

### **Resources**

## General

A sample of topics relevant to the fiscal operation of an AmeriCorps program and where they can be found within this manual is shown below.

**Sample Member service agreement** - State of Illinois, Department of Human Services (DHS), Community Service Agreement and associated attachments. See Chapter 3.

**Financial Management Provisions** - These topics are found in the AmeriCorps Provisions. A copy of these Provisions is included in Chapter 1.

**Member Costs** – See Chapter 3 of this manual for information on Living Allowances, Child Care, Taxes and Insurance, and Health Insurance. These topics are also discussed in the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Public Assistance Programs** - See Chapter 5 of this manual for information on Food Stamps, Public Housing, Unemployment Benefits, Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These topics are also discussed in the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Deductions to Living Allowances** - See Chapter 3, Policy Changes, of this manual for more information.

**Fund Raising** - For an explanation of fund raising issues concerning Members and Staff please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions or contact your Serve Illinois Program Officer.

**Administrative Costs** - Please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Liability Insurance Coverage** - Please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Termination of the Grant** - Please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## Match

Programs must meet proposed match **every quarter**.

Programs that are not meeting proposed levels of match at the end of a quarter should include the following comments in their Periodic Expense Report (PER) and Federal Financial Report (FFR):

1. An explanation as to why match was not met, and
2. Plans to meet match the next quarter.

Programs that do not meet match requirements and do not include comments in their PER and FFR reports will be required to submit a letter addressing the two issues noted above.

Corporation funds may be reduced by the Serve Illinois Commission for failure to meet the proposed or minimum match requirements. This would be done to bring the program in line with the match requirements as submitted in the application.

Programs must provide and account for the matching funds as agreed upon in the approved application. This means that the proposed match included in the application must be met even if it exceeds the minimum match requirement.

Cash or in-kind matching contributions that exceed the required minimum will be considered voluntary cost share. Programs that cannot meet the amount of voluntary cost share proposed in their application may submit a request to reduce the amount of cost share their program will contribute. However, the cost share/match cannot be reduced below the minimum percentage requirements as indicated above. See page 66 for more information relating to budget modifications.

## Overall Cost Match

Subject to the requirements of § 2521.45, and except as provided in paragraph (b), your overall share of program costs will increase as of the fourth consecutive year that you receive a grant, according to the previous timetable.

A grantee must have contributed matching resources by the end of a grant period in an amount equal to the combined total of the proposed or minimum overall annual match for each year of the grant period.

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
<b>Minimum Overall Share</b>	24%	24%	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

## Alternative Match

If your program is unable to meet the match requirements and is located in a rural or a severely economically distressed community, you may apply to the Corporation for a waiver that would require you to increase the overall amount of your share of program costs beginning in the seventh consecutive year that you receive a grant. Contact your Program Officer if you believe you meet the requirements and are interested in applying.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<b>Alternative Minimum Overall Share</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	29%	31%	33%	35%

## Administration Cost Match

Programs may bill a maximum 5.26% of the Corporation funds actually expended in the operation of the program to the administration line of the budget. Programs must meet this requirement **by the end of the program year**.

Each quarter that programs have more than 5.26% of grant funds charged to Administration, a letter will be sent noting the fact and reminding the program it must be in compliance by the end of the program year. Programs will be required to respond to this letter with an explanation as to why the 5.26% has been exceeded and plans for compliance by the end of the program year.

Corporation funds in this line may be reduced at the end of the program year if the 5.26% maximum is exceeded. This would be done to bring the program in line with allowable maximum Administrative charge against Corporation funds.

## Federal Indirect Cost Match

If you have a Federally Approved Indirect Cost (IDC) rate and choose to use it, the IDC rate will constitute documentation of your administrative costs including the 5.26% maximum payable by the Corporation. Please provide a copy of your IDC rate letter to your Program Officer.

## Budget Modifications

The Serve Illinois Commission understands that AmeriCorps programs must sometimes modify their budget during the program year.

These budget modification guidelines summarize the AmeriCorps Provisions on this issue. They are intended only as guidance and are not a substitute for the Provisions or other federal rules and regulations. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### Deadline and Process

Programs must submit budget modification request to the Commission in a timely manner. While budget modification requests will be accepted on a rolling basis, programs are requested to submit budget modifications that require the **approval of the Corporation for National and Community Service by April 1 of the current program year**. This will provide sufficient time for the Commission and the Corporation to review the request before members complete their terms of service.

Programs submitting a budget modification request must submit the following:

1. A letter detailing the request and explaining why the modification is needed.
2. A revised budget form.
3. A revised budget narrative.

