



# AmeriCorps Indiana

**Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant  
Program Handbook  
June 2023 Revision**



**Indiana**  
A State that Works

# Table of Contents

(Revised June 2023)

## Welcome

- [Welcome](#)
- [Purpose](#)
- [Key Websites](#)
- [Key Terms and Definitions](#)
- [Laws, Regulations and Governing Documents](#)

## National Service and Indiana

- [History of National Service in Indiana](#)
- [National Days Of Service](#)
- [Special Initiatives And Events](#)
- [Training And Technical Assistance](#)
  - [Training Requirements](#)
  - [Technical Assistance](#)

## Program & Serve Indiana Staff Roles & Requirements

- [Grantee Expectations](#)
- [Program Performance Expectations](#)
- [Serve Indiana's Role](#)
  - [Visual Representation of Program Director Role](#)
- [Program Environment Management](#)
  - [COMMUNICATING AND ESTABLISHING THE ENVIRONMENT](#)
  - [Multi-Site \(Service Site\) Standards](#)
  - [Multi-Site Service Site Requirements](#)

## Program And Member Management

- [Start Up](#)
  - [Application And Contracts Process](#) (Grant Application Review Process (GARP))
    - [STATE AGREEMENT/CONTRACT PROCESS](#)
    - [PROGRAM AMENDMENTS](#)
  - [Program Document & File/Report Management](#)
    - [Required Program Files/Documents/Policies/Procedures](#)
    - [Suggested Program Files/Documents/Policies/Procedures](#)
    - [Member Position Descriptions](#)
    - [Signatory Authority](#)
  - [Public Relations](#)
    - [CREATING A PROGRAM IMAGE](#)
    - [PROGRAM IDENTITY](#)
    - [MEMBER GEAR](#)
    - [LOGOS](#)
    - [PROGRAM WEB PAGE](#)

- [MEDIA](#)
    - [LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS](#)
  - [Member Recruitment](#)
    - [Member Qualifications Requirements](#)
    - [Use of My AmeriCorps](#)
    - [Recruitment Policy, Plan, and Documentation](#)
    - [Inclusion, Non-discrimination, & Reasonable Accommodations](#)
    - [Member Selection Process](#)
    - [Criminal History Check Indiana Requirements](#)
    - [Required training](#)
    - [Criminal History Check Policy](#)
    - [Required Criminal History Checks](#)
    - [Additional Information/Definitions](#)
    - [Errors & Corrective Action](#)
    - [Alternative Search Procedure](#)
  - [Member Enrollment & Retention Management](#)
    - [Member Pre-Enrollment, Enrollment & Enrollment Rates](#)
    - [Refilling Slots](#)
    - [Slot Conversion Approval Process](#)
    - [Member Change of Service Approval Process](#)
    - [Suspension/Early Exit Approval Process](#)
    - [Compelling Personal Circumstances Additional Approval Process](#)
    - [Change in Term Approval Process](#)
    - [Establishing Member Files](#)
- [Ongoing](#)
  - [Member Supervision](#)
    - [Member & Staff Training](#)
    - [Member & Program Staff Timekeeping](#)
    - [Member Performance Evaluations](#)
    - [Member Benefits](#)
    - [Living Allowance](#)
    - [Federal Benefit Eligibility](#)
    - [Health Care](#)
    - [Child Care](#)
    - [Eli Segal Education Award](#)
    - [Loan Forbearance and Interest Accrual](#)
    - [Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program](#)
    - [Unemployment](#)
    - [Workers' Compensation](#)
    - [Disciplinary Action/ Member Discipline Process](#)
  - [Program Grievance Policy](#)
  - [Community Development](#)
    - [Volunteer Recruitment](#)

## [Program Reporting, Fiscal Management and Monitoring](#)

- [Reporting](#)
  - [Program Evidence](#)

- [Progress Reports](#)
    - [Program Evaluations](#)
    - [Changes to performance measures, logic model, and evaluation plan](#)
  - [Program Fiscal Management Requirements](#)
    - [AmeriCorps Budgets](#)
    - [Program/Host Organization Requirements](#)
    - [Allowable Expenses](#)
    - [Documentation of Expenses](#)
    - [Documentation of personnel costs](#)
    - [Document of personnel fringe benefits](#)
    - [Document of staff/member travel](#)
    - [Documentation of supplies](#)
    - [Documentation of program evaluation](#)
    - [Documentation of staff/member training](#)
    - [Record retention documentation](#)
    - [Program Match Requirements](#)
    - [Allowable Match Expenses](#)
    - [Unallowable Match Expenses](#)
    - [Documentation of Match](#)
    - [Commission Training & Review of Match](#)
    - [Reimbursement Process](#)
    - [Special requests/requirements for programs/contracts](#)
    - [Program Financial Reporting & Modification Requirements](#)
    - [Aggregated Financial Reports](#)
    - [Budget Modification](#)
    - [Budget Modification Process](#)
    - [Unexpended Funds Report](#)
    - [Grant Extension Requests](#)
    - [Distribution of Living Allowance](#)
    - [Living Allowance Payment & Distribution Requirements for ALL Programs](#)
    - [Living Allowance Cohort Option](#)
    - [Non-Cohort Guidance](#)
- [Monitoring](#)
  - [Program Monitoring](#)
  - [Risk Based Monitoring](#)
  - [All Risk Level Programmatic Monitoring](#)
  - [Low Risk vs High Risk Programmatic Monitoring](#)
  - [Onsite Programmatic Monitoring Visit Overview](#)
  - [All Risk Level Fiscal Monitoring](#)
  - [Monitoring Reports](#)
  - [Non-Compliant Program or Organization Remediation Process](#)
  - [Program Staff Turnover](#)
- [Grant Close Out Process](#)

[Appendix](#) (Primarily links to [Serve Indiana: Resources for Current Grantees](#) + list of docs/resources)

[Serve In Contact Info](#)

# Welcome

## WELCOME

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the AmeriCorps family as a newly funded Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program. Serve Indiana is thrilled to have you on board, and we are excited to work with you to ensure your program's success.

As you embark on this journey of national service, we are committed to providing you with the guidance, oversight, and support necessary to create a strong and impactful AmeriCorps program. We recognize the importance of your role as a program director, and we want to assist you in navigating the many moving parts of national service.

To help you get started, we encourage you to utilize this AmeriCorps handbook as a valuable resource for understanding federal rules and regulations and ensuring that your program remains compliant. We believe that this handbook will be an excellent starting point and reference guide for familiarizing yourself with the intricacies of the AmeriCorps program and its requirements.

Once again, congratulations on your funding as an Indiana AmeriCorps State Program. We are excited to work with you and support you every step of the way.

Warm regards,

The Serve Indiana Team

## PURPOSE

The Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook has been specifically designed as a guide for those who administer Indiana AmeriCorps State programs within Indiana. This handbook will assist in detailing the process for monitoring, supporting, and evaluating programs and, above all, for working collaboratively to make the AmeriCorps State programs in Indiana successful.

While detailed, this document does not contain all required information for an AmeriCorps State program and should be used in conjunction with all AmeriCorps Headquarters' rules and regulations, Serve Indiana's application materials and other AmeriCorps State specific guidance. Please also note that the information contained in this handbook does not include all the legal requirements of an AmeriCorps grant. Program Directors or individuals with legal questions should consult the regulations, laws and governing documents listed in the [law and regulation section](#) in this handbook.

It is important that sub-grantees become familiar with all the information contained in this handbook. The program handbook will be revised as needed. Revisions will be posted on the Serve Indiana website. It is the responsibility of each Program Director to stay up-to-date and abide by all changes to policies and procedures. It is recommended that the program pull the most recent version of the handbook from the website each time it must be referenced.

*For questions, comments, or concerns regarding this document, contact your assigned Serve Indiana contact or email Serve Indiana at [info@serveindiana.gov](mailto:info@serveindiana.gov)*

## KEY WEBSITES

The following websites contain an abundance of information. For your convenience, individual page links have been embedded throughout The Handbook for easy reference.

## [AmeriCorps the Federal Agency](#)

- [State Subgrantees](#)
- [Manage Your Grant](#)
- [AmeriCorps Strategic Plan](#)
- [AmeriCorps Equity Action Plan](#)
- [Litmos](#) (AmeriCorps Online Courses and Learning Paths)

## [Serve Indiana](#)

- [Subgrantee Resources](#)
- [State Service Plan](#)

## Let's get social! We encourage you to follow us on:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [You Tube](#)

## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Service:** Serve Indiana refers to “service” in this document when referencing AmeriCorps members’ duties. AmeriCorps members “serve”, they do not work or volunteer at their site. Service is considered the action of helping others in a structured program. AmeriCorps members may receive a living stipend in exchange for their service, but it is not considered a wage or based on the number of hours they serve.

**Volunteer:** An individual who gives of their time without monetary compensation for a community organization or cause. This person may or may not be in a structured program, but they do not receive a living stipend and are not under contract.

### **AmeriCorps Headquarters (AC HQ, formerly known as Corporation for National & Community Service):**

AmeriCorps is the federal agency for national service and volunteerism. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans of all backgrounds to serve their country, address the nation’s most pressing challenges, and improve lives and communities. Working hand in hand with local partners, AC HQ invests funds into nonprofit and faith-based groups that are making a difference in local communities. They do so through several programs and initiatives: AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, the Social Innovation Fund, the Volunteer Generation Fund and more.

Serve Indiana receives funding from the AC HQ for AmeriCorps State programming and a commission support grant. Serve Indiana is not considered an AmeriCorps office. AmeriCorps Headquarters has offices located in Washington DC as well as Regional Offices that oversee VISTA and AmeriCorps Seniors programs within that region.

**Department of Workforce Development (DWD):** This is the state agency under which Serve Indiana is housed. Indiana DWD connects people and employers through engagement with continued transparency and accountability, while celebrating, valuing and prioritizing equity, inclusion and diversity.

**State Service Commission:** This is the state entity that distributes and manages AmeriCorps State funding and programs. Commissions are overseen by AC HQ and are required if a state is to receive AmeriCorps State funding. A commission refers to both the staff who work at the commission and the governing body that

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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oversees the staff and funding approval process. Further information about commissions is found in Serve Indiana's history section of this document.

**Serve Indiana Staff:** Serve Indiana currently has six full time staff members. The staff consist of the Executive Director, Director of Grants, Director of Programs, Communications & Training Manager, Program & Compliance Manager, and the Employer Based Volunteer Manager. Sub-grantees of Serve Indiana may work with all staff at times but will primarily interact with the Director of Grants and the Director of Programs as their main contacts to the Commission.

**Grant Application Review Process (GARP):** This is the process in which AmeriCorps State funding is reviewed and approved by a State Service Commission. It encompasses outreach to potential program organizations, the creation of the AmeriCorps State applications based on AC HQ guidance and regulations, the review of said applications, and the subsequent awards process.

**AmeriCorps State:** There are three types of AmeriCorps programs under the AmeriCorps umbrella, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps Seniors, AmeriCorps State/National and AmeriCorps NCCC. Each has their own specific regulations and goals. AmeriCorps State focuses on direct service to meet an undressed community need. AmeriCorps State funds stay within one state and are funneled through a state commission to nonprofit, government entities, faith-based organizations, or colleges/universities who then oversee the programming and AmeriCorps members.

**AmeriCorps Programs:** The organizations who receive AmeriCorps State funding are considered AmeriCorps programs. These programs include the AmeriCorps members who serve and the service sites in which they serve. Each program follows the AmeriCorps State and AC HQ rules and regulations. In addition, they may have their own program policies and procedures based on these rules and regulations and their organization.

**Sub-grantee:** Indiana AmeriCorps State programs are considered sub-grantees of Serve Indiana. (Note: the state contract says Grantee because of state regulations that cannot be modified, but the term sub-grantee is used by AmeriCorps, so SI uses it in the handbook to be consistent with what you will hear from other state and national organizations.)

**Program Director:** This refers to the person in charge of the AmeriCorps program. They are the main contact for the program.

**AmeriCorps member:** A service member who is completing the term of service for the AmeriCorps program. They are referred to as members and not volunteers or workers to enforce the service aspect of the program.

**eGrants/My AmeriCorps Portal/The Portal:** Programs utilize this AC HQ sponsored website to recruit AmeriCorps Members, submit grants, and manage programs. Programs *must* utilize the Portal to enroll members, manage members, exit members, apply for funding, and communicate with AC HQ.

**OnCorps:** This is the system that Serve Indiana uses to manage programs. It is where programs house member and supervisor timesheets, submit progress reports and submit expenses reports.

**Service site:** Previously known as a host site, this is the organization(s) where a member provides service in their community. Typical service locations are schools, youth serving organizations, food banks, health clinics, community parks, etc.

**Vulnerable populations:** persons who are age 17 or younger, age 55 or older, or individuals with disabilities.

**NOFO:** Notice of funding opportunity. This is the notice AC HQ or Serve Indiana sends out when AmeriCorps State funding is available for request.

**RFF:** Request for funds. AmeriCorps programs use Serve Indiana's form to request funding from their grant

after their PER is approved.

**PER:** Periodic Expense Report. This is the document used to document those funds drawn each month by an operational program. This is then reviewed by Serve Indiana for approval. If approved, the program can then submit a request for funds.

**AFR:** Aggregate Financial Report. Twice per year, operational AmeriCorps State programs must submit an AFR to Serve Indiana to note the amount of federal funding used. This report is then compiled and sent to the federal government on behalf of programs.

**FFR:** Federal Financial Report. Twice per year, Serve Indiana submits a FFR to the AC HQ to note the amount of federal funding used, federal funds used as match, and program income. AFRs are compiled in order to collect data to submit the federal government on behalf of programs.

