GEORGIA AMERICORPS
Is My Organization Ready for an AmeriCorps Grant?
A Readiness Assessment

INTRODUCTION:

This assessment is to assist you in determining if your organization is poised to apply, and hopefully, implement, an AmeriCorps grant. It should also assist you in getting your systems ready and preparing to submit a grant application for any type of funding.

This assessment is a general guide, a rough tool to help you plan for implementation of AmeriCorps and other complex grant-funded programming. Successful completion of the assessment does not guarantee AmeriCorps funding through the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism (GCSV) or the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Responding organizations are advised to ensure that the person or persons completing this form are those responsible for, and with sufficient knowledge of, the organization's financial and operational functions.

Regardless of your results GCSV staff is eager to assist you in designing and implementing services benefiting the residents of our state. Please contact us at AmeriCorpsGA@dca.ga.gov to learn more about how national service opportunities may be able to benefit your organization.

Special Note for Faith-Based Organizations seeking to operate government funded programs:

If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, federal funding is probably not a good option:

- Participation in government funded programs must be open to all who qualify, without regard to religious beliefs.
- No participant in a government funded program may be required to participate in inherently religious activities.
- AmeriCorps members must not proselytize.
- Government funded programs must be held in a separate place or time from religious activities.

Special Note for Organizations with an advocacy component seeking to operate an AmeriCorps program:

If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, hosting a federally-funded AmeriCorps program is not a good option:

- AmeriCorps members are prohibited from attempting to influence legislation.
- AmeriCorps members are prohibited from organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- AmeriCorps members are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- AmeriCorps members are prohibited from 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.
- AmeriCorps members are prohibited from conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive.

Please see pages 11-12 for a complete list of Prohibited Activities.

Special Note for ALL Organizations seeking to operate an AmeriCorps program:

If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, hosting a federally-funded AmeriCorps program is not a good option:

- AmeriCorps funds cannot be used to replace state or local public funds that have been previously used to support a project. If your program has previously used public funds to support positions, they would not be eligible as AmeriCorps positions (*Supplantation*).
- AmeriCorps members cannot duplicate services that are already provided within the locality of the program by other state or local government agencies. (*Non-duplication*).
- AmeriCorps members are less expensive than paid staff – your placement site cannot choose to take on an AmeriCorps member instead of staff, or reduce staff roles or benefits to save money (*Non-displacement*).
- AmeriCorps members may raise funds directly in support of your AmeriCorps program's service activities.
- AmeriCorps members may not raise funds for living allowances, participation fees, or for an organization's general (as opposed to project/program) operating expenses or endowment.

- AmeriCorps members may not write a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.

Please see pages 12-13 for more information on Supplantation, Non-duplication, Non-displacement, and Fundraising.

A READINESS ASSESSMENT

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Is your organization a public or private nonprofit organization – including labor organizations, faith-based and other community organizations; an institution of higher education; an educational institution; a government entity within the State of Georgia; an Indian Tribe; or a partnership or consortia?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

If the answer to the above question is "No" then your organization is not eligible to receive an AmeriCorps grant or serve as a Host Site for AmeriCorps members. You are similarly ineligible if your organization is a 501 (c) (4) non-profit entity [under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4)] that engages in lobbying.

Do your plans for utilizing AmeriCorps members call for members to provide services exclusively within the state of Georgia?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

*If the answer to the above question is "No" and the other results of this Assessment are favorable, then your organization may be interested in applying directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service for an AmeriCorps*National grant. Contact GCSV for details.*

2020 PRIORITIES

The Corporation's purpose is to maximize the power of service and volunteering to improve lives in communities across the country. Through all its programs, CNCS expands economic opportunity – helping Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment. By helping more Americans graduate, pursue higher education, and find work, national service provides immediate and long-term benefits by expanding individual opportunity, building family stability, and creating more sustainable, resilient communities.

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, CNCS has the following focus and priority areas:

DISASTER SERVICES: Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people, help economically disadvantaged people to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy, transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing, and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

EDUCATION: Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children, improve school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children, improve educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools, and/or support economically disadvantaged students' preparation for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive life events.

HEALTHY FUTURES: Grants will provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis, increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible, and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition with the purpose of reducing obesity. FUNDING PRIORITY: reducing and/or preventing prescription drug and opioid abuse.

VETERANS and MILITARY FAMILIES: Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength, increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their families served by CNCS programs, and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS programs.

RURAL INTERMEDIARIES: organizations that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve rural communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.

SAFER COMMUNITIES: programs that focus on public safety and/or partnerships between law enforcement and the community.