**Programs should not consider budget modification requests approved until written notice is received from the Illinois Commission and the Corporation.**

### Line Item Changes

Programs may move funds between line items if the amount moved is less than 10% of the total federal award. Keep in mind that modifications must be approved in OnCorps before they are considered effective. For example, a program that receives a \$100,000 grant may move up to \$10,000 between line items without approval as long as the transfer is in compliance with all other applicable. Programs who wish to transfer funds totaling more than 10% of the federal award must receive prior approval from the Illinois Commission and the Corporation. (OMB Circular A-11, Subpart C, Section 25.) The Commission requests that funds slated for Member Stipen remain within Section II-A (Member Cost).

### Sub-granting Funds

Programs must receive prior approval from the Illinois Commission and the Corporation to sub-grant or subcontract program activities not previously approved in the application for funding. Programs must receive prior approval from both the Commission and Corporation to transfer the grant or to sub-grant to a different organization. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Equipment**

Programs may not purchase equipment costing more than \$5,000 with grant funds unless specified in the approved budget or application without prior approval from the Commission and the Corporation. All purchases of equipment and supplies should be handled in accordance with 45 CFR 2541 – “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments” or with 45 CFR 2543 – “Grants and Agreements with institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and other Non-Profit Organizations.” For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

**Matching Funds/Voluntary Cost Share**

Programs must provide matching funds as agreed upon in the approved application and budget. At a minimum, Programs must meet the proposed level of match every quarter. Programs that do not meet this match at the end of the quarter should include comments on their fiscal reports (both the Periodic Expense Report and Financial Status Reports, when applicable) explaining why the match was not met and how the program will ensure it will meet the match requirement at the end of the next quarter. If comments are not included, a letter from the program addressing these two issues will be required.

Voluntary cost share is defined as cash or in-kind matching contributions that exceed the required minimum levels of match as noted above. Programs will be held accountable for meeting the amount of voluntary cost share they proposed in their application. Programs who cannot meet the proposed levels of voluntary cost share must submit a revised budget and budget narrative to the Illinois Commission and Corporation for approval. All programs are encouraged to raise funds from the private sector. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## Fiscal Reports

Report Type	Due Date
PER (Monthly)	20 <sup>th</sup> of each month
FFR (April – Sept. 2010)	October 20, 2010 (09-10 programs only)
FFR (Oct.– March 2011)	April 20, 2011
FFR (April – Sept. 2011)	October 20, 2011

### Periodic Expense Reports (PERs)

AmeriCorps\*State programs must submit PERs on a **monthly** basis in the Serve Illinois' Online Reporting system, OnCorps.

PERs from programs are due in OnCorps no later than the **20<sup>th</sup> day** of each month for the prior month's expenses. Should the 20<sup>th</sup> fall on a weekend, the reports are due the Friday before the weekend. The Illinois Commission will issue a reimbursement payment based on timely monthly expense reports submitted by programs. The monthly payments will result in year-to-date payments being equal to year-to-date reported expenditures, by program.

Failure to report monthly expenditures by the due date will result in a delay in issuing reimbursement payments. If you experience technical difficulties reporting in OnCorps, please contact your Program Officer.

### Federal Financial Reports (FFRs)

FFRs are cumulative financial status reports used by the Corporation to monitor sub-grantee spending. AmeriCorps\*State programs must submit Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) in OnCorps semi-annually. **These reports are due October 21 and April 21 or upon approval of the PER submitted that month.**

The last FFR completed for each program year must be marked as a "Final FFR." By marking a FFR as "Final," there can be no further charges or expenses claimed against the program year. Whether the FFR is "final" is a specific question on the FFR form.

**NOTE:** There may likely be times when it will be necessary for a program to submit two PERs and two FFRs on the same due date. This happens when expenses are being incurred that are the result of two different program years, i.e., program Year Two and Year Three overlap. Programs should report expenses associated with each program year separately on program year-specific PERs or FFRs.

## Progress Reports

The APR is built from several components, in My AmeriCorps and OnCorps, including:

MEMBER DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enrollment -My AmeriCorps</li> <li>■ Exits –My AmeriCorps</li> <li>■ Time Logs -OnCorps</li> </ul>
APR MAP (OnCorps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Performance Measures</li> <li>■ Implementation Plans</li> <li>■ Outputs</li> <li>■ Outcomes</li> </ul>
GREAT STORIES (OnCorps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Member and/or Program Success Stories</li> </ul>

The completed APR/PROGRESS REPORT includes information on: progress toward performance measures, member and volunteer hours, program challenges, and any program changes.

### Approving Performance Measures

Your Program Officer is responsible for approving performance measures in the APR Map after they have been entered by Program staff. Programs are unable to enter the necessary data to aggregate/roll up into their progress report to show progress toward their performance measures until approval is given.

### Support and Training for Performance Measures

Project STAR, a Corporation for National and Community Service sponsored technical assistance provider in performance measurement, is available to assist your program with measuring performance. Project STAR can help you set up your performance measurement system and consider the outputs and outcomes as you look to improve your program.

