

## **1e. Types of Grants and NOFO Process Overview**

Nevada Volunteers recruits, reviews and selects quality program applicants that reflect the needs and priorities of the state as determined by the Commission and its constituents. In establishing state priorities, Nevada Volunteers consults with its national service partners including the CNCS State Office and the partners of the state service plan. The Commission's decision to seek new applicants is based primarily on the availability of funds from CNCS and the capacity of Nevada Volunteers to effectively monitor and support new AmeriCorps subgrantees. There are various pools of funding available to potential AmeriCorps program applicants beginning with competitive and formula funding. Within each of these pools there are several options for grants that change from year to year including, operational, education award, special initiative, and planning grants. In general, these grants can be awarded as either cost reimbursement or fixed price depending on the organizational and programmatic history of the applicant. This list offers a basic description of each grant, but the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for each grant outlines specific options and restrictions. The grant cycles for each grant type may be different.

### *Competitive Funds*

Competitive funds are awarded to AmeriCorps applicants who successfully compete at the national level. The Commission formally recommends selected AmeriCorps Grant Applications to CNCS for competitive consideration, and CNCS makes the final competitive awards decision. Congress determines the availability of funds, and CNCS establishes priorities annually.

### *Formula Funds*

Formula funds are awarded to AmeriCorps applicants who successfully compete at the state level. Nevada Volunteers formally approves programs for formula funding and informs CNCS of its decisions. Fund availability is determined by Congress and allocated to Nevada Volunteers on a formula basis.

### *Types of Grants*

- Operational Grants – Operational grants include funds that are awarded to programs to support a portion of both program administration and costs associated with members. These can include costs for staffing, travel, operations, member living allowances, member benefits, and more.
- Education Award (EAP) Grants – EAP grants include a small amount of funds to support basic grant administration, but all other costs must be covered by the grantee. EAP grants do not provide funds to cover staffing, travel, operations, and member costs as noted above for operational grants. In general, these grants include the ability to provide members who successfully complete service with a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, but the funds associated with the awards are managed through the National Service Trust, not the grantee.
- Planning Grants – Planning grants include funds to support a program in successfully planning to host a full operational grant. During the period of the planning grant, funds are available to support staffing, travel, training, and other tasks deemed necessary to eventually host AmeriCorps members. These grants do not include funds to pay for

member living allowances or other benefits as planning grantees do not host members during the planning period. If awarded, the expectation is that planning grantees will apply for an operational grant during the next funding cycle.

- Special Initiative Grants – From time to time, CNCS will release special initiative grants that have a specific focus. Often these grants are connected to a specific funding source such as a private foundation or another federal agency. Depending on the initiative these grants can be awarded through the Commission or directly from CNCS.

#### *Grant Reimbursement*

There are two types of grant reimbursements: Cost Reimbursement and Fixed Price. Cost Reimbursement grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances with flexibility to use funds for allowable costs regardless of whether the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members or not. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a budget and periodic financial reports.

Fixed Price grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. Organizations use their own resources to cover the remaining costs. Programs are not required to submit a budget or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. Nevada Volunteers only awards fixed price grants to organizations that have a strong track record of managing a cost-reimbursement AmeriCorps grant.

#### *Grant Application Review and Selection*

Nevada Volunteers utilizes a standardized grant review process designed to ensure that only the highest quality proposals in compliance with national service rules, provisions and guidelines are presented to the full Commission to vote on recommendations for funding to be forwarded to CNCS. Nevada Volunteers reserves the right to select and recommend programs, both competitive and formula, that best reflect the diversity in program type and geographic representation outlined in the State Service Plan and other priority areas identified by the Commission.

Nevada Volunteers develops a grant review schedule prior to release of a Notices Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) that outlines grant review activities related to each NOFO. The grant review schedule includes submission deadlines for all applicant activities and proposed time frames for staff and review committee functions. The standard grant review process consists of the following steps:

- Preparation of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
- Announcement, posting, and advertisement of the NOFO
- Technical assistance and training conducted either in-person or via webinar
- Question and answer period
- Receipt of grant applications
- Initial staff review for compliance with application instructions

- Commission Program/Peer Review Committee review and scoring of grant applications
- Staff program and financial review of grant applications
- Grant clarification/negotiation with applicants
- Recommendation to Commission for approval
- Commission approval of annual AmeriCorps program portfolio
- Submission of approved applications to CNCS

Award Announcements depend on the type of funds and type of grants available, as a result this process can occur at different times of the year. Some components of the grant review process may be omitted if Nevada Volunteers does not seek new applicants for the specific grant type or if fewer than two applications are received.

#### *Appeals Process*

Nevada Volunteers offers an appeal process for AmeriCorps grant applicants whose request for funding has been denied. This process offers dissatisfied grant applicants an avenue to appeal an award decision and assures that the Program Committee's review process and subsequent grant award decisions are accurate, fair and reasonable. The Commission endeavors to assure that all grant awards fully reflect sound judgment and compliance with all NOFO terms and conditions and all appropriate AmeriCorps federal, state and state commission regulations. The Commission considers an award appeal for substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination or conflict of interest and/or non-compliance with procedures described in the NOFO document. If the grant applicant has substantive objections to the results of the peer review process, the applicant may request reconsideration. A request for reconsideration must be made by the applicant in writing within 14 business days after formal notice that an application was denied. A letter of appeal must be submitted to the Executive Director of Nevada Volunteers. The letter must:

- Describe the factors concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest or noncompliance that cause the applicant to conclude that the application should have been approved.
- Outline the specific areas in the proposal that applicant believes significantly addresses the NOFO requirements.
- Identify specific information in the application that the applicant believes Nevada Volunteers overlooked or misinterpreted.

Nevada Volunteers' Executive Director and/or other designated staff will review the appeal request within 5 business days of its receipt to ensure that it is compliant with this policy and merits further review. If it is determined that the appeal letter substantiates that there are material issues concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or non-compliance with procedures set forth in the NOFO, a Commissioner panel consisting of the Commission's Program Committee, Executive Director, and the Commission Chair will re-review the application. Nevada Volunteers will respond in writing with the final decision on any outcomes of the appeal review within 14 business days after the decision is made by the Commissioner panel. The Corporation for National and Community Service always has final approval rights for

all Nevada Volunteers' competitive grant awards, thus competitive decisions cannot be overturned by Nevada Volunteers.

*Basis for Cost per MSY Policy*

It is the policy of Nevada Volunteers to consider applications from individual Nevada AmeriCorps programs that exceed the Corporation's yearly average established for all AmeriCorps programs awarded by Nevada Volunteers. In order to consider cost per MSYs above the average, Nevada Volunteers must first assess its full portfolio of existing programs and the individual cost per MSYs including any programs under the average. This will assist in determining the latitude of Nevada Volunteers to consider programs and number of positions above the average and the degree of costs per MSY above the average. This policy is reviewed annually as Nevada Volunteers prepares its Notice of Funding Opportunity.