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS
(For more information on the above see 2020 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance

Do your plans for an AmeriCorps application include any of the above focus or priority areas?
  ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

ADMINISTRATIVE

Does your organization have a track record of success with its programs?
  ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Does your organization understand that the primary focus of AmeriCorps is AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps members support the host organizations' mission and goals? The program must always maintain a separate, but partnered identity and philosophy of AmeriCorps.
  ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Does your organization understand that AmeriCorps funding provides the opportunity for an organization to engage human resources to address specific need(s) as documented in the grant application?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Does your organization have the capacity to devote adequate staff to manage the implementation; regulatory oversight; and program monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of the AmeriCorps program as well as regular supervision of AmeriCorps members including recruitment, national service criminal history checks, service projects, timesheet reviews/approvals, and other member support services?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Does your organization have the infrastructure to recruit, train, and support the efforts of AmeriCorps members? Variables include office space, technology, supervisory time and skill, financial expertise, and the ability to manage a team of AmeriCorps members.

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Has your organization previously managed a federal, state, or foundation grant?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Are there formal internal controls governing all financial operations?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Does your organization have sufficient cash to operate a major grant on a reimbursement basis? *If your program starts September 1, 2019, you will submit a reimbursement request, with supporting documentation, to VM by October 15, 2019, for expenses incurred September 1 - September 30.* Payments are made 15-30 days after submission of reimbursement requests if adequate documentation is provided with submission.

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

Are the financial operations of your organization audited annually by an independent auditor?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

If you answered "No" to any of the above Administrative Questions, it is likely your organization would struggle to successfully administer an AmeriCorps grant. Consideration should be given to seeking a partnership with an existing AmeriCorps program or Applicant. Serving as an AmeriCorps host site, rather than as a primary grant applicant, is often a better option for smaller organizations. Contact GCSV for details or visit www.servega.org   *to learn about 2019-2020 AmeriCorps Georgia programs.*

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES

The following questions address key elements of successful organizations. Completion of this portion of the assessment will help provide you with additional information about the capacity and structure in place to operate an AmeriCorps program.

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE: THE MISSION

1. Does your organization have a clear written mission statement? (if no, skip to question 6)
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

2. Do all programs and efforts of your organization align with the mission?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

3. Has your organization said "no" to potentially good opportunities which are not consistent with the organizational mission or strategy?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

4. Is the mission of your organization understood by all stakeholders, including staff and board members?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

5. Is the mission of your organization frequently referred to (e.g. in planning sessions and other meetings)?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS

6. Does your organization have an active and independent board of directors and/or other governing body? (Independent is defined as a majority of board members who are neither employees of the organization nor family members of employees or other board members.)
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

7. Does the organization have written policies and procedures, including conflict of interest, non-discrimination, inclusion, and drug-free work place policies for employees and directors?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION: STRATEGIC PLANNING

8. Does your organization have a clear and coherent written plan for the future (i.e. 3-10 year strategic plan)? (If no, skip to question #14.)
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

9. Does the strategic plan have well defined measurable goals and achievable action steps with timeframes?
   ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

10. Are the goals in the strategic plan well known and understood by the staff and board?
    ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

11. Is the strategic plan made actionable by the realistic and detailed annual plans that outline specific work to be accomplished?
☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

12. Is this annual plan consistently used at all levels of the organization to guide organizations?
☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

13. Does the organization conduct regular assessment of internal operations to assess efficiency and effectiveness?
☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL REVENUE: SUSTAINABILITY

14. Does the organization have diversified funding from multiple sources?
☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   ☐ **Unsure**

15. Does your organization have a group of dedicated people that believe in its mission and are willing to provide financial support and volunteer their time?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

16. Are organizational and programmatic budgets closely and regularly monitored?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

17. Does your organization produce and review financial statements at least monthly?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

18. Has your agency been audited by a Certified Public Accountant firm or had a financial review within the past 2 years?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

19. Does your organization have a development/fundraising plan in place?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

20. Does your organization have plans to secure the financial and in-kind resources to meet any required matches?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

21. Do you have a "fund based" accounting system?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**
Current System Used: _____

22. If your organization uses accrual basis accounting, are there procedures in place to allow for reconciliation between cash and accrual basis reports?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

23. Is your organization's accounting system manual, automated, or a combination?
☐ **Manual** ☐ **Auto** ☐ **Combo** ☐ **Unsure**

24. How often are entries posted to the general ledger?
☐ **Daily**   ☐ **Monthly**   ☐ **Other:** _____
☐ **Weekly**   ☐ **Unsure**

