Planning Grant FAQs

Thank you for your interest in AmeriCorps planning grants! This document provides general information about AmeriCorps Planning Grants managed by Serve Virginia. Further information and application requirements are available in the annual Request for Applications (RFA).

What is an AmeriCorps planning grant?
A planning grant assists an organization in developing an AmeriCorps program. The purpose of a planning grant is to provide support so that the organization is better prepared to successfully compete for an operational grant.

Planning grant funding is used during the development process to provide resources for training, research and development activities, to support dedicated staff time, and engage consultants to help the planning grant team develop the structure and partnerships needed for a successful AmeriCorps program.

Is my organization eligible to receive a planning grant from the Serve Virginia?
The criteria for eligible applicants is the same for planning and operational grants; public, private, faith-based and other community/nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties), or tribal nations are eligible.

Organizations that currently have an AmeriCorps program must meet the criteria for a "new project" if they are interested in receiving a planning grant. More information can be found in 45 CFR § 2522.340 or the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

What role does Serve Virginia play in the grant process?
Serve Virginia reviews and chooses to fund planning grants through a competitive grant process. Once an organization has received a planning grant, the commission provides oversight and support to ensure that the organization is in compliance with federal regulations. Planning grant teams will also participate in a minimum of five training sessions with Serve Virginia staff, focusing on elements of successful AmeriCorps operational programs.

Can I have AmeriCorps members with a planning grant?
No. Planning grants do not include any AmeriCorps member slots. During the planning period, you will define the roles and activities members will perform in the operational program.

Can I use this grant to pay for the overall operational needs of our organization?
No. AmeriCorps planning grants are only for costs directly related to planning activities, rather than general organizational expenses. Planning grant funding can cover costs that directly support the development of the planning grant deliverables and reporting requirements. Fundable grant activities include, but are not limited to:

- Staff or consultants(s) to facilitate project planning and provide training and technical assistance aimed at improving the grantee's ability to implement an AmeriCorps program effectively
- Assessing and analyzing community needs-related information to identify specific gaps or needs that can be addressed through AmeriCorps
- Researching appropriate evidence-based interventions to inform service activities to be performed by AmeriCorps members
- Developing a program theory of change, logic model, or member/program policies
- Outreach and establishment of community partnerships to support the planning and implementation of AmeriCorps program
- Developing plans or systems for grant compliance and accountability
- Travel to training provided by AmeriCorps or Serve Virginia

Is there a maximum award amount?
Award amounts will be specified in the RFA. Most planning grants are between $50–75,000.

Will I have to contribute matching funds?
Yes, unless otherwise noted. Match requirements begin at 24% and are outlined in the RFA.

How long is the grant period?
AmeriCorps planning grants are for up to a one-year period.

If I receive a planning grant this year, am I expected to compete for an AmeriCorps operational program grant the following year?
Yes, but it is not required. The purpose of the planning grant is to support organizations in their development of an AmeriCorps program, including technical assistance for elements that will result in a successful application. There is no guarantee that planning grant recipients will receive an AmeriCorps program grant.

Additional resources for planning grants

Where can I find additional information to help develop my grant application?
On the Serve Virginia website, there are resources to help you determine organizational fit and develop your application. Learn more at **servevirginia.org**.

Serve Virginia inspires individuals and organizations to engage, connects them with the tools they need to make a difference, and celebrates their tremendous impact throughout the Commonwealth.