**MSY (Member Service Year):** One MSY is equivalent to one full time member (1700 hours). AmeriCorps funds are contingent on the number of MSYs requested by the program. There are 6 types of AmeriCorps member terms or slots: full time (1700), reduced full time (1200), half time (900), reduced half time (675), quarter time (450), and minimum time (300). The total MSYs a program requests depends on the number and type of slots/members positions included in a particular program design.

## Laws, Regulations, and Governing Documents

AmeriCorps State programs are governed by many laws and regulations. Although this handbook highlights some of the applicable laws and regulations, it is not a substitute for reading and understanding those which govern the program. Please click on the links below to review the laws, regulations, and terms and conditions that will be crucial to the operation of a compliant program. If there is a conflict between the content of this handbook and the AmeriCorps terms and conditions, the terms and conditions are the controlling authority.

Additionally, a program should re-read their grant agreement periodically to make sure they are in compliance and staying on track. If there are questions about something specific, the program should read through the law, regulation, or terms and conditions that apply to the subject first, consult this handbook second, and then contact the Serve Indiana Director of Grants to discuss how to apply the information if there are further questions.

Laws and regulations that govern and guide the Indiana AmeriCorps State program:

- [National and Community Service Act of 1990](#)
- [Serve America Act](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations](#)
- [45 CFR Chapter XXV](#)
- [42 USC Chapter 66](#)
- [Omni Circular](#)
- State and Local Regulations



## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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- [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#)
- Grant Agreement (incl. exhibits & attachments)
- Notice of Grant Award
- [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)
- [Grant Application Instructions](#)
- Program Proposal & Budget

# National Service and Indiana

## History of National Service in Indiana

National service in the United States has a long history, dating back to the ideas of American philosopher William James in the early 20th century. James proposed the concept of a "moral equivalent of war" in which young people would engage in national service, similar to military service, but for the purpose of contributing to society rather than fighting in wars.

The idea gained traction in the decades that followed, and during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide work and job training for unemployed young men. The CCC was widely regarded as a successful national service program, and it helped to pave the way for future initiatives.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of national service programs were established, including VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and the Peace Corps. These programs aimed to address social and economic issues through volunteerism and service.

The modern era of national service began in 1993 with the passage of the National and Community Service Act. This legislation created the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees several national service programs, including AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund.

AmeriCorps is the flagship national service program, and it provides funding for nonprofit organizations and public agencies to recruit and manage volunteers. AmeriCorps members serve in a variety of roles, including education, environmental conservation, disaster relief, and public health.

Since its creation, the Corporation for National and Community Service has helped to mobilize millions of Americans in service to their communities and the country as a whole. Today, national service remains an important part of American civic life, and it continues to inspire young people to engage in public service and make a positive impact on society.

Learn more about Corporation for National and Community Service history and programs at:  
<https://americorps.gov/about>

### **AmeriCorps Headquarters (AC HQ)**

The Corporation for National and Community Service ("CNCS" or "Corporation") was created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. CNCS empowers and supports Americans to tackle persistent challenges such as helping youth succeed in school, securing safe affordable housing for economically disadvantaged families, or helping communities respond to disasters. Through this work, CNCS achieves its mission of improving lives, strengthening communities, and fortifying the civic health of our nation.

AC HQ creates a strategic plan with the most updated version available on their website [here](#). The Corporation established funding priorities in their 2022-2026 plan that included:

1. Disaster Services
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Education
4. Environmental Stewardship

5. Healthy Futures

6. Veterans and Military Families

### AmeriCorps Strategic Priorities and Goals

To ensure agency resources are focused on addressing Administration priorities and the evolving needs of communities, AmeriCorps is aligning its planning and programming under a core set of priorities where national service can have the greatest impact. These strategic priorities are detailed in the AmeriCorps 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The following strategic goals will guide how AmeriCorps focuses its resources and prioritizes its learning and evidence building opportunities.

- Goal 1: Partner with communities to alleviate poverty and advance racial equity
- Goal 2: Enhance the experience for AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers
- Goal 3: Unite Americans by bringing them together in service
- Goal 4: Effectively steward federal resources
- Goal 5: Make AmeriCorps one of the best and most equitable places to work in the federal government

The agency has also prioritized a set of objectives that will inform the strategies and tactics necessary for attaining agency goals. For example, objectives like “Prioritize Investments in Underserved Communities”, “Recruit Diverse Corps of Members & Volunteers”, and “Expand Education & Economic Opportunity” will guide the implementation of the agency’s strategic plan and inform its strategic learning and evidence building priorities. Learn more about all of the elements of the plan at:

<https://americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/strategic-plan>

### AC HQ PROGRAMS

AmeriCorps: Through its programs, AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans to make an ongoing, intensive commitment to service.

- **AmeriCorps State and National:** AmeriCorps State and National offers grants that support a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. AmeriCorps State and National also administers grants for Indian tribes and U.S. territories who are eligible for funding that is set aside to address critical needs within their communities. ***Serve Indiana administers the AmeriCorps State grants in Indiana. AC HQ administers the AmeriCorps National grants awarded to organizations that serve multiple states.***
- **AmeriCorps VISTA:** AmeriCorps\*VISTA provides full-time members to community organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs that build capacity and ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. ***The Regional Office for Indiana administers this program in Indiana. [in@cns.gov](mailto:in@cns.gov)***
- **AmeriCorps NCCC:** The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps is a full-time residential program for men and women aged 18-24 that strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. ***The closest NCCC campus is located in Vinton, Iowa. Jeff Moeur, 319-472-9664 x 49, [jmoeur@cns.gov](mailto:jmoeur@cns.gov)***

AmeriCorps Seniors: AmeriCorps Seniors connects today’s 55+ population with the people and organizations that need them most. It helps them become mentors, coaches, or companions to people in need, or

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations. Volunteers receive guidance and training so they can make a contribution that suits their talents, interests, and availability. Conceived during John F. Kennedy's presidency, Senior Corps links more than 270,000 Americans to service opportunities. Their contributions of skills, knowledge, and experience make a real difference to individuals, nonprofits, and faith-based and other community organizations throughout the United States. There are three AmeriCorps Seniors programs: Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and Senior Companions.

Volunteer Generation Fund: The Volunteer Generation Fund, a program authorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, is designed to increase the number of people who serve in meaningful roles as volunteers dedicated to addressing important needs in communities across America.

Special Initiatives: The Corporation supports a variety of special initiatives and innovation grants, including:

- United We Serve / Serve.gov
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
- President's Volunteer Service Award

### **SERVE INDIANA**

Serve Indiana grew out of a long history of service and volunteerism in the state. The Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) became Serve Indiana in 2014 through Executive Order 14-07. This brought Serve Indiana under the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). DWD's theme is that it "connects people and employers through engagement with continued transparency and accountability, while celebrating, valuing and prioritizing equity, inclusion and diversity."

Serve Indiana is considered a "State Commission" according to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). In the National and Community Service Act of 1990, in order for states to receive AmeriCorps State dollars, there must be a commission in place. Serve Indiana provides programs and initiatives in support of community service and volunteerism.

**Programs** The main program is AmeriCorps State.

#### ***Special Initiatives***

- Awards for Excellence
- Day of Service Mini Grants
- Corporate Volunteerism

#### **Serve Indiana Staff**

- Executive Director - Stefonie Sebastian
- Director of Grants - Cassandra Gillenwater
- Director of Programs- Willie Brooks
- Communications & Training Manager - Kim Woods
- Employer Based Volunteer Manager - Kirstyn Nohlecek
- Program & Compliance Manager- Viviana Ramos

#### **The Serve Indiana Commission**

The Serve Indiana Commission (Commission), formerly known as the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism (ICCSV), is the governor-appointed administrative agent of the Indiana AmeriCorps State programs for AmeriCorps Headquarters. The Commission awards and administers AmeriCorps grants under the provisions of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990. The Commission, through the

staff, provides AmeriCorps programs with extensive training and ongoing technical assistance to support the development of high-quality AmeriCorps programs.

For more information about Serve Indiana, please visit our website at [www.Serveindiana.gov](http://www.Serveindiana.gov).

## National Days of Service

### Tools and Resources

Annually, there are many events celebrated both locally and nationally across the National Service Network. Each occasion is an opportunity to spotlight an AmeriCorps State program's impact while fulfilling programmatic needs. Some examples of what can be achieved during these events are: raising member morale, inspiring Indiana residents, recruiting new individuals, and expanding your program's reach in communities. A few AC-sponsored events are described below.

Serve Indiana promotes National Days of Service through their communications channels. The Commission does not require programs to attend or create events around National Days of Service. The Commission promotes these events by sharing national resources with programs and through their communications channels (primarily social media). Programs are encouraged to communicate National Day of Service events so Serve Indiana can promote among the network or attend the event to support the program.

The National Days of Service promoted by AC are the **National Day of Remembrance** and **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**. Information on these days can be found on the AC website: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve>

Other non AC National Days of Service include, **Global Youth Service Day** ([www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org)) and **Make a Difference Day** ([www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com)).

Serve Indiana also recommends AmeriCorps State programs attend the **National Conference on Volunteering and Service**. The National Conference on Volunteering and Service is a way for Program Directors to gain knowledge, be inspired, learn best practices and find opportunities to network with other states regarding AmeriCorps and volunteerism. Convened by Points of Light, this annual event provides attendees with a wide range of exciting informational plenary sessions, workshops, special events, service projects, exhibits, specialized learning tracks and more. For more information, visit <http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/>.

## Special Initiatives and Events

In addition to the national days of service, Serve Indiana, embarks on many special initiatives and events each year.

Notable events include:

- Indiana State AmeriCorps Swearing-In Ceremony (November)
- [AmeriCorps Week](#) (Second Full Week of March)
- Volunteer Week (April)

### What additional guidance does Serve Indiana have?

Dates are subject to change. Serve Indiana will promote all initiatives and events as they occur.

Another notable initiative that is encouraged, promoted and lead at the program level is around "Life After AmeriCorps." Programs frame this in different ways; events, webinars, and/or materials. Either way, it's important to think through how programs will prepare members for life after service.

# Training and Technical Assistance

Training and technical assistance priorities for AC HQ include improving the programmatic quality of national service programs, enhancing programs' capacity to successfully administer AC grants, advancing programs' ability to measure results, and providing outreach and support to rural and underserved communities. To align with these ideas and to ensure that programs have the tools for success, Serve Indiana provides required trainings, events, conference calls, and/or workshops. Serve Indiana trainings are a chance to connect with AmeriCorps State program staff and others from the National Service network. By applying shared best practices, Program Directors can more effectively guide members throughout their AmeriCorps experience. Trainings are overseen at Serve Indiana by the Training & Communications Manager by all staff are included in the planning and implementation process.

## Training Requirements

Serve Indiana sub-grantees are required to attend several events throughout the program year. Most years, Serve Indiana provides 3 in person trainings (summer orientation, winter and spring trainings), monthly new staff/program calls, annual fiscal webinar and quarterly all program calls. A calendar of these events is updated yearly and distributed to programs on or shortly after program orientation. It is created and reviewed by the Serve Indiana staff as a team. Once ready, it is distributed to all programs and added to the Serve Indiana website. Serve Indiana has the following stipulations and requirements around training:

- Sub-grantee staff are considered new for the first two years of their time with the program. The two years begins on their first day of work at their organization. Similarly, programs are considered new for the first two years. New staff/programs are required to attend all "new staff/program" events as designated by Serve Indiana.
- Sub-grantees are also required to send one person to each required training. Attendance at required events will be marked on the deadline compliance tracking sheet each year. A program director must contact Serve Indiana two days prior to the event if they will not attend. They are required to then send another staff person from their organization in their place. If the program does not communicate to the Commission, they will be marked as "absent". An "excused absence" can be granted to a program if they communicate prior to the event with Serve Indiana and have a strong rationale for why another staff member could not attend. In addition, they may be granted an "excused absence" if there are extenuating circumstances such as a family death, emergency, or severe illness.
- Serve Indiana encourages other organizational staff to attend trainings and may require that Executive Directors of organizations attend at least one training per year in person.
- All required trainings and dates are listed on the Serve Indiana calendar distributed before the start of the new program year. Any changes in dates are communicated in advance by Serve Indiana staff. Serve Indiana staff will also send reminders of such events with final details of logistics. This is communicated via email to the main Program Director contact.

### Technical Assistance

Serve Indiana staff can also provide additional technical assistance to programs. The Commission encourages programs to be knowledgeable of the rules and regulations of Serve Indiana, AC HQ, and their programs. Thus, before contacting Serve Indiana for assistance, programs should review the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) and the AmeriCorps Handbook for guidance. If additional questions arise, programs should then reach out to your assigned Program Manager. In that correspondence, they should include the information they have already reviewed.

In instances where a program is non-compliant, there is staff turnover, or additional technical assistance is needed, Serve Indiana may also set up program specific technical assistance. This may be focused on an individual topic or a variety. This can be scheduled by Serve Indiana staff or requested by a program.

Finally, Serve Indiana may require or encourage programs to opt into a mentor or coaching program if technical assistance is needed for several programs. This program's requirements would be communicated to all programs when released. In years past the goal has been to pair newer program directors with existing directors to share knowledge and grow programs. If a Program Director would like to see this program enacted, they should contact the Serve Indiana Director of Programs

# Program & Serve Indiana Staff Roles & Requirements

## **Overview:**

The goal of this section is to outline the expectations that Serve Indiana has for itself and its Indiana AmeriCorps State sub-grantees. The end objective is to help create and maintain successful AmeriCorps State programs, so all Indiana AmeriCorps members have consistent and successful terms of service. These expectations are not meant to take the place of the Indiana AmeriCorps Handbook or the AC HQ guidelines and regulations.

## Grantee Expectations

All Serve Indiana sub-grantees are required to abide by the below list of expectations.

