

2021-2022: AmeriCorps State Formula Guidance

Formula Funding Overview and Purpose

The 2021-2022 application process for AmeriCorps state funding is composed of three successive stages. In the first, applicants will provide information on their interest and potential for statewide reach. In the second, applicants will provide a Theory of Change for their program idea. In the third, applicants will submit a full application for review. Each stage of the process will include a review by the ServeMinnesota team. Following that review, some or all applicants will be asked to continue to the next stage of the formula process. Members of the ServeMinnesota team with expertise in program development will meet with programs invited to submit a full application to assist with details in program conceptualization and implementation. Key steps of the formula application process are bolded in the full timeline below.

The intent of the revised formula process is to foster new and innovative approaches to solving statewide issues. Pre-pilot collaboration is an integral component of new AmeriCorps initiatives in the state. Some applicants may have fully developed programs in mind. Others may have an idea for a program, with other details yet to be solidified. We welcome applicants at any stage of the process. However, before beginning the process, we ask applicants to consider their willingness to partner with ServeMinnesota. In some cases, no changes or modifications will be necessary. In others, our team may have specific recommendations to better align the final program model with characteristics of effective AmeriCorps programming.

Timeline

February 1, 2021	Formula released
February 11, 2021	STAGE 1: Critical need and capacity for statewide reach due to ServeMinnesota
February 12-16, 2021	ServeMinnesota review
February 19, 2021	Feedback and Invitation to Submit a Theory of Change
March 5, 2021	STAGE 2: Theory of Change description due to ServeMinnesota
March 8-12, 2021	ServeMinnesota review of Theory of Change
March 15, 2021	Invitation for Full Application
March 22—April 15	STAGE 3a: Joint review of Theory of Change and technical assistance for full application.
April 16, 2021	STAGE 3b: Full application due (draft 1)
April 19-30, 2021	Peer/Staff review. Joint collaboration as needed.
May 3, 2021	Feedback out
May 14, 2021	Stage 3c: Revised application due (final)
June 3, 2021	Board Approval
June 7, 2021	Due to CNCS
June 18, 2021	Notification of Funding (anticipated award date)

Application Instructions by Stage

The three major stages in the formula funding process are outlined below and can be referenced throughout the application process. For Stage 1 and Stage 2 (if invited), applicants should copy/paste the questions into a new word document, provide answers that adhere to the word limits, and submit the final version to grants@serveminnesota.org by the deadline indicated. Applicants invited to submit for Stage 3 will receive additional instructions for the creating the full application.

STAGE 1: Statewide need and position to scale

500 words. Due February 11, 2021. See instructions above for submission.

- (1) Describe the community problem you are seeking to solve, use data to demonstrate the severity of its impact at the state-level and define the affected populations within the state.
- (2) Describe your interest in scaling and how your organization is positioned to allow for scaling. For example, what organizational assets and supports are in place to ensure that you are positioned to deploy AmeriCorps members, not just within your local community, but across the state? It is not necessary to currently operate at a large scale—many new ideas for programming start small. It is necessary, however, to articulate your goals for scaling, a logical scaling path, and an ability successfully implement that plan. For example, what obstacles exist in regard to reaching state-wide scale? In what ways is your organization positioned to overcome those obstacles?

STAGE 2: Program Theory of Change.

Due March 5, 2021. See instructions above for submission.

- (1) Using state or local data, briefly outline the problem you are trying to solve and why the entry point you've chosen for AmeriCorps programming is logical. (200 words)
- (2) Describe your proposed intervention. What activities will members engage in? The exact procedures and dosage do not need to be final; however, please provide enough information to illustrate your vision of what AmeriCorps members will do with their time and how those activities are directly tied to the problem you are addressing. For example, why would member activities be expected to address the primary problem? (300 words)
- (3) Describe how the proposed activities are aligned with research. Use citations as applicable. Research might support a specific strategy you expect members to adopt or provide general support for the nature of member activities. (300 words)

Program Theory of Change (continued)

- (4) Describe your primary outcomes of interest. It is not necessary to know the exact measures you will use, but outcomes should be directly tied to the problem you are addressing and the member activities. Please consider implementation outcomes (e.g., assessments of consistency of implementation in relation to the program design and other members). Please also consider the timing and nature of outcomes as well as how outcomes relate to one another. For example, if a proposed program were to address employment by way of increasing the job-seeking skills of participants, there are at least two outcomes of interest: job-seeking skills (short-term) and employment (mid-term). Both outcomes should be directly tied to activities but the Theory of Change for such a program would likely place job-seeking skills as a precursor to employment. Both outcomes should not only be measured, but the relationship between the outcomes should be clear in the Theory of Change. (300 words).
- (5) Describe the extent to which there is evidence that your program idea is consistent with the needs and desires of the intended recipients. That is, describe what evidence exists that the proposed program is appropriate for, and desired by, the population served. Relatedly, describe your vision for how the issue of fit—which includes critical aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion—will be assessed and built upon as the program is launched and nurtured. (300 words)
- (6) Applicants may also choose to submit a visual depiction of their Theory of Change as a separate page that does not count against the word count.

Stage 3: Full Application

Due April 16th, 2021

Joint Planning and Review: All strong AmeriCorps programs are characterized by a series of specific activities related to training, implementation, outcome tracking, financial viability, and compliance. ServeMinnesota seeks to ensure that those characteristics are clearly present in new initiatives. Applicants invited to submit a full application will collaborate with the ServeMinnesota team to refine and build out the specifics (as needed) within the Theory of Change in an effort to guide the program toward a full application that reflects the values of high quality AmeriCorps programming. The nature of these meetings will vary depending on program need. Applicants can expect to meet with members of the ServeMinnesota team at least twice before finalizing the application.

Applicants invited to submit for Stage 3 will receive additional instructions during the review process for creating the full application.