You can contact Project STAR by calling 1-800-548-3656 or by visiting <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/star/ac>.

## **Final Reports**

Programs completing the final year of their three-year grant cycle must submit a Final Project Report in addition to their Progress Report due October 31 of each year. A Final Progress Report is a cumulative report covering the entire project period. This report is due January 20 following the end of the three-year grant cycle and should include the following information:

The narrative should include a three page, double-spaced summary of the qualitative accomplishments that the AmeriCorps grant has made for the duration of the grant period. Include a discussion of the impacts of any special initiatives that fall within this grant. Discuss what exists now in the communities that are served that did not exist prior to the grant. Use of quantitative data to support the impact statements is encouraged.

### **Final Federal Financial Report**

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle must submit a final Federal Financial Report (FFR) that is cumulative over the entire project period. This FFR is due January 20 following the end of the three-year grant cycle. This Final FFR should be completed on the required form and on the OnCorps reporting system. Please see Federal Financial Report (Standard Form 269A) included in this chapter.

### **Equipment and Supply Inventory Form**

Programs completing the final year of their three-year grant cycle must submit two (2) inventory forms. These are due March 1 following the end of the three-year grant cycle. One form is for any equipment inventory having a current fair market value of \$5,000 or more and purchased with federal grant funds. The second form is for any unused or residual supplies inventory purchased with federal funds exceeding \$5,000 in value. These reports should be completed on the Equipment and Supply Inventory Form included in this chapter. If no equipment or supplies were purchased using federal funds, programs should reflect this on each form. For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## **Deductions to Living Allowances**

Programs occasionally request the ability to deduct amounts from living allowances for member absences and other purposes. Programs may make deductions to living allowances or other payments made to AmeriCorps members; however, programs may not deduct any portion of the living allowance paid to the member by the Corporation.

Before making any deductions, programs are advised to consider the implications related to the treatment of employment laws, including those laws addressing minimum wage and unemployment compensation. Further, programs that deduct amounts from member living allowances may be required to increase their match funds as a result.

For more information, please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

## **Sustainability**

### **General Overview**

The Serve Illinois Commission defines “sustainability” as a plan that, through an organization’s use of various resources, will provide for a stronger infrastructure, stronger programs, and community self-sufficiency in regards to supporting the needs of its constituents, its financial health, and its ability to be well managed and accountable.

### **Sustainability Policy**

Programs must also follow the Sustainability Policy. Each program is required to gradually decrease reliance on federal funds, while continuing to meet the minimum match requirements.

More information on these topics may be found in the AmeriCorps Provisions.

### **Policy Guidelines**

The Corporation for National and Community Service has published the following increasing match requirements for all AmeriCorps programs. Under this policy, each program is required to gradually decrease its reliance on federal funds, yet still meet the Overall Minimum Match requirements. By either cash or in-kind matches in any category, programs must reach the required match level each year. Please note that the Corporation has created an alternative match requirement for grantees located in either a rural or a severely economically distressed area prior to submitting their grant application.

The Commission will provide assistance to programs in the area of sustainability by sponsoring additional training and technical assistance on collaborations and partnerships, leadership, and fundraising, as needed.

### **Policy Implementation**

The intent of the policy on sustainability is to decrease program dependency on federal funds, to ensure that services provided by AmeriCorps members will continue if federal funding is discontinued, and to make more funding available to support new programs.

Each grantee must submit a Sustainability Plan as part of the initial application for funding. This plan must provide details on community outreach and collaborations, community, new partnerships, and new resources provided to, or received from, the community. Subsequently, a Sustainability Progress Report must be submitted with each Continuation Application showing the progress made that year in the Sustainability Plan.

## My AmeriCorps and OnCorps Member Information Reporting

Programs need to know what is required of program/sites in terms of member data collection in order to monitor that they have met their reporting requirements. The specific CNCS rules as to when some of these forms must be completed are shown in the table below:

MEMBER FORM	DEADLINE
Member Commitment Tracker Forms	Immediately upon offer of a position (enrollment must follow < 30 days later)
Member Information Profiles	Must be completed before enrollment can be created
Member Enrollment Forms	Within 30 days of enrollment
Change of Term/Status Forms	Within 30 days of change
Member Exit Forms	Within 30 days of exit
Member Time Logs	No requirements, but see note below

A sample of each of these forms can be viewed in chapter 8 of this manual. These forms are created through the members My AmeriCorps Portal and approved by Program staff. It is important that member forms are completed in a timely manner. Timely completion could also play a role in future grant funding decisions, especially for competitively awarded funds.

Time logs track hours served by members in direct service, fundraising and training. (Note: the average of member training hours can be no more than 20% per grantee. Member fundraising hours may be no more than 10% per person.) Time logs need to be completed on a regular basis in order to ensure that the program/site is tracking member hours accurately as time log data is aggregated into the APR, and ultimately the GPR. It is critical that time logs be up to date prior to the submission of these reports.