### **Federal Rules and Regulations:**

Sub-grantees are required to read and become knowledgeable of all the applicable federal rules and regulations governing their program. These rules and regulations are listed in the previous section,

### **Serve Indiana/State Rules and Regulations:**

Sub-grantees are required to read and become knowledgeable of the Serve Indiana handbook and their state of Indiana grant agreement. Sub-grantees are expected to use the knowledge from the above listed documents to make productive decisions for their programs. Serve Indiana staff are willing and able to assist programs, but programs are expected to research questions before reaching out to the SI Director of Programs. The handbook is available on the Serve Indiana website: [www.serveindiana.gov](http://www.serveindiana.gov) in the AmeriCorps section. Grant agreements are processed with the Department of Workforce development and sent out in the early fall to programs.

### **Champions for National Service in Indiana:**

Serve Indiana expects all programs to be champions of national service. This means sub-grantees are educated on AmeriCorps to properly educate their communities about the importance of service and volunteerism in Indiana. In addition, programs are expected to educate their members on the larger network of National Service during their service and foster lifelong civically engaged individuals. It is expected that this role will include partnerships and collaborations with other national service entities in the state. This includes networking at Serve Indiana events, sharing best practices and coordinating with other programs, service sites and/or members in the community to create innovative approaches to meeting your needs.

### **Communication with Serve Indiana:**

Serve Indiana expects programs will update Serve Indiana with their Executive Director (or similar), Program Director, and fiscal contacts annually. (It is feasible that the program/fiscal person will be the same person at the organization.) If there is any turnover in these positions, it is expected that Serve Indiana will be updated and introduced to these new contacts within 14 business days. Serve Indiana will work to meet with the new contact within 30 business days of their start to introduce their role. The Program Director is the main contact for Serve Indiana, and it is expected they will communicate updates to their Executive/fiscal staff. Lastly, if a Program Director is out of the office for an extended period of time, Serve Indiana should be kept updated on other contacts for submission deadlines/questions.



**Training Expectations:**

Serve Indiana expects programs to fully participate at all Serve Indiana events. This includes sharing of resources and best practices with other programs. Serve Indiana requires programs to send at least one representative to each required training/event. Additional information on training requirements can be found in that section of this handbook.

## Program Performance Expectations

The Commission expects AmeriCorps programs to strive to be high performing and achieving. The staff and Commission of Serve Indiana recognize that without clear expectations of what a strong program entails, organizations may not achieve the best results. In the Fall of 2017, Serve Indiana Commission voted in the below expectations for all programs. It is the expectations of the Serve Indiana Commission and staff that programs meet said thresholds annually. AC HQ also has their own expectations as communicated below. A program should be aware that while they may meet Serve Indiana’s expectations, AC HQ may expect a different level of success. It should also be noted that these expectations may change as programs more consistently meet the below standards.

The Commission uses these expectations as part of their overall monitoring strategy. Serve Indiana is committed to addressing challenges by working with sub-grantees to find adequate technical assistance to meet their needs. To that end, Serve Indiana has developed a monitoring strategy that increases opportunities for guidance and intervention. This approach, the communication of Commission expectations and strong monitoring practices, allows the Commission to guide and strengthen programs to best meet the needs of their communities.

Data Point:	CNCS Expectation	Serve Indiana
<b>Recruitment/Enrollment Rate</b>	100%	90%
<b>Retention Rate</b>	85%	90%
<b>Performance Measures Met</b>	All measures met	90% of measures met
<b>Deadline compliance</b>	100% compliant	90% compliant
<b>Monitoring Visit Report Results</b>	Dependent on type and risk of finding.	1 Finding and/or less than 5 observations on most recent report
<b>Risk Level</b>	Low risk	Low risk for existing programs (Over 3 years in existence)

## Serve Indiana’s Role

*Along with sub-grantees, Serve Indiana staff is expected to abide by the below items when working with and for AmeriCorps programs.*

**Professionalism and Responsibility:**

Serve Indiana staff will work to be impeccable with their word and always strive to do the best work at all times. This means representing Serve Indiana, AmeriCorps and Volunteerism in a positive light at all events.

**Mission Focused:**

Serve Indiana staff will follow the State Service Plan (SSP) as their guide in their work. This document is the division’s strategic plan and is updated every 3 years. Staff will consistently follow the mission and v

vision of Serve Indiana, striving to propel service and volunteerism in the state. As with AmeriCorps programs, Serve Indiana staff will be champions for National Service. They will do so through their outreach efforts and partnerships locally and nationally.

### Resource Knowledge and Connections:

Serve Indiana will connect programs to state and federal resources as shared and discovered. Serve Indiana staff will be knowledgeable in all AmeriCorps, AC HQ, and Serve Indiana rules and regulations as appropriate. They will work to discover new and innovative approaches to serve programs through new partnerships as available. In addition, when guiding programs, staff will cite the resource for programs to ensure all parties have the correct information to be successful.

### Serve Indiana's Method of Communication:

- **Effective Communication:** Each Serve Indiana staff will listen well, speak clearly and be certain the other staff/client understands before sending him or her on their way. In addition, all staff will be comfortable with questions, comments about current processes or activities.
- **Annual calendar:** Serve Indiana will create and update a yearly calendar each program year. It will be distributed around orientation for all programs. While topics may shift, Serve Indiana will work to keep dates the same to help programs plan their year. All updates will be properly communicated to programs in advance.
- **Response time:** The Serve Indiana handbook notes response times for each submission period from sub-grantees. Serve Indiana staff will abide by those timelines and communicate to their respective programs if it will be longer.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Serve Indiana will also communicate with programs on a regular basis through training and technical assistance. In the annual calendar, these trainings will be communicated and unstructured assistance will be available to programs.

## Visual Representation of Program Director Role

**Ongoing:** The below items are duties that continue throughout the program year that PD's must constantly watch and review.

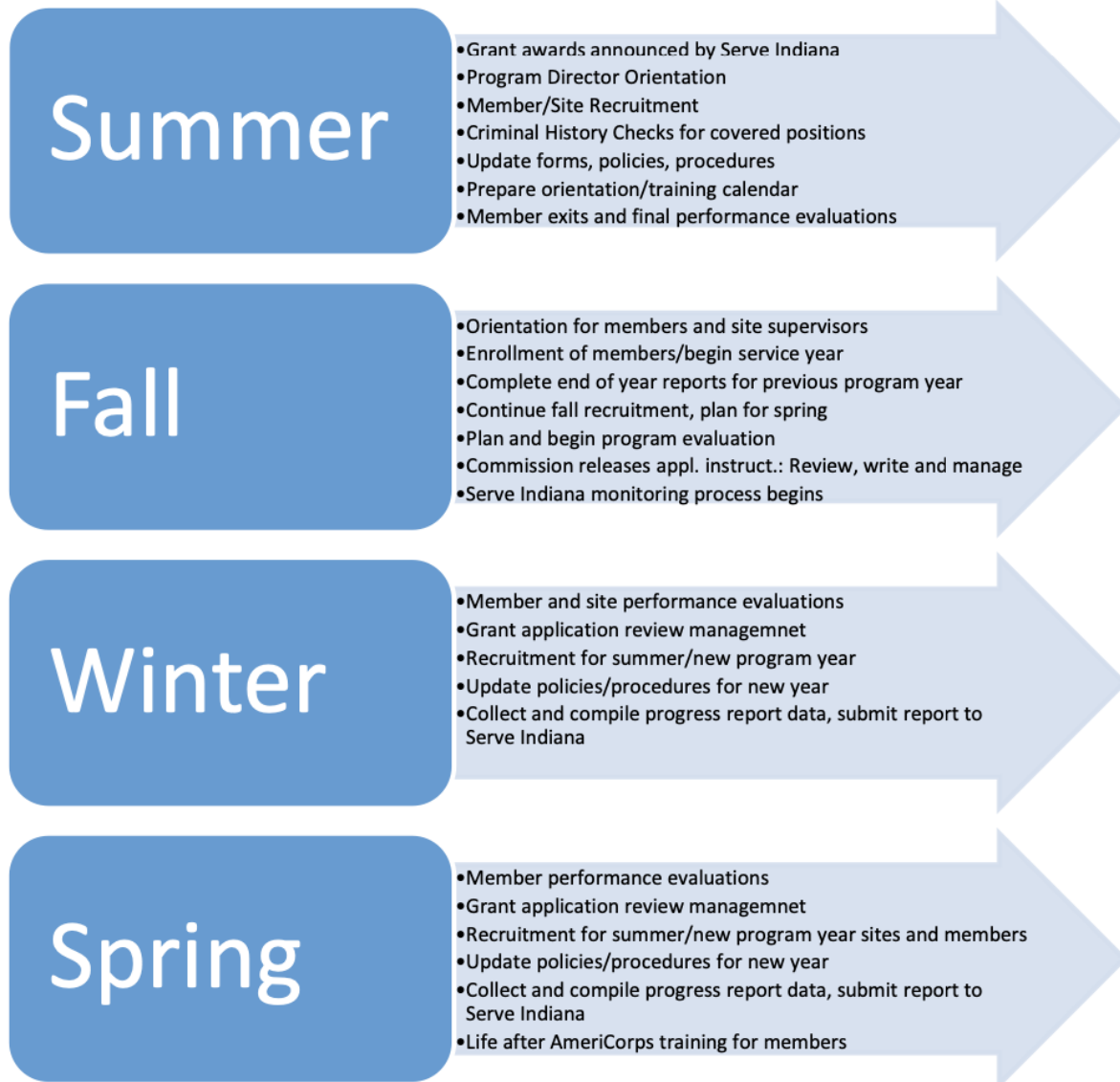


## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

**Monthly:** Each month, depending on the type of grant, PD's must be aware of the below items and their submissions.



**Yearly:** The next page notes what a typical program year looks like for a sub-grantee. Again, this is a guide for program and should be taken into consideration with the SI calendar, their program needs and their organization's needs.



## Program Environment Management

### COMMUNICATING AND ESTABLISHING THE ENVIRONMENT

To create a positive program environment, programs should combine the unique AmeriCorps program style with a gratifying service experience. The Program Director's office should be a professional, confidential, and a safe place for individuals to communicate openly. The AmeriCorps logo should be posted in said office and in any common spaces utilized by members. Training spaces and all meetings should also be a safe place for attendees, and it is imperative that the environment be unattached to religious, political, and other practices or beliefs.

As appropriate communication is important for the success of a program, e-mails should be timely and respectful, and conducted in a professional manner. For best practices on email etiquette, a great resource for programs or members is <http://www.101emailtippetips.com/>.

When the Program Director is out of the office to attend a conference or away for a number of days, it is important to have an out-of-office (auto reply) e-mail and voice mail message. The message should reflect contact information of the staff covering program duties and a time of return to the office. There may be situations when your Serve Indiana staff needs to contact staff for information and timing may be crucial.

### **Multi-Site (Service Site) Standards**

Programs with several sites have a unique role in running an AmeriCorps program. This section helps explain the definitions, policies and procedures Serve Indiana follows with these types of programs. Most programs have more than one service site but there are some who only place members within their organization. Serve Indiana does not manage or communicate with any service site. It is the responsibility of the program to manage their service site and ensure compliance.

**Multi-Site Program** refers to an AmeriCorps State program in which the Indiana AmeriCorps State sub-grantee organization works with one or more partner organizations where AmeriCorps members are placed to complete their term of service.

**Service Site** means the partner organization hosting AmeriCorps members. A partner organization must have legal status as a state or local government, an Indian Tribe, a non-profit organization (religious organizations are permissible), or an educational institution and provide one or more types of eligible programs as defined in C.F.R. §2522.110.

### **Multi-Site Service Site Requirements**

*All programs who intend to place a member outside of their host organization must abide by the following.*

**Service Site Recruitment and Selection:** The sub-grantee must establish written service site selection criteria based on, at a minimum:

- a. Grant requirements
- b. Adequate service site capacity

- c. An alignment between the host organization's (sub-grantee) mission and the identified community need
  - d. Past performance (if applicable)
2. Programs must be accessible to persons with disabilities.
3. The sub-grantee must have a documented method for selecting service sites based on the established service site selection criteria.
4. The sub-grantee must secure signed agreements/contracts with each service site partner organization hosting AmeriCorps members. At a minimum, the agreement/contract must contain the following:
  - a. Number of members and hours for term of service
  - b. Intended program activities, outputs, and outcomes at the service site
  - c. Roles and responsibilities of sub-grantee and service site related to:
    - Member recruitment, member development, and member supervision
    - Training and orientation
    - Site monitoring
    - Reporting and communication
    - Program evaluation/performance measurement
    - In-kind and cash support, if applicable
    - Consequences for non-compliance with applicable AmeriCorps rules, provisions, and guidelines established at the federal, state, and sub-grantee levels
  - d. Reference to all applicable AmeriCorps rules, provisions, and guidelines established at the federal and state levels
  - e. Prohibited activities
  - f. Other program-specific requirements

### **Service Site Development and Support:**

- (1) The sub-grantee must develop and implement a plan to effectively orient and train service sites, so that service sites may adequately support and engage members.
- (2) The sub-grantee must establish a written attendance policy to ensure service sites benefit from the orientation and training provided by the sub-grantee.
- (3) The sub-grantee must conduct a service site supervisor orientation and provide ongoing training and support to service sites.
- (4) The sub-grantee must communicate with service sites regarding changes or updates in policy,

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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procedure, program activities, training/event notices and invitations, member status, etc. in a timely manner.

- (5) Programs must ensure that service sites demonstrate an understanding of national service and recognize and encourage members' participation in sub-grantee, statewide, and national events through the following activities:
  - a. Service site support of member participation in sub-grantee and AmeriCorps trainings and events
  - b. Members wear AmeriCorps logos during service hours
  - c. Service site posting of AmeriCorps signage prominently
  - d. Service site posting of drug-free workplace notice prominently
  - e. Service site use of AmeriCorps logo on program recruitment materials, recruitment ads, and other program materials
  - f. Service site use of required non-discrimination language on program materials
- (6) The sub-grantee must establish and maintain a procedure for the filing and adjudication of grievances from service sites and other individuals concerning the program.

