



# Serve Washington

Changing Communities. Changing Lives.

## READINESS ASSESSMENT: Is My Organization Ready to Apply for an AmeriCorps Grant?

### INTRODUCTION

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This Readiness Assessment uses simple questions to help you determine whether your organization is poised to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps grant. Read each question carefully and answer honestly. This assessment is a tool to help you plan for implementation and administration of AmeriCorps grant-funded programming.

Successful completion of the assessment does not guarantee AmeriCorps funding through Serve Washington or the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Regardless of your results, Serve Washington is eager to assist you in designing and implementing services benefitting the residents of our state. Please contact Robyn Harris or Amber Martin-Jahn to learn more about how AmeriCorps may be able to benefit your organization and how our Commission may be able to help you in implementing new AmeriCorps programs or creating partnerships with existing programs.

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## FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Is your organization a Federally Recognized Indian Tribe (2 C.F.R. §200.54), Institution of Higher Education (2 C. F.R. §200.55), Local Government (2 C.F.R. §200.64), Nonprofit Organization (2 C.F.R. §200.70) or State (2 C.F.R. §200.90)?

Yes  No  Unsure

Does your organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address specific unmet community needs in the areas of Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Veterans/Military Families or similar issue areas?

Yes  No  Unsure

**If the answer to either of the above questions 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 or has been convicted of a federal crime.**

**Organizations should also have an Employer Identification Number (EIN), a Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS), and be registered as active in the System for Award Management (SAM).**

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

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 & Community Service for an AmeriCorps National grant.**

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Do your plans for utilizing AmeriCorps members call for members to provide direct service to community recipients or the environment (as opposed to capacity building/systems development/fundraising)?

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 & Community Service for an AmeriCorps VISTA grant.**

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Does your organization have a track record of success with its programs?

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 & skill, financial expertise, and the ability to manage volunteers.

Yes  No  Unsure

Has your organization previously managed a major 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? Both the Federal and State governments rarely, if ever, pay grant funds in advance. Payments are made 30-60 days after submission of invoices by programs.

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 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 in Washington. Serving as an AmeriCorps host site, rather than as a primary grant applicant is often a better option for smaller organizations. Contact Serve Washington for more details.

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## **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.

Score this section of the assessment by giving yourself one (1) point for each YES answer.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE: THE MISSION**

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

Yes  No  Unsure

2. Do ALL organizational programs and efforts 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 understood by ALL stakeholders within the organization?

Yes  No  Unsure

5. Is the mission frequently referred to (e.g. in planning sessions and other meetings)?

Yes  No  Unsure

### **ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS**

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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 a conflict of interest policy for employees and directors?

Yes  No  Unsure

### **ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

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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 #13)

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 realistic and detailed annual plans that outline the specific work to be accomplished?

Yes     No     Unsure

12. Is this annual plan consistently used at all levels of the organization to guide operations?

Yes     No     Unsure

13. Does the organization conduct regular assessment of internal operations to assess efficiency and effectiveness?

Yes     No     Unsure

## **ORGANIZATIONAL REVENUE: SUSTAINABILITY**

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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?

Yes     No     Unsure

16. Does your organization have a group of dedicated people that believe in its mission and are willing to volunteer their time?

Yes     No     Unsure

## **ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

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17. Are organizational and programmatic budgets closely and regularly monitored?

Yes     No     Unsure

18. Does your organization produce and review financial statements at least monthly?

Yes     No     Unsure

19. Does the organization have a development/fundraising plan in place?

Yes     No     Unsure

20. Does the organization have plans to secure the financial and in-kind resources to meet any required matches?

Yes     No     Unsure

## **ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: HUMAN RESOURCES**

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21. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain the best employees in accordance with an equal opportunity environment?

Yes     No     Unsure

22. Does your organization provide staff and volunteers with written position descriptions and the necessary resources to carry out duties appropriately?
- Yes     No     Unsure
23. Does the organization provide relevant and regular training for staff and board members?
- Yes     No     Unsure
24. Are employee performance reviews conducted on a consistent and fair basis?
- Yes     No     Unsure
25. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain volunteers?
- Yes     No     Unsure

## **PROGRAM DESIGN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**

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26. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of community need?
- Yes     No     Unsure    Date Last Conducted: \_\_\_\_\_
27. Does your organization analyze and use the results of needs assessments to effect change?
- Yes     No     Unsure
28. 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
29. Are your organization's programs and services well defined?
- Yes     No     Unsure
30. 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**

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31. Does your organization have a comprehensive well-developed evaluation system used to measure the impact of programs and services?
- Yes     No     Unsure
32. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of existing programs' effectiveness in meeting recipient needs AND identify areas for improvement?
- Yes     No     Unsure
33. Does your organization collect data to measure performance and progress on a continual basis?
- Yes     No     Unsure
34. Is data analyzed, used in program redesign and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis? (e.g. annual report)
- Yes     No     Unsure
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## ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH: PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

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35. Does your organization participate in partnerships with other groups?

- Yes     No     Unsure

36. Have these relationships led to mutually beneficial collaboration?

- Yes     No     Unsure

## FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

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If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, government 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.
  - Government funded positions must not proselytize.
  - Government funded programs must be held in a separate place or time from religious activities.
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## RESULTS

Count the total number of times you selected “yes” and refer to the chart below to determine your organization’s readiness. Balanced organizations with consistent excellence across organizational competencies tend to be most successful in administering complex grants like AmeriCorps. If your replies to this assessment reveal significant areas of growth, it might be best to address these before pursuing AmeriCorps support.

- **20 - 36 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have the capacity to successfully operate a government-funded project or program.
- **12 - 20 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may need to make a few improvements in your capacity and planning to independently administer an AmeriCorps grant. Exploring partnerships might be beneficial.
- **Less than 12 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have a significant need to build its capacity before it is ready to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.