My AmeriCorps and OnCorps have tools to help programs monitor member progress. These tools can identify members who are falling behind and at risk of not being able to complete their required number of hours of service to earn an education award before the end of the program year.

## OnCorps Due Dates

Fiscal Reporting Requirements for AmeriCorps\*State Program Cycle 2009-10

**PER** = Periodic Expense Report (Monthly Report)

**FFR** = Federal Financial Report (semi-annual)

**Progress Report** (semi-annual)

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Report Type	Due Date
PER (Monthly)	20 <sup>th</sup> of each month
FFR (Aug – March)	April 21, 2011
FFR (April – Sept.)	October 21, 2011
Progress Report	April 30, 2011
	October 31, 2011
Final FFR	January 20, 2012

### **IMPORTANT:**

Please understand that there may be times when it will be necessary to submit two PERs and two FFRs on any given due date. This would occur when you are incurring expenses toward two separate program years during the same reporting period. You will report all expenses claimed under each program year accordingly – NOT together. One program year is not completed until the “Final FFR” has been completed.

The last FFR completed for each program year must be marked as a “Final FFR”. By marking an FFR as “Final”, there can be no further charges claimed toward the corresponding program year (This is a specific question on the FFR form).

## Records Retention

All financial records, supporting documentation, statistical records, evaluation and performance data, member information, and personnel records must be retained for three years after the close of an AmeriCorps grant.

If any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit or other action involving the records has been started before the expiration of the 3-year period, the records must be retained until completion of the action and resolution of all issues which arise from it, or until the end of the regular 3-year period, whichever is later.

TYPE OF DOCUMENTATION	EXAMPLES
All Materials Related to the Grants Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ NOFAs</li> <li>■ RFPs or RFAs</li> <li>■ all applications received (not just those funded)</li> <li>■ all correspondence and notes from negotiations</li> <li>■ score sheets</li> <li>■ reviewer confidentiality/conflict of interest agreements</li> <li>■ CNCS approvals of awards</li> </ul>
Grant Agreements and Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Grants and contracts between State Commissions and grantees</li> <li>■ Grants and contracts between National Programs and sites</li> </ul>
Program Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reports</li> <li>■ Correspondence</li> <li>■ Policy Statements</li> </ul>
Monitoring Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Monitoring Reports</li> <li>■ Site visit tools</li> <li>■ Reports on site visits to grantees/sites</li> </ul>
Official Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Letters on Other Matters</li> </ul>

## Resources

### Progress Reporting

The CNCS' AmeriCorps Application Instructions contains an overview of reporting requirements for grantees. The Project STAR web pages at the Resource Center (<http://composure.nationalservicerresources.org/resources/tta/index.php#>) offers online tutorials, toolkits and tips for performance measurement development, data collection and analysis and reporting. Project Star also hosts conference call and webinar trainings on the APR and GPR. The Commission will provide information regarding progress reporting in OnCorps as it becomes available.

### Financial Reporting

CNCS and Walker and Company have developed an online eLearning course, *Key Concepts of Financial Management*, available at the Resource Center:

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/courses-desc>

For an overview of Walker and Company's other available services and resources, please visit:

[http://nationalservicerresources.org/resources/tta/walker\\_and\\_company\\_llp.php](http://nationalservicerresources.org/resources/tta/walker_and_company_llp.php)

### Other Reporting resources

Please visit the Resource Center: <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/index.php>.

# Program Monitoring

## **Purpose of Monitoring**

General

Preparation

Procedure

## **Monitoring Visits**

### **High-Risk Site Visits**

Risk-Based Assessment

### **Monitoring Check Lists**

Member Documentation

Program Documentation

Desk-Based Monitoring

Member Service agreement Documentation

Site Monitoring

Member Orientation

### **Financial Monitoring**

Financial Documentation

### **Recruitment/Retention**

### **Program Close-Out**

### **Monitoring Tools**

Program Review Instrument

Host Site Supervisor Evaluation

Member Evaluation

### **Program Evaluation**

## Purpose of Program Monitoring

State Service Commissions and National Programs face many challenges in administering AmeriCorps programs. Limited staff capacity, as well as unusual program models, can make monitoring and management particularly difficult. As stewards of public funding, the SERVE ILLINOIS COMMISSION needs to ensure that the programs and sites they fund are aware of their contractual requirements and are in compliance with all of the rules, regulations, and provisions governing AmeriCorps funds. To accomplish this, your Serve Illinois Commission Program Officer must create adequate systems for monitoring program/sites that are fully implemented and available in writing.