### **Service Site Supervision and Monitoring:**

- (1) The sub-grantee must establish and utilize a documented method of ensuring that service sites are in compliance with all applicable AmeriCorps rules, provisions, and guidelines established at the federal, state, and sub-grantee levels.
- (2) The sub-grantee must conduct a formal compliance visit of each service site at a minimum of annually. Informal compliance visits should be conducted as needed. Documentation of the visit(s) must be maintained.
- (3) The sub-grantee must create and carry out, as applicable, a written procedure for addressing service site non-compliance.
- (4) The sub-grantee must provide evidence that compliance issues have been addressed, as applicable.
- (5) The sub-grantee must work with service sites to develop an effective method of tracking and reporting program activities, outputs, outcomes, and "Great Stories."
- (6) The sub-grantee must ensure that service sites institute safeguards as necessary and appropriate to ensure the safety of members.
- (7) The sub-grantee must establish a process to ensure it receives timely notifications from service sites regarding any serious injuries or death sustained by members in the performance of their service responsibilities.

Compliance with these rules and regulations will be monitored by Serve Indiana during the monitoring process.

# Program and Member Management

## *Start Up*

### **Application & Contracts Process**

#### AmeriCorps Grant Application Review Process (GARP)

AmeriCorps State has an extensive application process that starts in the fall and ends in June of the following year. There are several due dates and types of application submissions, so it is important to understand each. This section explains the basic definitions, review process, and policies Serve Indiana follows.

**Definitions** Serve Indiana has the potential to fund all types of grants below depending on the types of submissions. Any organizations funded under the below definitions is considered part of Serve Indiana's portfolio to manage. Regardless of type of funding, funded organizations must follow the rules and regulations set out by both AC HQ and Serve Indiana.

#### **General Definitions:**

- **Grant Application Review Process (GARP)** refers to the processes employed by Serve Indiana and The Serve Indiana Commission (Commission) for the review and selection of AmeriCorps State host organizations (programs).
- **Sub-grantee** means the host organization with legal and fiscal responsibilities for an AmeriCorps State Formula, Competitive, or Education Award program and its members.

#### **Funding Types:**

- **Competitive Funds** is an award to organizations operating in Indiana that are nominated to participate in a nationwide competition. Successful applicants receive grants to fund a portion of program costs and member's living allowance. These awardees are still considered a part of the Serve Indiana portfolio but simply go through a more stringent review process.
- **Formula Funds** means an award to organizations in Indiana through a statewide competition. Successful applicants receive grants to support AmeriCorps member positions and other program costs. These awardees are still considered a part of the Serve Indiana portfolio but simply go through a less stringent review process.

#### **Grant Types:**

- **Cost Reimbursement or Operational Grants (non-fixed amount)** fund a portion of program operating costs and member costs with a maximum cost per MSY (Member Service Year). Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a budget and financial reports. They require a minimum match of 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten.
- **Fixed Amount 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 or other resources to cover the remaining costs. Programs are not required to submit budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. However, AC HQ provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Programs can access all the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Professional Corps programs applying for operational funding through a Fixed Amount Grant must submit a budget in support of their request for operational funds.

- **Planning Grant recipients** receive funding to spend one year developing an application for an AmeriCorps program that would be submitted in a subsequent grant competition. Funds are typically used to cover expenses such as staff salary, consultants, travel to similar established programs or topical conferences, and any reasonable costs supporting the development of an operational program. The Commission's offering of planning grants can change from year to year depending on staff capacity and fund availability.

### **Types of Applicants:**

- New Applicant (No previous AmeriCorps funding or a 5-year gap in funding, see below)
- Continuing Formula Sub-grantee (in year 1 and 2 of a 3-year Fixed-Amount or Cost Reimbursable Formula grant period)
- Continuing Competitive Sub-grantee (in year 1 and 2 of a 3-year Fixed-Amount or Cost Reimbursable Competitive grant period)
- Re-compete Formula Sub-grantee (in the last year of a 3-year Fixed-Amount or Cost Reimbursable Formula grant period)
- Re-compete Competitive Sub-grantee (in the last year of a 3-year Fixed-Amount or Cost Reimbursable Competitive grant period)
- Planning Formula Sub-grantee
- Current Planning Grant applying for formula operational funding

### **Eligible Applicants:**

The following institutions are eligible to receive AmeriCorps State formula and competitive funding under 42 U.S.C. 12571(a). For purposes of this policy, the terms *eligible applicant*, *eligible entity*, *sub-grantee*, and *sub-recipient* are interchangeable.

- A State;
- Subdivisions of States;
- A public or private nonprofit organization (including religious entities and labor groups);
- Indiana Tribes,
- An institution of higher education; or,
- A Federal agency.

### **Application Consideration:**

Under guidelines outlined in Serve Indiana Communication 2006-P-10 (effective October 2, 2006), the Commission shall determine solely the appropriate funding source – formula or competitive – for a particular eligible applicant.

### **Award Limitations:**

There are specific competitive guidelines set by AC HQ each year and communicated via the NOFO and application instructions. Serve Indiana attempts to also communicate any yearly limitations they may have in their versions of those documents. Specific to competitive applicants, these limitations are updated annually by AC HQ and may center on the minimum number of MSY or slots a competitive program may request each year. Applicants should review such limitations carefully before applying. Serve Indiana has formula award



limitations around the minimum number of funded MSY and organizations who are funded competitively receiving formula funds. First, an eligible entity in receipt of AmeriCorps State competitive or national direct funds is ineligible to receive a formula award. Second, Serve Indiana will not award an application under a 10 MSY threshold and primarily keeps new applicants MSY counts to amount manageable based on the organization’s AmeriCorps program experience.

**Matching Requirements:**

A recipient of formula funds shall adhere to the basic matching requirements set forth by AC HQ.

A recipient of funds shall provide a single match for the AmeriCorps State program beginning in the first year of the first three-year grant. The single match percentage shall increase over the previous period by two percent in the first year of a second three-year grant and by four percent (4%) over each of the previous periods in years two (2) through ten (10). A recipient shall contribute a dollar-for-dollar match for the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10+
<b>Sub-grantee Share Requirements</b>	24%	24%	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

- If a sub-grantee receives two non-consecutive formula awards, then the Commission shall hold the entity to the level of overall match it provided in the previous competitive grant cycle.
  - If a sub-recipient fails to receive formula or competitive funds for a period of five (5) or more years, or can document a comprehensive change in program model, then the minimum overall share defaults to year one of a three-year grant cycle upon the sub-grantee’s receipt of Commission funds.
  - If an entity is a new or replacement applicant for an existing program funded under 42 U.S.C. 12581(a)(1), then it shall provide matching resources at the level the previous legal applicant had reached at the time the new or replacement applicant assumed responsibility for the program.
- A sub-grantee may be eligible to receive a waiver from the minimum overall share provided it meets the requirements set forth in 45 C.F.R. 2524.60(3)I-(f)(2) and 2521.70.
- Additional information on match is included in the match section of this handbook and updated yearly in the NOFO/Application Instructions.

**Grant Application Review, Selection, and Appeals Process Schedule:**

Serve Indiana will develop a schedule relative to the Grant Application Review, Selection, and Appeals Process prior to or near the start of the program year that clearly outlines anticipated GARP activities for the year. The schedule will include submission deadlines for all applicant activities and proposed time frames for the Commission and Serve Indiana staff functions.

**Distribution of Indiana’s AmeriCorps State Formula Funding Allocation:**

1. Each year, funding will be set-aside from Indiana’s Formula allocation for continued support of Continuing Formula Sub-grantees, pending The Serve Indiana Commission (Commission) approval and Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation) funding support.

2. The remainder of the Formula allocation will be made available to applicants through a public Request for Proposals process.

### **Annual Review Process Timeline:**

1. Early Fall: AC HQ releases NOFO and application instructions to Commission. Commission GARP staff review and edit for Commission specific requirements and deadlines. This version of application materials will communicate which type of applicant should follow the proposed deadlines (i.e., formula continuation versus competitive continuation).
2. End of October/early November: Due date for above applicants
3. October-Mid November: Review of applicants, initial clarification process. SI staff conduct PARA (see section for more information) and prepare for Commission meeting.
4. December: Commission meeting, SI staff present applications, previous performance, and recommendations. Commission votes on applicants moving to competitive considerations, all applicants notified of results by SI staff. Non- approved competitive applicants moved to formula slate as appropriate.
5. January: Submission of competitive applications to AC HQ.
6. Early Spring: SI releases formula continuation application materials based on NOFO/application instructions above if not already released in fall.
7. March or April: Formula continuations submit application in eGrants. Review process and initial clarification process begins. AC HQ may also provide clarification for competitive applicants at this time.
8. Mid May: AC HQ releases competitive application decisions, SI communicates results to applicants. Non- approved competitive applicants moved to formula slate as appropriate.
9. May/June: Commission meeting where SI staff present formula slate, Commissioners vote on final formula slate. SI staff communicate results to programs.

**Commission meeting presentation:** At least one week before the December and May/June funding decision meetings, Serve Indiana staff will send two documents to Commissioners. An Excel spreadsheet will include a list of all applicants, their funding request totals, match totals, and previous performance based on the program Expectations and Monitoring section of this handbook. The second document will be a Word document with executive summaries and proposed performance measures of each applicant. During the meeting, the appropriate SI staff will present this information and be available to answer questions of each applicant. Decisions around funding or reducing an applicant's award will be communicated in the total number of MSY.

**Award letters:** Following each Commission meeting where funding decisions are made, SI staff will send out a letter to all applicants. After the December meeting, the letter will include whether or not the applicant was moved to competitive consideration. It will also include a document with reviewers' aggregate information and feedback. After the May/June formula meeting, the letter will include whether or not the application was approved for funding, the total MSY, and total AC HQ award amount. These letters may also include clarifications and next steps for applicants.

**Applicant self-removal:** If an applicant organization decides to remove their application from further consideration at any point in the process, SI will document that decision and save it in the organization's monitoring folder or in that year's GARP folder. Documentation may include an email from the organization or an official letter from SI to the organization following an in person/phone conversation.

### ***Renewal Process for Indiana's AmeriCorps State Continuing Formula Sub-grantees.***

1. Serve Indiana will release a renewal request process for Continuing Formula sub-grantees.
2. Continuing Formula Requests will be reviewed by Serve Indiana staff and the Commission's Program Committee (or similar structure), taking into consideration past performance.
3. Recommendations will be presented to the Commission at the meeting following the AC HQ competitive decisions (May/June).
4. The Commission may decide to renew or to not renew the Sub-grantee, based on formal and informal criteria established by the Commission for the given year.
5. If the Commission decides not to renew the Sub-grantee, the funds that were set-aside for the Sub-grantee may be added to the pool of available Formula funds.

### ***Renewal Process for Indiana's AmeriCorps State Continuing Competitive Sub-grantee:***

1. Serve Indiana will issue the renewal request process for Continuing Competitive Sub-grantees, as directed by the Corporation.
2. Continuing Competitive Requests will be reviewed by Serve Indiana staff and the Commission's Program Committee (or similar structure).
3. Recommendations will be presented to the Commission. For information on presentation materials provided for each applicant, see the below Commission Meeting Presentation section. The Commission may select one of the following recommendations/decisions relative to the proposals
  - a. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at the amount requested, with no changes.
  - b. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at the amount requested, with contingencies.
  - c. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at less than requested, with contingencies.
  - d. Move proposal to formula consideration, with contingencies.
  - e. Move proposal to formula consideration, with no changes.
  - f. Do not fund the proposal.
4. Following the Commission meeting, applicants will be notified of the Commission Competitive decision within 3 business days of the meeting. For information on what is included in such a notification, see the award letter section.
5. Once applications are resubmitted, Serve Indiana staff will review and submit the approved competitive applications to AC HQ by their deadline and move the remaining formula considered applications to the proper prime in eGrants.
6. Once the Commission receives notice of competitive funding decisions from the Corporation, the Commission will finalize funding awards relative to Indiana's available AmeriCorps State Formula funding. Proposals declined by the Corporation for Competitive funding may be eligible for formula funding consideration. Applicants will be notified in writing within three business days of AC HQ funding decisions and next steps.
7. Following the AC HQ competitive decision, the Commission will be presented with the full formula slate for final formula decisions. The Commission may select one of the following recommendations/decisions relative to the proposals:
  - a. Fund the proposal at the amount requested, with no changes.
  - b. Fund the proposal at the amount requested, with contingencies.
  - c. Fund the proposal at less than requested, with contingencies.
  - d. Do not fund the proposal.

- e. Fund the proposal at the amount requested with contingencies, including that applicant institutes a 3-month development period followed by 9 months operating in Year 1 (new applicants; formula funding only).
  - f. Fund the proposal at less than requested with contingencies, including that applicant institutes a 3-month development period followed by 9 months operating in Year 1 (new applicants; formula funding only).
  - g. Fund as a planning grant
8. Applicants will be notified in writing within 3 business days of Commission formula funding decisions and next steps. Following any clarification process, Serve Indiana staff will send on the formula approved applicants to AC HQ for final review.
9. Following the AC HQ review, Serve Indiana staff will communicate the final approval from AC HQ via email once received.

