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# AmeriCorps 201: What you need to know



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# Learning Objectives:



1. Planning your program
  2. Planning your budget
  3. Program requirements
  4. Next steps
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Objective 1:  
Planning Your Program

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# Member Service Activities: Allowable Activities



- “Direct service activities that will advance the goals of your program. . .that will result in a specific identifiable service or improvement that otherwise would not be provided” (45 CFR 2520.25)
- “Capacity-building activities that advance your program’s goals” (45 CFR 2520.30)
  - Up to 10% of time may be spent fundraising (45 CFR 2520.40)
- Must be included in, or consistent with, your approved grant application

# Examples of Allowable Direct Service Activities (45 CFR 2520.25)



- Tutoring children in reading
- Helping to run an after-school program
- Engaging in community clean-up projects
- Providing health information to a vulnerable population
- Providing relief services to a community affected by a disaster
- Conducting a neighborhood watch program as part of a public safety effort

# Examples of Allowable Capacity- Building Activities (45 CFR 2520.30)



- Strengthening volunteer management and recruitment
- Conducting outreach and securing resources in support of service activities that meet specific needs in the community
- Helping build the infrastructure of the sponsoring organization
- Fundraising
- Developing collaborative relationships with other organizations working to achieve similar goals in the community

# Requirement to Recruit & Support Volunteers(45 CFR 2520.35)



- Some component of your program that is supported through the grant must involve recruiting or supporting **non-AmeriCorps volunteers**
- If this requirement would constitute a fundamental alteration to your program structure, it may be waived in response to your written request for such a waiver in the grant application

# Prohibited Activities

(45 CFR 2520.65)



- Attempting to influence legislation
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements

# Prohibited Activities (continued)



- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office
- 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
- Helping to register people to vote

# Prohibited Activities (continued)



- 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
- Providing a direct benefit to a business organized for profit, a labor union, partisan political organization, a non 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, or an organization engaged in religious activities, unless corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities

# Members vs. Employees

(45 CFR 2540.100)



## ■ Supplantation:

- Grants may not be used to replace State and local public funds that had been used to support programs of the type eligible to receive Corporation support

## ■ Nonduplication:

- Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program

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## Objective 2: Planning Your Budget

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# Sections of the Budget



- Section I: Program Operating Costs
  - Staff costs, travel, equipment, training, etc
- Section II: Member Costs
  - Living allowance, FICA, health care, etc.
- Section III: Administrative/Indirect Costs
  - Costs to operate the organization not directly attributable to the program
  - Cannot exceed 5% of total Corporation funds actually expended under this award

# Matching Funds

(45 CFR 2521.35-2521.90)



- Member Support Costs (Section II)
  - Federal share must not exceed 85%
  - Grantee share must be non-federal
- Program Operating Costs (Sections I & III)
  - Grantee share may be cash or in-kind

# Member Benefits

(45 CFR 2522.240-2522.250)



- AmeriCorps education awards
  - Provided 100% by the National Service Trust – not part of the grant
  - Used to finance future education or to pay off qualified student loans
  - \$5,350 for full time; scale for less than full time members (the amount is the same as the PELL grant each year)
  - Living allowance
  - Allows members to meet certain costs of living while serving in the program
  - Maximum Corporation share is 85%
  - Not required for education award grants and less than full time positions
  - Minimum \$11,800 per year for full time (1,700 hours)

# Member Benefits (continued)



- **Childcare (45 CFR 2522.250)**
  - Program must provide child care assistance to qualified full-time members
  - Assistance may be through an eligible provider or a child care allowance
  
- **Healthcare (45 CFR 2522.250)**
  - Program must provide health care coverage to all eligible full time members
  - Coverage must meet minimum standards determined by the Corporation

# Other Costs to Consider:



- Programs responsible for:
  - Member training
  - All aspects of member recruitment and management
  - Member orientation
  - Program-related travel
- Costs should be written into the budget

# Minimum Number of MSY's



- MSY = Member Service Year
  - Equivalent to one full time term of service over the course of the year (1,700 hours)
  - Can compare with FTE