## Components of a Monitoring Strategy

An adequate monitoring strategy features an array of oversight of program/sites, including:

- Document Review
- Compliance Reviews
- Program Quality and Performance Reviews
- Special Audits or Surveys
- One-on-one technical assistance to resolve any issues

## General

The Serve Illinois Commission conducts site visits to programs for two purposes:

1. To provide assistance on program development and implementation issues; and
2. To ensure compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations.

Programs in their first three years of funding typically require more assistance than programs that have been operating for four or more years. The majority of staff time and energy will be spent visiting and providing assistance to new programs.

Programs not scheduled for a visit may request assistance or a site visit to focus on specific program issues at any time. Staff will accommodate these requests as efficiently as possible.

In addition, all programs with one or more high-risk factors, determined by the Risk Assessment Tool, will receive additional visits from Serve Illinois Commission Program Officers.

This policy will help to ensure high quality AmeriCorps programs are implemented while maximizing staff time and meeting the recommendations of the Inspector General in regards to program monitoring.

## **Preparations**

To prepare properly for a site visit, program staff should:

- Review the Monitoring Tool provided by your Program Officer and be prepared to present any requested documentation.
- Schedule the visit with your Program Officer at a time when the appropriate people will be available for meetings.
- Verify that member time sheets are entered and up to date two weeks prior to the meeting.

## **Procedure**

All visits will be scheduled in advance. Your Program Officer will contact you to schedule your monitoring visit(s).

Written feedback will be provided to programs after each visit. Copies of all completed forms and correspondence will be kept in program monitoring files.

## Monitoring Visits

Based on a state or organization’s risk-based monitoring strategy, a programmatic site visit may be made to every grantee or site one time per grant cycle, one time per year, or more often as may be appropriate.

Typical site visit activities include the following:

ACTIVITY	INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED
Interview	AmeriCorps Program/Site Director
Member File Checks (other types of files?)	AmeriCorps Program/Site Director
Multi-Site Observation of Member Activities	AmeriCorps Members
Field Interviews	Site Supervisor, AmeriCorps Members
Mid Year/Close-Out Interview	AmeriCorps Program/Site Director and Staff

All AmeriCorps programs will receive a monitoring site visit during each program year. The purpose of the visit is to assess the program’s compliance with federal regulations and to help the program improve systems to pass a formula OIG audit. Member files, program policies and fiscal records will be reviewed during the visit. The AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument will be used to assess program compliance. *(Please see AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument at the end of this chapter).*

The results of the visit will be reviewed with program staff at the end of the day. The site visit feedback letter sent to the program should include only those issues discussed during the visit.

The modules of the AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument to be completed are as follows:

### Module A: Reporting and Communication Compliance and Early Issue Detection

This Module will be completed before the visit. Results will be reviewed with the program and important issues or concerns will be discussed. A program may only receive a “Yes – Appears OK” rating if it has been in compliance with the item being reviewed 100% of the time. Programs that are not performing in this area must show improvement and demonstrate a commitment to improving. Any concerns in this area will be addressed in the site visit feedback letter and a corrective action plan to improve future performance will be required.

## **Module B: Financial Compliance**

The majority of this module will be completed with the assistance of the program's fiscal staff, but some questions will most likely be answered by program staff. Programs should have copies of their expenditure forms and the Federal Financial Reports submitted via OnCorps available for review. A copy of the program's original budget should also be available. In general, a program must have all required documentation for each item and every cost sampled to receive a "Yes – Appears OK" rating.

## **Module C: Policies and Procedures Compliance**

All programs should be in compliance with all of these issues. Written documentation and/or proof of compliance is necessary in case of an audit and should be provided here. Programs should have written documentation readily accessible, such as training agendas or memos. Programs **must** have written documentation to receive a "Yes – Appears OK" rating.

## **Module D: Member Documentation Compliance**

Member files will be reviewed to determine if required documentation is being kept by the program. Program Officers will randomly select the member files to be reviewed. All member files reviewed must contain required documentation for a program to receive a "Yes – Appears OK" rating. A program may receive a "Needs Improvement" rating if one file is missing required documentation. If more than one file is missing documentation, the program will receive a "Does Not Meet Requirement" rating. Programs that do not meet a requirement must submit documentation showing full compliance and improve future performance to ensure continued funding.

*\*See attached file: 27. Member File Checklist*

## **Review Outcome**

After the monitoring visit is complete, the Program Officer will provide written feedback relating to the review. It is expected that all programs will receive "acceptable" in all categories. The monitoring review will be used to determine if additional site visits are necessary and may impact a program's renewal application and ability to access additional training funds.

*\* See attached file: 28. Program Review Instrument*

## High-Risk Site Visits

High-risk site visits are conducted to provide targeted assistance on specific issues or concerns.