### ***Application Process for New and Re-competing AmeriCorps State Applicants:\*\****

1. Serve Indiana will issue a full application Request for Proposals for AmeriCorps State Competitive funds and available AmeriCorps State Formula funds, as directed by the Corporation.
2. Application Instructions will be distributed to all applicants specific to the type of grant they are applying for, New/Re-compete, Continuation, and/or Planning. Such instructions will include a final deadline and may include a notice of intent to apply deadline as well.
3. All New and Re-compete applications, regardless of whether they are competing for competitive or formula funding, are required to submit in the fall and will be subject to the following Review Process:
  - a. Upon receipt, Serve Indiana staff will review proposals for submission accuracy and compliance. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.
  - b. Serve Indiana will utilize a peer review process to evaluate AmeriCorps proposals. Peer review teams may be comprised of three to five grant readers who evaluate and score each New and Re-compete proposal. All reviewers will be required to sign conflict of interest forms to ensure unbiased evaluation of proposals. Once proposals have been read and scored, the peer review committee will convene to discuss results, rank proposals, and to formalize recommendations to the Commission.
  - c. Serve Indiana staff will conduct a review of all AmeriCorps proposals. Staff may analyze the results of the peer review and further scrutinize the strengths and weaknesses of all proposals, taking into consideration the past performance of re-competing applicants.
  - d. The proposals for new and re-competing grants may be ranked and/or evaluated based on score and/or other formal and informal criteria as determined by the Commission.
4. Recommendations will be presented to the Commission. For information on presentation materials provided for each applicant, see the below Commission Meeting Presentation section. The Commission may select one of the following recommendations/decisions relative to the proposals
  - a. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at the amount requested, with no changes.
  - b. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at the amount requested, with contingencies.
  - c. Submit proposal to competitive consideration at less than requested, with contingencies.
  - d. Move proposal to formula consideration, with contingencies.
  - e. Move proposal to formula consideration, with no changes.
  - f. Do not fund the proposal.

5. Following the Commission meeting, applications will be notified of the Commission Competitive decision within 3 business days of the meeting. For information on what is included in such a notification, see the award letter section.
6. Once applications are resubmitted, Serve Indiana staff will review and submit the approved Competitive applications to AC HQ by their deadline and move the remaining formula considered applications to the proper prime in eGrants.
7. Once the Commission receives notice of competitive funding decisions from the Corporation, the Commission will finalize funding awards relative to Indiana's available AmeriCorps State formula funding. Proposals declined by the Corporation for Competitive funding may be eligible for formula funding consideration. Applicants will be notified in writing within three business days of AC HQ funding decisions and next steps.
8. Following the AC HQ competitive decision, the Commission will be presented with the full formula slate for final formula decisions. The Commission may select one of the following recommendations/decisions relative to the proposals:
  - a. Fund the proposal at the amount requested, with no changes.
  - b. Fund the proposal at the amount requested, with contingencies.
  - c. Fund the proposal at less than requested, with contingencies.
  - d. Do not fund the proposal.
  - e. Fund the proposal at the amount requested with contingencies, including that applicant institute a 3-month development period followed by 9 months operating in Year 1 (new applicants; formula funding only).
  - f. Fund the proposal at less than requested with contingencies, including that applicant institute a 3-month development period followed by 9 months operating in Year 1 (new applicants; formula funding only).
  - g. Fund as a planning grant.
9. New Applicants are not eligible to receive a recommendation/decision of "Fund the proposal at the amount requested, with no changes," until a Pre-Award Risk Assessment has been conducted and it is determined that the applicant is capable of successfully managing an AmeriCorps grant. See PARA section for additional information.
10. Applicants will be notified in writing within three business days of final funding decisions. For information on what is included in such a notification, see the award letter section.

***\*\*It should be noted that the above information also applies to current planning grants applying for operational funding as well.***

***Pre-award risk assessments:*** Prior to the December commission meeting, Serve Indiana staff will conduct a pre-award risk assessment (PARA) on all new applicant organizations (both planning and program). This will include a document review and in-person or virtual interview with necessary staff (and a board member as available). Items reviewed may include fiscal management, organizational policies/procedures, program development, human resources and use of federal funds. The Commission will use the same list of questions and checklists for all applicant organizations. SI staff will present to the Commission with the results at the December meeting. A full report with the results and additional detail will be issued to the applicant organizations upon completion. Serve Indiana will conduct a pre-award risk assessment regarding financial and organizational capacity to administer federal grants with each new AmeriCorps State applicant. Applicants may be asked to submit the most recent audit if available, as part of the assessment.

PARA results are either pass, pass with contingencies, or do not pass. Additionally, risk factors will be identified when the applicant receives their PARA results. Applicants must provide a report on actions taken to address any risk factors identified prior to funding. The PARA summary of results will be verified and approved by the Executive Director of Serve Indiana. If the pre-award risk assessment is pass or pass with contingencies, the applicant's proposal will remain in the pool of proposals. If the organization does not pass the PARA, the SI staff will not recommend them for funding to the Commission. The Commission may decide from there on whether or not to fund the application.

***Special Note about Continuing Formula Sub-grantees:***

1. Continuing Formula Sub-grantees are considered for competitive funds during their re-compete process (year 3 of funding).
2. If a formula funded sub-grantee would like to be considered sooner (i.e., year 1 or 2), they must submit a full, updated application with a major change in program model, in the fall submission process.

***Applicant Formula Self-Selection:***

During the submission process, a new or currently funded sub-grantee may self-select for formula consideration only. This must be communicated (and acknowledged) to SI staff in writing before the December Commission meeting. SI staff has the authority to move an applicant to stay in formula if the application pool if the application does not meet all AC HQ competitive standards.

***Additional Formula Funds:***

In the instance Serve Indiana has additional formula funds still available to award after the Commission goes through the funding requests at the spring meeting, the Commission may offer additional funds (MSY) to high performing programs. The programs will be selected based on their past and current performance and the Commission will discuss this at the spring meeting. The Commission will also allow the staff to work with such programs on the amount of increase available to each program. Staff will document the results of this process in the grant application review process folder.

***Appeals Process:***

The Commission offers an appeal process for AmeriCorps grant applicants whose request for funding has been denied or reduced. This process offers dissatisfied grant applicants an avenue to appeal an award decision and assures that the Commission peer review process and subsequent grant award decisions are accurate, fair, and reasonable. Such a process encourages confidence in the Commission grant process.

The Commission strives to assure that all grant awards fully reflect sound judgment and compliance with all RFP terms and conditions and all appropriate AmeriCorps federal, state and Commission regulations.

Therefore, grant applicants may appeal an award decision based on substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination or conflicts of interest, and/or non-compliance with procedures described in the RFP document, such as significant computational errors or contextual omissions.

If a grant applicant has substantive objections to the results of the peer review process and wishes to appeal the decision made by the Commission, the applicant may request reconsideration. A request for reconsideration must be made by the applicant in writing within 10 business days of the date of the notice of the Commission funding decision via a letter of appeal submitted to the State Service Director of Serve Indiana.

The letter must:

1. Describe the factor(s) or fact(s) concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest or non-compliance that cause the applicant to conclude that the proposal should have been approved.
2. Outline the specific area(s) in the proposal that the applicant believes significantly addresses the RFP requirements.
3. Identify specific information in the proposal that the applicant believes the Commission overlooked or misinterpreted.

Serve Indiana State Service Director and/or other designated staff will review the appeal request within five (5) business days of its receipt to ensure that it is in compliance with this policy and merits further review by the Commission. If the State Service Director or designee determines the appeal letter substantiates material issues concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest or non-compliance with procedures set forth in the RFP, the Executive Director and the Commission Chair will re-review the proposal and submit the request to the Commission for a vote.

Applicants will be notified in writing within three (3) business days of final funding decisions. AmeriCorps Headquarters has final approval rights for all grant proposals.

## STATE AGREEMENT/CONTRACT PROCESS

Following the award process, all funded programs must go through the State of Indiana contracts process. This process includes Serve Indiana and DWD staff. When Serve Indiana receives the final notice of grant award (NGA) from AC HQ, the staff communicate with the DWD contracts team. At this point, the process is taken over by the contracts team. That team drafts the contract using the approved application/budget from eGrants and sends it on to programs for signature. Once signed by the program and all necessary state officials, the contract becomes an "Executed Agreement". This process can take around 45 business days from the time the NGA start date until the program receives the final agreement. The Executed Agreement is sent on to the program and Serve Indiana. DWD staff then send the necessary Serve Indiana staff member the "Purchase Order" simultaneously. The Purchase Order is the number used on the request for funds form that ties to the Agreement. The Purchase Order is then sent on to the program and signals the program can begin drawing funds on their contract. Further information about that number can be found in the reimbursement section of this handbook.

The State of Indiana Executed Agreement (grant agreement) is a legally binding contract that establishes a program's relationship with Serve Indiana/DWD. A new grant agreement is signed each year, after a program has been approved for new, re-compete or continued AC HQ funding. It is an essential document for an AmeriCorps program. Program Directors and key staff persons should become familiar with the full grant agreement. The agreement is signed between the funded organization/program and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) on behalf of Serve Indiana. The deliverables listed in the grant agreement *are not* intended to be an exhaustive list of all DWD, Serve Indiana and AC HQ requirements. As stated in the grant agreement, there are referenced laws, regulations, provisions, and documents that govern the program. There may be additional requirements set forth by Serve Indiana or AC HQ at any time during the program year. Program Directors are responsible for meeting all requirements.

Additionally, a program should also keep in mind that as a sub-grantee of Serve Indiana, the program is required to adhere to all requests for public records in accordance with [Indiana's Access to Public Records Act](#).

### SAM.gov Registration & FSRS Reporting

All applicants must register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. See the SAM Quick Guide for Grantees. SAM registration must be renewed annually. AmeriCorps suggests that applicants finalize a new registration or renew an existing one at least three weeks before the application deadline, to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. Applicants must use their SAM registered legal name and physical address on all grant applications to AmeriCorps. The legal applicant's name and physical address in eGrants must match exactly the applicant's SAM-registered information. AmeriCorps will not make awards to entities that do not have a valid SAM registration and Unique Entity Identifier. If an applicant has not fully complied with these requirements by the time AmeriCorps is ready to make a federal award, AmeriCorps may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. Applications must include an Employer Identification Number. Applications must include a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is generated as part of the SAM registration process.

Serve Indiana is required to report at Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) on all subawards over \$30,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for the recipient organization and its subrecipients. Recipients and subrecipients must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 CFR Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply. This process is completed once the NOGA has been sent by AmeriCorps by the Director of Grants and/or Operations Manager.

### PROGRAM AMENDMENTS

Program amendments are defined as mid-year program changes (direct or indirect) that alter the scope or objective of the program, impact your program's performance measures, involve a turnover or extended absence or time reduction ([45 CFR§2543.25](#)) in a management/supervisory staff position, or propose any other material changes to the original executed grant agreement. These changes must be reported to the Serve Indiana Director of Grants in writing.

**Any program considering making changes that will impact their grant approved performance measures should consult with the Serve Indiana Director of Grants well in advance. Any changes to the program scope, objective or performance measures must be approved. Programs should not consider any request granted until written notification is provided to them from the Director of Grants. On the AmeriCorps calendar, Serve Indiana communicates the final deadline for program amendments.**

### Program Document & File/Report Management

The Commission values strong program management and believes program staff know their communities and organizations best. As such, the Commission does have a list of documents that are required for programs and a list of suggested documents, but it does not have a required template for most items.

Compliance is ensured through continued training/technical assistance, sample templates, mentor programs, and monitoring. It is the responsibility of the program to take those offerings and ensure they are compliant with their own program needs, organization policies and procedures, the AC HQ Terms and Conditions, federal rules/regulations, and Serve Indiana requirements. When the Commission reviews such documents,



as long as they are compliant in these ways, the Commission deems them appropriate.

The Commission has listed below the required and suggested program file/policies. These items are communicated in program trainings, the Program Handbook, and through monitoring. Annually, the Commission conducts an orientation for all new/existing programs. At that training, programs are trained on a variety of topics including, but not limited to, the specific items needed for member's files, required program policies and procedures, sample templates, successful program examples, and common audit/monitoring findings. For more information on program trainings, the program training section of this handbook should be reviewed. Throughout the year, additional training/technical assistance is provided around these items through conference calls and one-on-one assistance.

### Required Program Files/Documents/Policies/Procedures:

**Service Site MOU/Agreements:** If a program has a service site that is outside of their organization, Serve Indiana requires a service site MOU/agreement with each site with the below information.

- Number of members
- Hours for each term of service for the members located at the site
- Intended program activities, outputs, and outcomes at service site
- All roles & responsibilities of the Program (legal applicant) and service site including but not limited to recruitment, member development, member supervision, member training & orientation, site supervisor training & orientation, reporting & communication, program evaluation, performance measurement, in-kind and/or cash support (if applicable) and consequences for non-compliance.
- AmeriCorps rules, provisions, and guidelines
- Prohibited activities
- Other program-specific requirements
- Host site supervisor and/or representative signature and date
- Authorized program representative signature and date

**AmeriCorps Program Policies/Procedures:** Serve Indiana requires all programs to have policies and/or procedures around the following items. A program may use their established organizational policies, but it is highly encouraged that programs create AmeriCorps specific policies/procedures or add AmeriCorps specific information to existing policies/procedures.