# Possible Terms of Service in MSY's



- 1 Full Time Member = 1 MSY
  - 1,700 hours of service
- 1 Half Time Member = 0.5 MSY
  - 900 hours of service
- 1 Reduced Half Time Member = 0.375 MSY
  - 675 hours of service
- 1 Quarter Time Member = 0.25 MSY
  - 450 hours of service
- 1 Minimum Time Member = 0.2 MSY
  - 300 hours of service

# Cost Per MSY (45 CFR 2522.485)



- Programs requested grant amount may not exceed \$12,600 (this amount is published each year) per MSY
- Example:
  - XYZ Organization is awarded 10 MSY's, which it will use for 10 full time AmeriCorps members
  - The maximum amount they can receive from the corporation would be:  
$$\underline{10 \text{ MSY's} \times \$12,600 = \$126,000}$$
  - This amount **does not** include the education award nor childcare costs, which are provided separately from the grant
  - This amount **does** include member support costs, program staff salaries, overhead, travel costs, etc.

# Staffing Suggestions



- This is **not** a program that could easily be absorbed into the duties of current staff
- We recommend at least one person charging 90% of their time to the grant as a program director/manager
- We recommend that the program director and the fiscal manager not be the same person
- Depending on the size of the program, other staff might be beneficial as well

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# Objective 3: Program Requirements

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# Programmatic Reporting



- Progress Reports
  - Due quarterly
  - Member data (slots filled, hours served, etc.)
  - Volunteer data (volunteers recruited by program, hours served, etc.)
  - Progress on performance measures
  - Great stories
  - Challenges and significant program changes
  - Disability

# Financial Reporting



- Periodic Expense Report (PER): due monthly
  - Program Operating Costs for month
  - Member costs for month
  - Administrative costs for month
  - Broken down into grantee share (match) and CNCS share

# Performance Measures

(45 CFR 2522.500-2522.650)



- All grantees must establish, track, and assess performance measures for their programs
- All grantees must ensure that any program under their oversight fulfills performance measures and evaluation requirements
- Each application must include a minimum of one set of aligned performance measures
  - Includes one member output, one intermediate outcome and one end outcome

# Example of a Set of Aligned Performance Measures



## TutorCorps AmeriCorps Tutoring Program:

- Output: Number of students that participated in a tutoring program
- Intermediate-Outcome: Percent of students reading more books
- End-Outcome: Number and percent of students who have improved their reading score to grade level

# Types of Performance Measures



## ■ Community-Focused

### □ Needs and Service Activities

- Examples: tutoring, building homes, running after-school programs, etc.
- Community Strengthening
  - Examples: developing volunteer programs in a community, engaging residents in community development efforts, etc.

## ■ Member-Focused

### □ Participant Development

- Examples: increasing member civic engagement, providing members with technical training, etc.

# Evaluation (45 CFR 2522.500-2522.540 and 2522.700-2522.740)



- Evaluation is a more in-depth, rigorous effort to measure the impact of programs
- Programs receiving more than \$500,000 in federal funds (other than EAP) must arrange for an **independent evaluation** of the program
- Programs receiving less than \$500,000 in federal funds and EAP grantees must arrange for an **internal evaluation** of the program

# Performance Measurement vs. Evaluation



- Performance Measurement:
  - Annual snapshot of program progress
  - Used for monitoring and accountability
- Evaluation:
  - Covers at least one year
  - More in-depth, rigorous effort to measure process and/or impact
  - Uses scientifically-based research methods
  - Compares program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program

# Internal vs. Independent Evaluation



- Internal Evaluation:
  - Performed “in house” with the assistance of someone knowledgeable about evaluation
  
- Independent Evaluation:
  - Conducted by an independent expert (or experts) external to the program/organization

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# Objective 4: Next Steps

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# Useful Links:



- Performance Measurement/Evaluation:
    - <http://nationalserviceresources.org/program-management/performance-measurement>
  - AmeriCorps Regulations:
    - [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/manage/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/manage/index.asp)
  - Alaska State Commission Website:
    - <http://www.servealaska.alaska.gov>
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# For More Information:



Please call Serve Alaska at (907) 269-4637

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