The agenda for program visits will vary based on the reason for the visit. In general, Program Officers (and Commission members or other staff, as appropriate) will meet with members, site supervisors or other stakeholders to discuss the program. When possible, members will be observed in service. The Commission acknowledges that issues such as confidentiality may prevent this. Program Officers will try to obtain as much information as possible about program activities and services in order to identify best practices or areas for improvement.

For program-related visits being conducted because of high-risk factors, the agenda will be determined by the reason for the visit. For example, the agenda for a visit that is being held because of a change in program director will focus on expectations of programs, AmeriCorps regulations and relationship building. The agenda for a visit that is being conducted because of concerns regarding prohibited activities will focus on meeting with members, site supervisors, and program staff to assess whether prohibited activities were taking place and to ensure that prohibited activities do not occur in the future.

The site feedback letter will serve as written documentation of what occurred during the visit.

## High-Risk Programs

Programs designated as high-risk or who request a site visit to focus on specific issues will receive additional visits.

High-risk factors may include, but are not limited to:

- A change in program director or other key staff
- Legitimate member complaints to the Commission
- Poor past performance by the program (based on progress reports and/or previous site visits)
- Concerns regarding prohibited activities
- Compliance with reporting deadlines

These visits will be conducted on an on-going basis throughout the program year.

**Risk-based Criteria Form  
Illinois AmeriCorps State Programs  
2010-11**

**Program Name:**  
**Date:**  
**Program Director:**  
**Program Year:**  
**Program Officer:**

This tool will be used to identify which of the currently funded programs will require formal monitoring in the next program year. If a program needs improvement or are out of compliance in any of the first 9 criteria, they will receive both formal monitoring visits for the next program year. If the program is compliant in all areas, the program will receive only the necessary visits.

	<b>Risk-based criteria</b>	<b>Pass or Fail</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Prior monitoring visits identify insufficient documentation and/or systems</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Program has newly hired staff member(s)</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Program demonstrates a need for additional support</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Program maintained less than 100% recruitment and/or 90% retention</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Program requests additional support</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Program has significantly changed the performance measures</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Program has significantly increased their grant</b>		
<b>8</b>	<b>Program fell significantly short in reaching their performance measures</b>		

Results:

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## Monitoring Checklist

In general, it is expected that program staff will monitor grantees and sites to examine the following:

### Member Documentation

- AmeriCorps Application
- Determination of Eligibility
- Background Checks
- Enrollment Forms
- Retention Statistics (end of term/exit, change of status/term, terms of release)
- Hours Worked and Timesheets
- Training Received
- Benefits (child care, health care, etc.)
- Member Service Agreements
- Position Descriptions
- Performance Evaluations (at least mid-year and end of year)

\* See attached file: 27. Member File Checklist

### Program Documentation

- Grievance Procedures
- Prohibited Activities
- Staff Timesheets
- Progress Toward Meeting Performance Measure Targets
- Measurement Tools
- Use of OnCorps
- National Identity (signage, uniforms, published materials)
- Mechanism for Community Input and Collaboration
- Subcontracts or Host Site Agreements (if applicable)

\* See attached file: 28. Program Review Instrument, Module C for a more detailed list of documents

## Desk-Based Monitoring

While an on-site monitoring visit can provide a valuable, direct view of a grantee's/site's operations, it is a resource-intensive form of monitoring. Desk-based monitoring is more sparing of scarce resources of staff time and money and, properly used, can actually forestall the need for more intensive intervention later on to resolve grantee problems.

Throughout the year, your Program Officer manages Onorps accounts for each program/site in their portfolios. Areas that require your Program Officers attention include:

- Approving performance measures
- Reviewing reports

Your Program Officer will also utilize My AmeriCorps as an effective management and monitoring tool. For instance, through My AmeriCorps, it is possible to:

- Review each program/site's progress on member recruitment and retention
- Track member progress toward completing service hours
- Check timeliness of reporting, including member forms, progress reports, and financial reports.
- Conduct member enrollment queries and monitor member hours tables

Your Program Officer will also utilize OnCorps as an effective management and monitoring tool. For instance, through OnCorps, it is possible to:

- Monitor expenditures
- Review progress towards performance measures
- Check timeliness of reporting, including member forms, progress reports, and financial reports.

## Member Service Agreement

The standard member service agreement in particular should be reviewed carefully to ensure that it contains the following items:

- Minimum number of hours and other requirements necessary for a post-service education award
- Start and end dates of the member's term of service
- Amount of the living allowance
- How the member will be paid
- Description of the other benefits available to the member
- Standards of conduct and sanctions for improper conduct
- Prohibited activities
- Requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act
- Termination and suspension rules (including the specific circumstances under which a member can be released for cause)
- Position description for the member
- Grievance procedures
- Any other program-specific requirements
- Signatures of both the member and the program director

## Member Orientation

Orientation materials should also be reviewed carefully to ensure that the grantee/site has provided members with appropriate training for beginning their term of service. This should include:

- An overview of national service
- Program rules, regulations, and expectations
- Review of the member service agreement
- Training appropriate to activities
- Grievance Procedures

*\* See the Orientation Checklist in Chapter 3, page 29, for a detail description of mandated topics*

## Site Monitoring

Site visits by program staff can have many purposes, some of the most important of which are summarized in the table below:

LEARNING	Finding out about AmeriCorps grantees'/sites' service activities and community partnerships.
PUBLICITY	Hearing success stories.
COMPLIANCE	Assuring that all federal, state, local, contractual, and organization-specific regulations, policies, and provisions are being followed.
MONITORING PROGRESS	Comparing actual outputs and outcomes to the performance measures outlined in a grantee/site contract.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	To improve overall quality of the program.

\* See attached file: 29. Host Site Supervisor Evaluation Form for more details

## **Financial Monitoring**

Typically, program staff is assisted by fiscal staff in assuring that program and sites are in compliance with the fiscal requirements of their grants. Though program staff do not have primary responsibility in this area, they should be aware of grantee obligations to submit periodic expense reports and financial status reports, meet match requirements, and (in most cases) conduct annual audits.

## **Financial Documentation**

- Match (where applicable)
- Receipts for Grant Expenditures
- Internal Controls Systems
- Accounting Systems
- Payroll System
- A-133 Audit (if applicable)

\* See attached file: 28. Program Review Instrument, Module B for a more detailed list of items

## Recruitment/Retention Monitoring Tool

In light of the CNCS standards for member enrollment and retention, it is important for your Program Officer to monitor their grantees/sites closely to keep track of how they are doing in these areas. The standards are:

ENROLLMENT RATE = Total slots filled/total slots awarded.

**Enrollment for programs should be 100%.**

RETENTION RATE = Total members exiting with an Education Award/total slots filled.

**A target of 90% for retention or completion is desired.**

CNCS realizes that many programs not yet meeting these rates are nevertheless performing well in their individual circumstances. Also, retention may vary among effective programs depending on the target populations for those programs. However, in order to leverage limited program dollars, CNCS expects programs to strive toward improving their rates of enrollment and retention. During the application process, programs that are not meeting these standards need to offer a rationale for why not, as appropriate.

## Recruitment/Retention Rate Calculation

To calculate enrollment and retention using the data in My AmeriCorps:

1. Log into your account via eGrants
2. Select S/N Reports
3. Select Report via pull down menu
4. Select Program year
5. Select format (PDF, Excel etc.)
6. Select Submit
7. You may open or save the report created

## Program Close-Out

Each year, near the end of your program year, your Program Officer will conduct a program close-out visit. This visit will be conducted by using the AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument. Programs will be required to present documentation relating to fiscal policy, program policy and member files.

Please see the AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument for details on specific documentation that will need to be available.

## Final Close-Out

The Corporation grants are usually awarded for a three year Project Period, consisting of three yearly budget periods. The Serve Illinois Commission is required to submit documentation of program close-outs to the Corporation. Close-out documents are due to your Program Officer no later than 60 days after the close of the grant and should include the following:

### Final Project Report

The narrative should include a three page, double-spaced summary of the qualitative accomplishments that the AmeriCorps grant has made for the duration of the grant period. Include a discussion of the impacts of any special initiatives that fall within this grant. Discuss what exists now in the communities that are served that did not exist prior to this grant. Quantitative data may be used to support the impact statements.

Please attach the appropriate cover page, that can be found via the link shown below, [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/tta/forms.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/forms.asp) and submit to the Commission. This report is not submitted via OnCorps.

### Final Federal Financial Report

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle, must submit a final Federal Financial Report (FFR) that is cumulative over the entire project period. This FFR is due within 60 days after the end of the project period. This Final FFR should be completed on the required form and not in OnCorps.

### Equipment and Supply Inventory Form

A program completing the final year of its three-year grant cycle must submit two (2) inventory forms. One for any equipment inventory with a current fair market value of \$5,000 or more purchased with federal grant funds. The second form for unused/residual supplies inventory

- continued-

purchased with federal funds exceeding \$5000. Reports should be completed on the required forms. If no equipment or supplies were purchased, forms should reflect such. For more information please refer to the AmeriCorps Provisions.

#### IDHS Grant Close-Out

At the end of each IDHS grant period, providers will be required to complete a “Grant Reconciliation Form”. This form will be provided to the Grantee upon completion of the IDHS grant period.

*\*See attached files:*

*30 Federal Financial Report*

*31 Equipment Inventory*

*32 Inventory of Residual Supplies*

*33 Certification of Subgrant Closeout*

## Monitoring Tools

The Pre-Site Visit Checklist should be completed by the Program Officer prior to each Monitoring Visit

*\*see attached file: 34. Pre-Site Visit Review Tool*

The Risk-Based Criteria Form will be completed the beginning of each program year. This form will be used to determine the number of visits a Program will receive in the upcoming year.