- **Training Policy:** *Specific required trainings and documentation process is located in the AmeriCorps training section of this handbook.*
- **Member timesheet policy**
- **Member performance evaluation/review policy**
- **Site evaluation/review policy**
- **Member file & documentation policy/process:** *All programs are required to have the below items, at a minimum, in each member's file. The Commission encourages programs to include in their policy information on when the program will collect required member documents and how they are retained. Programs may save such items electronically, but their process should be noted in their written policy/procedure. Serve Indiana provides a file checklist template in the AmeriCorps Handbook.*
  - Member application and enrollment forms (verification in eGrants portal is appropriate)
  - Member documentation of citizenship/naturalization/resident alien status & verification by program
  - Proof of Age and program verification
  - GED and other educational requirements (verification in portal is appropriate)
  - Documentation of discipline, suspension, early exit, compelling personal circumstance (as applicable)

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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- W-2, W-4, WH-4 tax form
- Loan forbearance information (as applicable)
- Publicity/photo release
- Acceptance into program based on results of NSCHC
- Mid-term performance evaluation/review (half time & full time required)
- End of term performance evaluation/review (all members, regardless of exit type)
- Health insurance enrollment or waiver (documentation of insurance for FT required if waived program insurance)
- Child care benefit eligibility & documentation waiver
- Signed member contract
- **Criminal history check policy & documentation process**
- **Service site selection policy/process:** *The sub-grantee must establish written service site selection criteria based on, at a minimum the following information. The Commission provides additional assistance around service site selection and management is available in the AmeriCorps Handbook.*
  - Grant requirements
  - Adequate service site capacity
  - An alignment between the host organization's mission and the identified community need
  - Past performance (if applicable)
  - Adequate member supervision and ability to comply with all AmeriCorps requirements.
- **Grievance policy/procedure:** *Each program is required to use one of the grievance policy forms provided by Serve Indiana in member contracts, service site agreements, and all other MOU's or contracts utilized for the AmeriCorps program. Additionally, the program must provide the grievance procedure to other interested parties/individuals and the grievance must be listed publicly by all programs (i.e., on the program's AmeriCorps webpage). The wording cannot be altered without prior written approval from Serve Indiana. Each program is also responsible for developing a procedure for handling grievances that ensures the program meets the basic requirements. Specific elements that need to be incorporated into your procedure are dictated by the grant agreement, AC HQ regulations, and provisions. The grievance policy is included in the appendix of the AmeriCorps Handbook.*

**Member Contract/Service Agreement:** The member contract serves as a legally enforceable agreement between the sub-grantee organization and the person with whom the program has offered the AmeriCorps service position, and must be signed and dated by both the member and Program Director no later than their first day of service. The minimum requirements for the member contract are contained in the AC HQ Terms and Conditions and an example member contract is available in the appendix of this Handbook. Programs are responsible for finalizing the contents of this contract and obtaining the necessary signatures prior to the member's start of service. Programs are able to tailor the contract to suit the specific needs of your program, while ensuring that applicable requirements from your grant agreement, grant provisions, and federal law are met. The following items are required at a minimum in all AmeriCorps contracts for Serve Indiana programs.

- Member name
- Member position description
- Member start and end date
- Minimum number of service hours required
- Type of service slot
- Education award total
- Living allowance total, distribution amount, and first payment date
- Drug-free workplace act (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.)
- Prohibited activities (listed in 45 C.F.R. 2520.65)

- Standards of conduct
- Disciplinary Processes
- Suspension and termination
- Release for cause rules
- Non-discrimination statement
- Grievance Procedure (must be one of the two required grievance procedures provided by Serve Indiana)
- Civil rights requirements, complaint procedures, and rights of beneficiaries
- Signature and date for member, site supervisors (if applicable), and program director

**Recruitment Materials & Program Websites:** A Commission program is responsible for proactively recruiting qualified individuals who are interested in contributing their knowledge, experience, skills and service to the program's target community. AmeriCorps State programs should use the AmeriCorps Indiana logo on all marketing and branding materials. Upon request, AC HQ will produce an AmeriCorps logo specific to a particular program that can be used for gear, publications, web sites, etc. All recruitment material must include civil rights requirements and nondiscrimination requirements. Sample wording is available through the AC HQ Terms and Conditions.

The organization that is the legal applicant on the grant should have a page on their website specific to the AmeriCorps State program. The tab or link to the program's web page should have the AmeriCorps Indiana logo next to your program link or include a statement that identifies it as an AmeriCorps State program. The website should include the approved grievance procedure for all the public to review.

Program web pages should display several logos and note the program is possible through funding from AC HQ and Serve Indiana. The website should display the AmeriCorps Indiana logo as a link to AmeriCorps.gov. Likewise, program web pages should also contain an AC HQ logo and a link to their homepage at [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov). Lastly, the webpage should include the Serve Indiana logo with a link to the Serve Indiana website. Additional information about program recruitment and marketing is made available by the Commission through this Handbook and training/technical assistance.

### Suggested Program Files/Documents/Policies/Procedures:

**Member handbook:** This is considered a best practice for programs to provide to members. It should include all AmeriCorps specific rules/regulations, policies/procedures, and any important information to ensure success of the member during their term of service. If a program does not have an official member handbook, said policies/procedures should be available at the organization for member review and listed in the member contract as appropriate. Serve Indiana does not have a required template for a member handbook but can provide examples from existing AmeriCorps programs.

**Member enrollment/exit policy/procedure:** The Commission strongly encourages programs to have a member enrollment/exit policy/procedure to ensure proper steps are taken to successfully enroll/exit a member. Members must be enrolled in eGrants no later than 5 calendar days after their start of service and exited no later than 30 days after their end of service. In addition, programs must enroll/exit members in the OnCorps system. Prior to an enrollment, programs must ensure proper member completion of National Service Criminal History Checks and document collection. Prior to an exit, there may be required communication with Serve Indiana depending on the type of exit. Serve Indiana includes additional information on enrollment/exit of members in the discipline section of this handbook and within the AmeriCorps Directors Handbook.

### Member Position Descriptions

Creating a written service position description sets the foundation for the recruitment process by outlining specific member functions and activities. Also, this description can help identify individuals that may be a good match for a program's service opportunity based on education, life experience, attitude, temperament, potential, and motivation.

The way service position descriptions are presented can strongly impact how a program is perceived – especially by those who have no prior knowledge of your organization or AmeriCorps. The recruitment process from an applicant's perspective generally begins when one views a service position description in an advertisement. A prospective applicant should be able to get a clear sense of a program's expectations and be able to assess if the role suits their goals and interests. Once a service position description is created, it can be easily added to flyers, brochures, newsletters, group/mass emails, posters, websites and a wide variety of other mediums where the program's target applicants are likely to take note of this information.

#### ***Program Requirements:***

Programs are required to write and maintain position descriptions for each member position. Position descriptions may be the same for several members if their positions are the same. Service sites may write their own position descriptions, but Serve Indiana highly recommends that programs are involved in the review/approval process. This ensures all required language, rules/regulations, and acknowledgements are included.

Serve Indiana and AC HQ also require that programs use the my.AmeriCorps system to create and post their position descriptions. This system is reviewed by AC HQ for accuracy and is a way to save position descriptions.

Finally, Programs must use the approved position description in their member contract, and it is recommended they keep a separate, full copy, in the members' files.

#### **Programs should ensure the position description:**

- Does not include anything that would violate the prohibited activities, non-duplication, and non-displacement requirements.
- Follows the approved grant application narrative and performance measures.
- Does not include phrases such as "other duties as assigned" and "etc."
- Is descriptive and clear about the duties.
- Carries the correct AmeriCorps lingo (it is not a "job description" and they are not "potential employees," it is a "position description" and they are "potential members").
- Follows the AC HQ provisions and Serve Indiana handbook.

#### **At a minimum, Serve Indiana requires that all position descriptions include the following information:**

- An accurate service position title.
- A description of your organization's mission and work.
- A brief summary of the service opportunity and what your program is looking for in a member.
- A list of duties and/or responsibilities that clearly distinguishes between the essential functions and marginal functions. (Descending order from most to least

important is recommended.)

- A list of required and preferred skills.
- A list of required and preferred qualifications.
- A description of the benefits of serving as an AmeriCorps member.
- A description of the unique benefits and opportunities your program and/or service site provides.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Council language. For example: At Program X we do not discriminate against members on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, union affiliation, etc.
- The number of hours and the duration of available service terms.
- Contact information for Program Director or hiring manager.
- Text stating that reasonable accommodations for the selection process and during service are available upon request. Include contact information for the person who handles accommodation requests and the deadline for such requests.

**New Programs:** Serve Indiana requires all new programs (in their first year) to submit all of their proposed position descriptions to Serve Indiana staff by the program orientation at the latest. Descriptions are submitted via email and reviewed by Serve Indiana staff prior to the beginning of the program year. First year programs who would like to begin recruitment earlier, must submit their position descriptions to Serve Indiana prior to starting that process. Serve Indiana will review and approve position descriptions in a timely manner.

**Changing/Updating Position Descriptions:** If a program would like to change or update their position descriptions, they must be approved by Serve Indiana first. In those instances, programs should submit the following information to their Serve Indiana contact.

1. Copy of previous positions descriptions
2. Copy of proposed new/updated description
3. Answers to the following questions:
  - a. Why are these changes being made?
  - b. How does this align with your performance measures?
  - c. How does this align with your approved grant narrative?
  - d. How many members will use this description?
4. Any additional information to showcase the changes needed.

Serve Indiana staff will take 3 business days to review the updates position descriptions and communicate approval or next steps to the program. Programs should not move forward with new or updated positions until descriptions have been approved by Serve Indiana.

**Other Reviews:** Serve Indiana will also review position descriptions at in person monitoring visits and may request a program's position description anytime throughout the year. AC HQ may also request the written position description at any point during the program year as well.

### Signatory Authority

Serve Indiana requires all programs to submit a signatory authority form annually. Serve Indiana communicates due dates for this form on the annual calendar and sends out a reminder with the template prior to that due date.

Programs who have no changes in their signatory authority may note this when the request for submission is sent out. This form denotes which individuals at the organization have authority to sign which documents for the program and fiscal management. It is important for programs to understand this authority and update Serve Indiana if staff responsibilities change throughout the year.

#### **A. Definitions:**

Authorized signatory: denotes an individual or individuals designated by the board of directors to execute agreements, contracts, and other AmeriCorps State related documentation.

Board of directors: refers to a legally organized body with oversight of a sub-grantee's fiscal and organizational responsibilities.

Sub-grantee: means the host organization with legal and fiscal responsibilities for an AmeriCorps State formula or competitive program and its members.

Service Site: means the partner organization hosting AmeriCorps members. A partner organization must have legal status as a state or local government, an Indian Tribe, a non-profit organization (religious organizations are permissible), or an educational institution and provide one or more types of eligible programs as defined in C.F.R. §2522.110.

#### **B. Authorized Signatory:**

- (1) It shall be the responsibility of the sub-grantee organization to determine which individual or individuals may execute one or more of the following AmeriCorps State documents:
  - a. State grant agreement
  - b. Member contracts
  - c. Member-related forms
  - d. Program application
  - e. Program management forms
  - f. Quarterly Progress Reports
  - g. Financial Status Reports (FSR)
  - h. Grant closeout package
  - i. Request for reimbursement
  - j. Service site agreement(s)
  - k. Correspondence
  - l. Other requests or documentation
- (2) The sub-grantee organization shall complete the Sub-grantee Signatory Authority Form at the commencement of each program year.
- (3) It shall be the responsibility of the sub-grantee organization to revise the above-referenced form and return it to Serve Indiana if a change or changes occur on the original or revised form filed with Serve

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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Indiana.

- (4) The sub-grantee organization shall authorize one (1) primary and a minimum of one (1), but not more than two (2), secondary signatories

# Public Relations

### CREATING A PROGRAM IMAGE

Establishing a strong program identity is extremely important to the sustainability and growth of a program. The purpose of public relations is building and promoting your program's image. Through media attention and social networking, you can increase awareness of and generate support for your program within the community.

### PROGRAM IDENTITY

Promoting a program creates awareness of the program's involvement in the community. Programs belong to a national network which is an essential piece of a program's public relations plan. The Corporation for National and Community Service continues to provide an increasing number of resources for program promotion. Serve Indiana provides programs support for promotion and connectivity. Programs must follow the guidelines documented in the grant agreement. All promotions and publications must use the AmeriCorps Indiana logo or the AmeriCorps program's logo and contain information as outlined in the grant agreement.

Program promotion best practices include:

- Program Directors (and other AmeriCorps program management staff) to have business cards with the AmeriCorps Indiana logo;
- Program Directors (and other AmeriCorps program management staff) to use an e-mail signature indicating that they are the Program Director of (Program Name), an AmeriCorps program.

Programs are, at a minimum, required to have a:

- A web page with recruitment information as well as the Serve Indiana logo and AC HQ logo and acknowledging funding as noted below.

### MEMBER GEAR

AC HQ provides support for various member items known as "gear". Serve Indiana does not have a requirement for how often members are in gear but encourages that all members and supervisors have at least an AmeriCorps pin to brand themselves. Regulations on the amount of gear that can be purchased are noted in the applications instructions updated annually each fall and available on Serve Indiana's website. Programs can purchase AmeriCorps specific gear for members from the AC HQ sponsored vendor at <http://www.nationalservicegear.org/>. Although these items only have the national AmeriCorps logo, programs may also produce their own gear with their program name and the AmeriCorps Indiana logo on these items.

### LOGOS

AmeriCorps State programs should use the AmeriCorps Indiana logo on all marketing and branding materials. Upon request, AC HQ will produce an AmeriCorps logo specific to a particular program that can be used for gear, publications, web sites, etc. To make a request, email [logos@cns.gov](mailto:logos@cns.gov).



### PROGRAM WEB PAGE

The organization that is the legal applicant on the grant should have a page on their website specific to your AmeriCorps State program. The tab or link to your program's web page should have the AmeriCorps Indiana logo next to your program link or include a statement that identifies it as an AmeriCorps State program.

Program web pages should display several logos and note the program is possible through funding from AC HQ and Serve Indiana. The website should display the AmeriCorps Indiana logo as a link to AmeriCorps.gov. Likewise, program web pages should also contain an AC HQ logo and a link to their homepage at [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov). Lastly, the webpage should include the Serve Indiana logo with a link to the Serve Indiana website.

An AmeriCorps program web page should also contain information on the program's mission, current information about the program, and recruitment status. It should have as much information as possible to promote the program, including links to social media if available. It is also helpful to think about keywords for search engine optimization. If someone is interested in AmeriCorps programs in Indiana, a web search using keywords should display a program at the top of the search list. For more information about search engine optimization, [see this guide](#).