25. Does the accounting system track completely and accurately the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or funding source?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

26. Does your accounting system allow cash basis reporting and for the recording of "in kind" contributions?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

27. Are all accounting entries (both cash and in-kind) supported by appropriate documentation?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

28. Does your organization use an automated payroll system? If yes, please identify the system and the provider name.
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**
System Name: _____   **Provider Name:** _____

29. Is your organization familiar with federal cost principles?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

30. Is your organization familiar with procedures for the determination and allowance of costs in connection with Corporation for National and Community Service grants and contracts?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: INTERNAL CONTROLS

31. Are the duties of the bookkeeper and record keeper separate from cash functions (receipts, deposits, check signing/releasing)?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

32. Are checks signed by individual(s) whose duties exclude recording cash received, approving vouchers for payment, and the preparation of payroll?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

33. Are purchase approval methods documented and communicated?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

34. Are employee payroll reports supported by appropriately signed documentation (timesheets, leave slips, etc)?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

35. Are employees who handle funds bonded against any loss by reasons of fraud or dishonesty?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

36. Are time and activity distribution records (time sheets) maintained by funding source and project type for each employee to account for total hours with your organization?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: TECHNOLOGY

37. Does every key staff member have access to a computer with up-to-date software, internet access and email capabilities?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

38. Does your organization have a computerized accounting system?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: HUMAN RESOURCES

39. Does your organization plan to use existing staff to manage the AmeriCorps program?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

40. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain the best employees (and/or AmeriCorps members) in accordance with an equal opportunity environment?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

41. Does your organization provide staff and volunteers with written job descriptions and the necessary resources to carry out duties appropriately?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

42. Does your organization provide relevant and regular training for staff and board members?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

43. Are employee performance appraisals conducted on a consistent and fair basis?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

44. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain volunteers and/or AmeriCorps members?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

PROGRAM DESIGN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

45. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of community needs?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

46. Does your organization analyze and use the results of needs assessment to chart change?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

47. Does your organization have the ability to grow and/or create new and innovative programs to meet the needs of the community?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

48. Are your organization's programs and services well defined?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

49. Does your organization have the ability to close a program that is no longer needed or relevant?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE & CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

50. Does your organization have a comprehensive well-developed community assessment or evaluation system used to measure the impact of programs and services?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

51. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of existing programs' effectiveness in meeting recipient needs and identify needs for improvement?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

52. Does your organization collect data to measure performance and progress on a continual basis?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

53. Is data analyzed, used in program redesign and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis? (e.g. annual reports)
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

ORGANIZATION OUTREACH: PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

54. Does your organization participate in partnerships with other groups?
    ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

55. Have these relationships led to mutually beneficial collaboration?
     ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Unsure**

RESOURCES REFERENCED

Prohibited Activities 45CFR§2520.65
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 contracts 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 business organized for profit;
   i. A labor union;
   ii. A partisan political organization;
   iii. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
   iv. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
j) Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
k) Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
l) Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Supplantation, Non-Duplication, and Non-Displacement:
Supplantation: AmeriCorps funds cannot be used to replace state or local public funds that have been previously used to support a project. If your program has previously used public funds to support positions, they would not be eligible as AmeriCorps positions.
Non-Duplication: Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless the requirements of paragraph (f) of this section are met, Corporation assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.
Non-Displacement: The Legal Applicant or the placement site cannot elect to take on an AmeriCorps member instead of staff, or reduce staff roles or benefits to save money. Programs cannot transition paid staff members into AmeriCorps positions unless that staff member has applied for an AmeriCorps position that is outside of their previous staff role.

    (1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

    (2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

    (3) A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.

    (4) A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.

    (5) A participant in any program receiving assistance under this chapter may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—
    (i)Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or
    (ii)Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.

    (6) A participant in any program receiving assistance under this chapter may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—
    (i) Presently employed worker;
    (ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;
    (iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;
    (iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or
    (v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

AmeriCorps and Fundraising 45CFR § 2520.40
Under what circumstances may AmeriCorps members in my program raise resources?
(a) AmeriCorps members may raise resources directly in support of your program's service activities.
(b) Examples of fundraising activities AmeriCorps members may perform include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Seeking donations of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers teach children to read;
(2) Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers;
(3) Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals;
(4) Securing financial resources from the community to assist 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 a community-based organization;
(5) Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members.

(c) AmeriCorps members may not:
(1) Raise funds for living allowances or for an organization's general (as opposed to project) operating expenses or endowment;
(2) Write a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.

Thank you for your interest in applying for AmeriCorps funding. We look forward to working with your organization.