*\*see Risk-Based Criteria Form, in Chapter 7, page 80*

The AmeriCorps Program Review Instrument is the primary tool used to assess program quality and compliance with regulations.

*\*see attached file: 28. Program Review Instrument*

The Member File Checklist Service will be used to evaluate member files.

*\*see attached file: 27. Member File Checklist*

The Illinois AmeriCorps\*State Program Evaluation survey tool, based on Module E of the Program Review Instrument, will be used during program-related or high-risks site visits to gather additional input from members.

*\*see attached file: 35.AmeriCorps member evaluation*

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

As articulated in the AmeriCorps regulations [45 CFR §§ 2522.700-740](#), all AmeriCorps State and National grantees that receive an average annual Corporation grant of \$500,000 or more must conduct an independent evaluation. An independent evaluation uses an external evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program to be evaluated.

All other AmeriCorps State and National grantees must conduct an internal evaluation. An internal evaluation is designed and conducted by qualified program staff or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates.

If you are a...	You will submit an...
State formula grantee	Evaluation as specified by your state commission.
State competitive grantee with an average annual Corporation grant under \$500,000	Internal Evaluation
State competitive grantee with an average annual Corporation grant of \$500,000 or more	Independent Evaluation
National grantees with an average annual Corporation grant under \$500,000	Internal Evaluation
National grantee with an average annual Corporation grant of \$500,000 or more:	Independent Evaluation
State and National Education Award Program (EAP) grantee, regardless of funding	Internal Evaluation

If you are recompeting you are required to submit “a summary of your evaluation efforts or plan to date, and a copy of any evaluation that has been completed, as part of your application for funding” ([45 CFR § 2522.730](#)). If you re compete again in 2011 or beyond, you are required to submit a completed evaluation with your application. The Corporation will consider the results of your evaluation “in assessing the quality and outcomes of your program” ([45 CFR § 2522.470](#)).

If you receive an average of \$500,000 or more per year from the Corporation, averaged over the last three years of funding you have received before you re compete, we expect you to conduct an independent evaluation by contracting with an external evaluator. The AmeriCorps regulations describe how this evaluation should provide evidence of a causal relationship between program activities and outcomes ([45 CFR § 2522.700](#)). You may consider using an experimental or quasi-experimental design, or compare your results with national/state/local data. Your external evaluation method should match the size, scale, and purpose of your program.

In our ongoing effort to reduce burden on grantees, especially those with smaller grants, grantees an average annual grant under \$500,000 may submit an internal evaluation. The primary difference between the independent evaluations that grantees that receive \$500,000 or over are required to submit and the internal evaluation is who conducts the evaluation study. Your own staff and other stakeholders can serve as internal evaluators.

We encourage you to design your internal evaluation so that it will yield data most useful to you. You may opt for an impact evaluation, or you may conduct a process or management evaluation. You are not required to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation that proves causality, which is required of grantees that receive \$500,000 or over, although you are allowed to conduct this type of study. We expect the same high quality that we expect of a larger grantee, regardless of the type of evaluation you decide to conduct.

# Attachments

**Please see the “Attachments” folder on the Program Director Policy and Procedure Manual CD for the following file attachments:**

1. Certificate of Appreciation
2. Training and Technical Assistance Provider List
3. Medical Review Form
4. Reasonable Accommodations Request Procedure
5. Reasonable Accommodations Request Form
6. Reasonable Accommodation Monitoring Report
7. Reasonable Accommodations Appeal of Denial
8. DCFS Authorization for Background Check
9. Member Service Agreement Template
10. Member Enrollment Form
11. Member Exit Form
12. Slot Conversion and Transfer Policy
13. Child Care Checklist
14. AmeriCorps Child Care Benefits Eligibility Application
15. Health Insurance Enrollment Questionnaire
16. Loan Forbearance Request Form
17. Interest Accrual Form
18. Memorandum Regarding Prohibited Activities
19. Program Start-up Checklist
20. Administrative and Financial Systems Checklist
21. Getting Members Started Checklist
22. Sample Timesheet
23. Federal Register, DOCID fr20ap01-79
24. Illinois Administrative Rules, Section 2732.215
25. Changes in Supplemental Security Income Memorandum
26. CNCS Letter Regarding the HEART Act
27. Member File Checklist
28. Program Review Instrument
29. Host Site Supervisor Evaluation Form
30. Financial Status Report
31. Equipment Inventory
32. Inventory of Residual Supplies
33. Certification of Subgrant Closeout
34. Pre-Site Visit Checklist
35. AmeriCorps Member Evaluation
36. AmeriCorps State Program Evaluation
37. AmeriCorps Member Handbook
38. Program Directory
39. Tutorial PowerPoints