### MEDIA

The story that a program director, service site or member tells is vital to the program's reputation. When speaking or writing, one should always use the phrases, "an AmeriCorps program" or "a member of the AmeriCorps National Service Network." Additionally, marketing should incorporate appropriate AmeriCorps lingo to accurately tell the story of national service.

To get started, here is a list of marketing best practices:

- *Keep and share a collection of stories and pictures.* Good stories resonate with people, and can be used in brochures, newsletters, and newspaper articles. Reporters want facts and stories.
- *Have a favorite story for speaking engagements.* It doesn't matter how old it is, if it has a message that captures what your experience with the program is about, then use it.
- *Think beyond traditional media sources* when distributing press releases. Send releases to your community newspapers, donors, volunteers, board members, parents and anyone who could potentially share with audiences you won't normally reach.
- *Know who your elected officials are,* from your city-county council persons, and school board reps, to your state and federal representatives. Elected officials consistently look for photo opportunities. Include them in your email marketing list so they get current information.
- *When writing a press release, keep all the pertinent information in the first paragraph.* Be sure to answer the question, "Why should I care about this," and include "who, what, when, and where." Most individuals reading press releases will only read the title and first paragraph. If it doesn't grab their attention, it's often tossed.
- *Market every event.* If you can answer the question, "why should people care about what we are doing?" then let people know.

- *Include Serve Indiana/Corporation for National and Community Service support on your website and marketing materials.*

Media attention and social networking are important tools to increase understanding and build support for a program within the community. Social networking is a valuable tool for connecting to the community and getting a message out to a larger audience. Social media is being used by government and nonprofits to recruit, train, fundraise, inform and create awareness of programs and services. Through online newsletters and blogs, programs can document and tell their success stories, allowing members and the community to feel connected to the program. Press releases are an effective way to inform the community and potential funders of a program's achievements, how a program is making a difference in the community, the program's awards/recognitions, and events. An example can be found in the appendix.

### LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

AmeriCorps members must abide by the conditions outlined in the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) regarding media interviews. At the beginning of the program year, each child being served, AmeriCorps member, and volunteer should have a signed media release form granting your program the right to use the individual's name and image in media and publications.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [AC HQ Branding and Messaging Guidance](#)
- [AC Marketing Materials, Fact Sheets and Social Media Guide](#)
- [Building Communications Capacity](#)

## Member Recruitment

Serve Indiana believes that recruitment is key to a program's success. Serve Indiana is certain strong recruitment practices lead to strong retention rates in the program year. Serve Indiana values programs that are organized and proactive in their recruitment approach. Serve Indiana believes that if the right members are selected, they will successfully complete their terms and expand the program's reach.

An AmeriCorps State program is responsible for proactively recruiting qualified individuals who are interested in contributing their knowledge, experience, skills and service to the program's target community.

Serve Indiana does not recruit AmeriCorps members in the programs funded by the Commission. The only involvement they may have is opening a My.AmeriCorps position to a sub-applicant who has received their award letter but does not yet have access to that system. Serve Indiana provides training/technical assistance to programs around recruitment at least once annually. Programs may request additional TA from Serve Indiana staff if needed and available. For additional information on Serve Indiana's training and technical assistance for programs, please review that section of the handbook.

For more information on Member Recruitment, see the [AmeriCorps Member Recruitment Resource Guide](#).

## Member Qualifications Requirements

Serve Indiana requires programs to, at a minimum, follow the AC HQ required member qualifications. A Member is an individual that has been selected by a grantee or sub-grantee to serve in an approved national service position. It is the responsibility of the program to ensure their members meet these requirements. For more information about documenting these qualifications, see the Program Document and File

Management section of this handbook.

The Serve Indiana/AC HQ basic member qualifications are as followed,

- 1) Must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States;
- 2) Must be at least 17 years of age at the commencement of service (turning 18 before completion of service), unless the member is out of school and enrolled in a full-time, year-round youth corps or full-time summer program as defined in the Act (42 U.S.C. §12572 (a)(3)(B)(x)), in which case he or she must be between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, and
- 3) Must have received a high school diploma or its equivalent, agree to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent (unless this requirement is waived based on an individual education assessment conducted by the program), and who did not drop out of an elementary or secondary school to enroll in the program, or is enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 1091 of title 20.

### Use of My AmeriCorps

The [My AmeriCorps Portal](#) is an online member management system supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Among many functions, this resource gives AmeriCorps programs the opportunity to recruit nationally, free of charge. Serve Indiana and AC HQ require the use of the My AmeriCorps system as a part of a program's recruitment strategy. Specifically all AmeriCorps programs must post their position descriptions on My.AmeriCorps. Since My.AmeriCorps is a component of eGrants, all new AmeriCorps programs are required to first register with eGrants.

My AmeriCorps' recruitment features include the ability to:

- Create, post, and edit a service opportunity
- Search for applicants based on specific programmatic needs
- View applications
- Approve or reject an application
- Select applicants
- Contact applicants

My AmeriCorps technical assistance: <https://americorps.gov/contact>

### Recruitment Policy, Plan, and Documentation

Programs are required to establish a written recruitment policy, plan, and a documented way of tracking recruitment. The Commission requires all programs to create recruitment and program materials that communicate program inclusion. At a minimum, programs must have the following items:

1. A documented recruitment plan that encourages diversity and inclusion.
2. Documentation of the implementation of this plan (i.e., an excel spreadsheet with recruitment efforts and tracking).
3. Recruitment materials with the following required items:
  - a. The AmeriCorps logo;
  - b. Acknowledgement of support from AC HQ and Serve Indiana
  - c. Notification to members; civil rights requirements; information to community beneficiaries, applicants, program staff, and the public that operates its program subject to the non-discrimination requirements & statutes.

- i. *Sample language: This program is available to all, without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, political affiliation, or, in most instances, religion. It is also unlawful to retaliate against any person who, or organization that, files a complaint about such discrimination. In addition to filing a complaint with local and state agencies that are responsible for resolving discrimination complaints, you may bring a complaint to the attention of the Corporation for National and Community Service. If you believe that you or others have been discriminated against, or if you want more information, contact: (Name, address, phone number – both voice and TTY, and preferably toll free – FAX number and email address of the grantee) or Office of Civil Right and Inclusiveness, Corporation for National and Community Service, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20525, (800) 833-3722 (TTY and reasonable accommodation line),(202) 565-3465 (FAX); eo@cns.gov (email)).*
- d. Information on civil rights requirements, handbooks, manuals, pamphlets, and posts in prominent locations, as appropriate.

In areas where the program serves mostly non-English speakers, the Program must provide the information in the prevailing language. Program are encouraged to also include the following items in their recruitment practices:

1. Involvement of all necessary staff in the recruitment process (i.e., human resources staff)
2. Involvement of potential service sites in process
3. Training for necessary staff around AmeriCorps and specific recruitment requirements
4. Use of the my.AmeriCorps system for recruitment
5. Use of templates and approved questions for service sites for all positions

*Programs should be mindful of other required program policies that correspond with member recruitment including, but not limited to, the member file policy and national service criminal history check policy. These policy requirements are documented in the Program Document and File Management section and the Criminal History Check sections of this handbook.*

## Inclusion, Non-Discrimination, & Reasonable Accommodations

Serve Indiana encourages individuals of all abilities and backgrounds to participate in Indiana's National Service programs, and any program receiving federal funds is required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To be in compliance with federal law, all AmeriCorps programs must prohibit any form of discrimination against persons with disabilities in recruitment and service. A qualified individual with a disability must not, solely due to his/her disability, be excluded from, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination by the services, programming, or activities of an AC HQ program.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act defines a person with a disability as an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. "Major life activities" refers to anything a person without a disability can do with little or no difficulty. Major life activities include, but are not limited to caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, sitting, standing, lifting, reaching, sleeping and mental/emotional processes such as thinking, concentrating and interacting with others. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) has added the operation of major bodily functions such as the immune system, normal cell growth and the endocrine system as major life activities that are subject to impairment and legally covered under the definition of disability.

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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Along with these federal requirements, Serve Indiana promotes programs that are inclusive. Inclusion is promoting diversity and building community. Inclusion is also about all persons abilities and how to share them. Promoting inclusion in service means respecting and treating every person as an individual. Inclusion is an essential element of Indiana AmeriCorps success. National Service is for everyone because everyone has the ability to serve. Programs should be intentional about inclusion when developing recruitment strategies, creating program activities and structure, and managing member experiences.

The Commission also requires AmeriCorps State programs to ensure reasonable accommodations are available to recruits and members. A reasonable accommodation is any adjustment or modification in a service position that enables a qualified person with a disability to receive an equitable service opportunity and/or experience. Programs have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations, and to secure any resources necessary to meet this obligation.

Reasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Modifying an application process, an interview, or a test
- Modifying a service site to make existing facilities accessible to and usable by an individual with a disability (e.g., distraction reduction or clutter removal)
- Modifying a policy or procedure
- Modifying training materials or supervisory methods
- Restructuring a position, including:
  - Adjusting how or when an essential function is completed.
  - Dividing, exchanging, reassigning, or eliminating marginal functions.
  - Allowing a fellow member or volunteer to assist an individual.
  - Reassigning an individual to a vacant service position.
  - Providing flexible work/service schedules or leave policies.
- Providing or modifying equipment, assistive technology, or auxiliary aids (devices that enable effective communication for people with disabilities) and services
- Ensuring all program activities are held in accessible locations

All AmeriCorps State programs are required to report the number of reasonable accommodations requested, the number of reasonable accommodations provided, and the number of disability disclosures at the end of each program year, or when requested by AC HQ through Serve Indiana. In addition, documentation to substantiate this disability-related data should be securely filed and available for review at any time. Serve Indiana tracks this information in their program monitoring visits. For more information about that process, see the monitoring section of this handbook.

## Member Selection Process

As part of their recruitment policy, programs are required to have a documented member selection process. Serve Indiana believes that strong recruitment practices lead to strong retention rates in the program year. The interview specifically is a key component to the member selection process. It is important that programs accurately describe the member role and assess whether the potential member is a good fit. Program Directors should be honest and up front about the commitment required to serve in an AmeriCorps program

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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and should especially emphasize that serving as a member is different from traditional employment. Setting realistic expectations at this point in the process will increase retention for a program and ensure that members do not feel misled.

*Serve Indiana suggests the following steps for a member selection process:*

- Create guidelines for the type of skills needed for member positions
- Create mechanism to receive and review applications in a timely manner
- Respond to potential members for interviews and document communication
- Communicate and document with recruits when they do not move forward
- Conduct interviews where, AmeriCorps, the organization, the goals of the program, time and contract commitment of AmeriCorps, the selection process, and key contacts are explained

*Program Directors **must** ensure that each applicant understands that if selected s/he will:*

- Be a member of your program, as a participant who has committed to a specific term of service.
- **Not** be an employee of your organization who receives payment for hours worked.
- Receive certain benefits as outlined in their Member Agreement, over the course of the program year and/or upon successful completion of their service term.
  - Note: Some member benefits vary from program to program. Programs should consult their program's grant agreement and/or your Serve Indiana Program Manager for clarification. For general information on all AmeriCorps State benefits see the member benefits section of this handbook.

*When interviewing, a Program Director should:*

- Interview in facilities that are accessible to everyone and provide confidentiality
- Use the service position description as a guide that can be referred to when necessary
- Ask each interviewee the same questions and record responses
- Ask about education, experience, skills, licenses and/or certificates that are relevant to the service position
- Be clear about the essential functions and expectations of a service opportunity
- Be willing to consider alternative ways an essential function, marginal function or task can be performed
- Focus on what an interviewee can contribute to the needs of the service program and target community
- Focus on what an interviewee can gain from participating in your program's service opportunity
- Adhere to interview etiquette such as showing respect to all interviewees, facing the person being interviewed, providing an interviewee your undivided attention, and maintaining eye contact with the interviewee, even if he/she is blind, using an interpreter, etc.
- Use appropriate language
  - "disability" instead of "handicap"
  - "person with a disability" instead of a "disabled person"

When interviewing, a Program Director must not:

- Make assumptions about an interviewee's abilities or about the type of accommodations an interviewee may need
- Make medical inquiries, even if it was disclosed by the interviewee. Medical inquiries and/or requests for medical documentation must occur only after an applicant is officially offered a service opportunity
- Allow the disclosure of a disability during an interview to be used as a factor in the consideration of your selection decision
- Ask direct or indirect questions related to the existence, nature, severity, or cause of an illness or disability. This includes questions concerning past attendance and leave from work related to illness or disability.
- Ask personal questions related to an interviewee's marital, family, and/or financial status
- Inquire about an interviewee's non-professional affiliations (i.e., clubs, social organizations, union membership, etc.)
- Ask race-related questions
- Make biological sex and gender related assumptions about an interviewee's abilities

When an interviewee reveals information that is illegal for an interviewer to ask, inappropriate, and/or information a program would rather not be aware of, the interviewer should always change the course of the conversation back to an appropriate topic. Information of this nature should not be noted nor serve as a factor in your selection decision.

### *Reasonable Accommodations Recruitment Considerations*

*(See inclusion, nondiscrimination, & reasonable accommodations section for additional information)*

A Program Director should communicate reasonable accommodation rights to all current program staff (and the larger agency if applicable) prior to the start of the recruitment process. Throughout the recruitment process all applicants should be informed about their reasonable accommodation rights, including their right to request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the selection process for any portion of the selection process. For more information about requesting a reasonable accommodation, a program should contact the Serve Indiana Director of Programs.

