



The **FINANCE PROJECT**

Helping leaders finance and sustain initiatives that lead to better futures for children, families, and communities

## **September Funding Tip**

### **Tip: Maximizing Federal Funding – Using AmeriCorps Funds to Support Youth Programs and Services**

Maximizing federal funding is a financing strategy that can substantially expand the funding base for youth-serving programs, providing a source of stable revenue and potentially freeing up other funds. This funding tip highlights AmeriCorps State and National Grants, a source of federal funding for youth-serving organizations.

When accessing federal funding sources, it is important that program leaders determine whether a specific funding source is worth pursuing. Consider the following questions to assess if a specific federal funding source meets your program's goals and resource needs.

1. **Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?** What types of investments can the funding source support? Does it align with your organization's priorities and needs?
2. **How do you access these funds?** What types of programs or organizations can apply for funds? Can youth programs apply directly for the funds or do funds flow through the State or Local government?
3. **Should I apply?** How many grants are given out each year? What is the average grant size? What are the reporting requirements? Is it worth the time and effort to apply?

## **AmeriCorps State and National Grants**

### **1. Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?**

Managed by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent agency of the federal government, AmeriCorps grants support high-quality programs that meet community needs throughout the country through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps state and national grants support nonprofit and private community-based organizations to hire, train and engage AmeriCorps members to operate or plan national and community service programs that address four major issue areas: education, public safety, human needs, and environment. Grantees design activities for a team of members serving full- or part-time for up to one year. Sample activities include:

- tutoring and mentoring youth;
- assisting crime victims;
- building homes;
- restoring parks; and
- recruiting community volunteers.

### **2. How do you access these funds?**

**AmeriCorps State Grants:** Funds flow to State Public Service Commissions who then allocate the funding to grantees. Eligible applicants include public or non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, and schools. Applicants apply directly to the State Commission. For more information see:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/apply/state.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/state.asp).

**AmeriCorps National Grants:** Funds flow directly from the CNCS to grantees. Eligible applicants include public or non profit organizations, institutions of higher education, states or tribes, and consortiums of any of the above. Applicants apply directly to the Federal Agency. For more information see: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/apply/national.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/national.asp).

### 3. Should I apply?

Key considerations when deciding to apply for AmeriCorps state and national grants include the following.

- ✓ The **average State Grant** is \$200,000. Awards generally last three years with annual increments. Reporting requirements are set by each individual State Commission. See the requirements for your state: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>.
- ✓ The **average National Grant** is \$3 million. Awards also last for three years with annual increments.
- ✓ **Funded organizations are responsible for** recruiting, selecting, and supervising AmeriCorps members to serve in their programs.
- ✓ **Sponsoring partners must provide** 33 percent of the program operating costs and 15 percent of member support costs.
- ✓ **Ask other grantees** about their experiences. View a list of current grantees that may be contacted with questions about what it is like to operate an AmeriCorps National grant at: [http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/08\\_0725\\_nofa\\_ac\\_nat\\_contacts.pdf](http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/08_0725_nofa_ac_nat_contacts.pdf).
- ✓ **ARRA funds supporting 100,000 new AmeriCorps members.** The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) designated \$201 million for the expansion of AmeriCorps State, National and Vista Grants. AmeriCorps National and State grants were awarded May 8, 2009. **ARRA AmeriCorps grants will only be awarded to existing grantees.**

#### Example from the Field

The Lewis-Clark Service Corps AmeriCorps program at Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, ID supports 75 AmeriCorps members including students, recent graduates, and other individuals who have not attended college. The members are placed at about 40 sites throughout the state in a variety of settings: charter schools, public schools, homeless shelters, other colleges and universities, and state agencies such as the Department of Corrections. Each year, members tutor and mentor about 5,000 at-risk students at all ages from pre-school through adulthood.

Keys to success include strong partnerships with community organizations that host members; extensive host site training; ongoing member support; and multiple offices, in Boise and Lewiston, to ease the effort of keeping touch with sites across a large state. For information on the Lewis-Clark Service Corps AmeriCorps program, contact Debi Fitzgerald, (208) 792-2084, [dfitzger@lcsc.edu](mailto:dfitzger@lcsc.edu).

To see a list of AmeriCorps grantees in your state, go to:

[http://www.americorps.gov/about/role\\_impact/state\\_profiles.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/about/role_impact/state_profiles.asp).

Source: "Program Spotlight: Lewis-Clark AmeriCorps Program." (n.d) retrieved August 10, 2009, from Americorps Web Site: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/tta/featured\\_program\\_detail.asp?tbl\\_featuredprogram\\_id=7](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/featured_program_detail.asp?tbl_featuredprogram_id=7)

#### Additional Resources from The Finance Project

- [Corporation for National and Community Service Funding Opportunities for Afterschool](#) (January 2009)
- [Thinking Broadly: Financing Strategies for Youth Programs](#) (January 2007)
- [Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Youth Programs](#) (January 2007)



Visit The Finance Project's online [federal funding database](#), which highlights over 100 federal funding sources that can support youth programs.



Visit The Finance Project's [Youth Programs Resource Center](#) and [Clearinghouse](#) for information and resources about developing, financing, and sustaining youth programs. The clearinghouse, jointly developed by The Finance Project and The Forum for Youth Investment, features more than 1000 research, promising practice and technical assistance resources developed by organizations in the field that aim to improve the lives of youth.

*The Finance Project does not give grants or provide funding for projects. We provide leaders with the information, tools, advice, and training to identify financing strategies that fit their needs and to build their capacity to successfully sustain programs over time.*