If an applicant discusses, discloses, and/or requests a reasonable accommodation unrelated to the selection process a Program Director should not discuss, inquire, nor use this information when selecting members. To address this situation a Program Director can redirect the conversation. For example, one could say, "Thank you. I appreciate the fact that you felt comfortable enough to express X information. Here at Y program, we encourage the participation of every individual who has the skills and abilities required to execute the responsibilities of this service opportunity, and we will provide the accommodations necessary to ensure inclusive participation." A Program Director could also briefly explain their program's accommodation process. Prohibiting disability, illness, and medical information questions (or discussions) prior to the official offer of a position helps to minimize the risk that an interviewer will be perceived as someone who offered or

denied a service position to an applicant based on the applicant's disability/illness/medical history. Once selection decisions have been made, and if the member is offered a service opportunity, then a confidential conversation can occur regarding the best way to accommodate the member's needs.

### *Making a Selection*

The members chosen should have interests and abilities that relate closely to the goals and activities of the service positions. Establishing and fostering a connection between the needs/desires of members to their service opportunity allows members to gain satisfaction and further development from their service. Although each member will find fulfillment in different ways, addressing the motivations that influence member fulfillment (recognition, making a difference, learning, growth, being a part of something greater than oneself, etc.) will help programs increase member retention. Additionally, programs should be sure that members are committed to national service and understand that while your program will include professional development opportunities, it is distinctly different from a "job" and requires a strong commitment to intensive service.

### *Service Position Offer*

After selecting the best potential members for a program, it is up to each organization to determine the best way to offer the position to the member. Programs should clearly explain that all offers are contingent on the results of the individual's criminal history check and AmeriCorps funding award notice (if offered prior to Commission/AC HQ decisions).

## Criminal History Check Indiana Requirements

All AmeriCorps State programs are required to conduct complete and accurate criminal history checks on all **covered positions**. Coverage is not dependent on the type of service the individual is performing, the individual's access to vulnerable populations, or whether the grantee or sub-grantee program is using federal share or sub-grantee matching share funds to pay the individual. AC HQ has a very specific definition for "covered position". Each program must refer to the [AC resources](#) and the law to determine which individuals in the program, at service sites, and employed by partner organizations will be in covered positions. Serve Indiana considers all covered staff and AmeriCorps members to have reoccurring access to vulnerable populations unless the program can provide documentation otherwise. It is the responsibility of the program to contact the Director of Grants prior to conducting such checks with such documentation.

Serve Indiana recognizes the discrepancies that can occur between types of grants and covered positions listed on grants. To be clear, grant types such as full-cost, fixed-amount AmeriCorps programs where the program is exempt from submitting budgets or financial reports, the test used to determine covered positions is different. Fixed programs should thoroughly read the Criminal History Check resources distributed by AC HQ, as well as the [Knowledge Network FAQ for Fixed grants](#). For Operational Grants, if a staff member's time is listed on the grant (either AC HQ or match share), then they must go through the NSCHC/CHC process correctly as noted below. In addition, Serve Indiana considers a staff member's start date on the AmeriCorps grant to be the first day of the program unless the staff member was hired after the start of the program. In that situation, the first day the organization accrued expenses for that staff member on the AmeriCorps grant should be considered the staff member's start date for the CHC/NSCHC process. It is the responsibility of the program to document these instances and follow the AC HQ rules and regulations around this process.

Serve Indiana has specific steps, approved vendors, and trainings all programs must follow. Any deviations from this policy can result in **significant financial consequences** for the sub-grantee as noted in the disallowance policy listed in the Serve Indiana policies section. If an organization would like to apply for an



## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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“Alternative Search Procedure” or “ASP” they must contact the Serve Indiana Director of Grants before conducting any searches as noted at the end of this policy. If a program does not have an approved ASP in place, they must use the approved vendors noted by AC HQ and Serve Indiana. These requirements are based on the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) and policies set forth for grantees.

For information on Serve Indiana’s monitoring of criminal history check processes, results, and disallowances, please review the program monitoring section of this handbook.

All programs are required to have a written background check policy, complete annual AC HQ training, [and use Serve Indiana/AC approved vendors as listed below. Any deviation from these requirements could result in a disallowance.](#)

### Required Training

Each year, all AmeriCorps State programs, planning grants and Serve Indiana staff are required to complete a National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) Online Training Course. It is required that all Serve Indiana staff complete the training during the first month of employment. In addition, programs are required to have a minimum of two staff members at their organizations complete the training annually. If additional staff handle covered position criminal history checks, they must also complete the training as well. If a new program staff member is hired who has access to the member's criminal history check process or results, they must complete the training within 30 days of their start date. It is the responsibility of the program to communicate to Serve Indiana the staff that are required to complete the training. It is also the responsibility of the program to ensure new staff complete and submit documentation to Serve Indiana within 30 days of the staff member’s start.

AC HQ has provided an interactive webinar with a certificate of completion when a person successfully completes the course and its quiz. Serve Indiana communicates the due date for completion of this training and additional instructions to programs via email. Programs are required to track the date of their certificate expiration. If a person’s expiration date happens before the release of reminders, it is the responsibility of the individual to contact Serve Indiana for the correct course as it may update year to year.

Serve Indiana’s instructions to programs include the following information:

1. Location of the training and basic step by step instructions
2. Proper documentation and submission of training:
  - a. Programs must submit quiz certificate with name and 100% grade
  - b. Programs must submit completed certificate to SI via email

The Serve Indiana Operations Manager manages the collection of these materials via email. Serve Indiana uses an Excel tracking sheet to ensure programs are in compliance. The sheet will always include at a minimum, the program name, name of the program staff who completed the training, completion dates, and similar information for Serve Indiana staff.

#### ***Additional Training Options:***

Programs are highly encouraged to read and become familiar with the entire process on [executing criminal history checks](#). These resources are updated as needed and outline the processes and regulations required to be compliant.

Programs are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with [AC’ National Service Criminal History Check Enforcement Guide](#). Serve Indiana follows that guide during their disallowance process as noted in that

section of the handbook.

### Criminal History Check Policy

All programs are required to create and document a background check policy for their program. The policy must be completed prior to conducting criminal history checks on covered positions.

*The policy must:*

- Mirror this handbook and the AC HQ regulations.
- Include any additional requirements of the program's overall organization.
- Note a program's review process and the steps programs will take if an individual is listed as unqualified.
- Include a waiver form for individuals to sign off on the criminal history check.
  - Although the NSOPW (sex offender check) does not require an authorization signed by the covered individual, a **signed authorization from the member or staff being checked is required prior to initiating the FBI/Indiana state check.**
- Provide documentation guidelines
  - *Both the initiation documentation and results should be kept in a separate file from the individual's background waiver form and other paperwork. These files should be kept in a locked location separate from the member/program files.*
- Provide guidelines for position accommodation approved practices.

*Use of CHC Templates:*

*Serve Indiana requires programs to use their approved CHC documents including a CHC waiver, checklist, and cover sheet as well. If these documents are not used the program will be considered non-compliant. Programs may request these items at any time by contacting the Serve Indiana Operations Manager, are also available in the appendix of this handbook, as well as [on our website](#). Any modifications to these documents must be approved in writing by Serve Indiana staff prior to use.*

### Required Criminal History Checks

All sub-grantees must conduct at least a *three-part* National Service Criminal History check on all AC HQ covered individuals. The results of these checks must be documented and saved in the manner consistent with the program's file documentation policy and criminal history check policy. **As a reminder, Serve Indiana considers all covered positions to have reoccurring access to vulnerable populations. It is the responsibility of the program to document otherwise, prior to conducting these checks.**

A *three-part* check includes:

**Proper NSCHC run via Truescreen and Fieldprint:** <https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check>

**OR the NSCHC run via the vendors below:**

**National Sex Offender Public Website check (NSOPW).** Conducted by visiting <https://www.nsopw.gov/>.  
Programs must:

- ✓ run a national name-based search
- ✓ print the results
  - ensure the printout has a computer-generated date stamp
- ✓ all geographic regions are reporting

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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- ✓ no states are indicated as missing
- ✓ the name is spelled correctly with no typos
- ✓ In addition, programs should sign off on the check noting that any “hits” do not match the person’s date of birth/name.

**FBI fingerprint-based check.** The Indiana repository approved by the AC HQ is the Indiana State Police which has an agreement with Identogo. They will conduct FBI and Indiana State Limited (i.e., state of service checks) AmeriCorps programs. The combined check should be initiated by visiting <http://www.identogo.com/>. Programs should use the system to schedule an appointment for each member’s background check.

To access Identogo, a program must register with the Indiana State Police. The program will need to ask that your agency be added to the list prior to running the search. Serve Indiana has provided the criteria for the check to Identogo so a program must ensure to note that your agency runs checks for your *AmeriCorps* program. The contact for the Indiana State Police is Martha Somers [msommers@isp.IN.gov](mailto:msommers@isp.IN.gov).

Once the agency is registered, the program should go to the Identogo website. Click on the state of Indiana on the map, and then on Online Scheduling. Several screens will prompt from there to schedule the individual’s appointment and payment. Appointments can be scheduled by location in the state but cannot be scheduled outside of Indiana. In addition, at the time of scheduling, the person must be 18 years old. When the individual attends the appointment, they will have their fingerprints taken and they must have identification for the appointment.

The date the fingerprint appointment is scheduled is considered the “initiated date”. Results are sent to the program electronically and in the mail and will read “qualified” or “unqualified”. Qualified notes the individual is approved for AmeriCorps service or supervision. For more information about unqualified results and why the member or staff may not be allowed to participate in the AmeriCorps program, review [AC HQ regulations and the laws governing AmeriCorps](#). If a program has issues with the appointment system or receiving results, they should contact the Indiana State Police. Programs MUST document these steps to ensure they can communicate proper initiation.

**Indiana state criminal history check (automatically included in the FBI check (#2) when Identogo is used.)**

**NON-Indiana Residents:** *If the covered individual claims **residency in a state other than Indiana**, a state-based check for that state (through an approved vendor) must be conducted in addition to the steps above. AC HQ has approved official criminal history information repositories for each state or territory. Programs must use approved vendors to obtain criminal history check information unless AC HQ approves an Alternate Search Protocol (ASP). It is the responsibility of the program to document how residency was obtained and that residency follows the AC HQ guidelines.*

*When to complete the checks:*

**NSOPW searches must be completed prior to the start of the member service. State of Residence and State of Service checks (FBI/State) for all covered individuals must be completed prior to the start of the member service.**

## Additional Information/Definitions

The procedures outlined above and information below are provided as a starting point only and are not an

exhaustive list of all the elements of a background check. Each program is responsible for knowing and implementing the correct criminal history check requirements. Up-to-date information should be obtained from [AC's website](#).

### **Ineligible individuals:**

An ineligible individual (42 USC 12645g(c)) is anyone who (1) is registered or required to be registered on a sex offender registry; (2) has been convicted of murder; (3) refuses to consent to the NSCHCs; or (4) makes a false statement in connection with his or her NSCHC. Ineligible individuals are barred from working or serving on a grant-funded program. Recipients are strongly encouraged to promote the safety of those involved in their national service program through various means.

The NSCHC establishes a baseline screening procedure. Recipients may establish a screening procedure with components and criteria that go beyond the NSCHC baseline requirements and that are tailored to the needs of their program, organization, and beneficiary population. Recipients should also be aware that regardless of documented accompaniment, all associated costs with an ineligible individual will be disallowed.

If a program determines that an ineligible individual served or worked on an AC HQ grant (including matching funds), the program must: Immediately remove any currently serving ineligible individuals from the AC HQ grant and retain documentation of their service history and NSCHC documentation. Disallow all costs associated with the individual. Costs include any stipend, salary, fringe benefits, or education award. Calculate these costs from the individual's start date in a covered position. Establish proper documentation and report the confirmed ineligibility to Serve Indiana who will then communicate with AC HQ as appropriate (see Monitoring Documentation in Section VI for details).

### **Eligible Individual – Non Compliant File:**

Non-compliance refers to a situation in which an individual in a covered position is eligible to serve, but a recipient did not fully comply with all of these items:

Properly conduct all required NSCHC components for the individual. Conduct the required NSCHC components on time. Ensure that an individual with access to vulnerable populations was in the physical presence of a qualified individual while checks were pending (also known as "accompaniment"). See the below section for more information on who can perform accompaniment. Retain proper documentation (see Monitoring Documentation in Section VI for details).

If non-compliance is discovered: A recipient must take corrective action to correctly determine eligibility. See Section III and Appendix B. AC HQ will disallow costs associated with NSCHC non-compliance per Section IV of the CHC disallowance guide.

### **Accompaniment:**

*Accompaniment is not allowed. All checks must be completed and adjudicated before the member begins service, or the staff charges to the grant.*

## **Errors & Corrective Action**

If a program finds an error in their criminal history check results (i.e., late or incorrect result) outside of the Serve Indiana annual review of results, the program must immediately conduct a correct check on the covered position and contact Serve Indiana for guidance. Serve Indiana staff will then review the AC HQ [National Service Criminal History Check Enforcement Guide](#) and the monitoring (and disallowance) section of this handbook. The SI staff will then communicate next steps for the program including a corrective action

plan and possible additional training following the AC HQ guidance. Serve Indiana staff will document this process in the program's criminal history check folder and begin the disallowance process if appropriate.

Serve Indiana does not review criminal history checks at on site monitoring but if one is found in the review process at monitoring, Serve Indiana staff will always advise programs to conduct a new and correct check on the covered position while at the visit. The Serve Indiana staff will begin the corrective action and disallowance process with that program immediately following the visit. Serve Indiana staff will document this process in the program's criminal history check folder and begin the disallowance process if appropriate.

### Alternative Search Procedure (ASP)

If a program would like to request an ASP, they must contact Serve Indiana to start that process. Serve Indiana staff will then review the AC HQ policies and procedures around ASP and begin that process on behalf of the program. Programs funded through Serve Indiana should not contact AC HQ directly for an ASP as those may not be valid if not approved through Serve Indiana. It is the responsibility of the program to ensure they are in compliance annually around an ASP as it should not be assumed the ASP covers more than one grant year.

## Member Enrollment & Retention Management

The Commission uses the AC HQ system eGrants and its My AmeriCorps portal for management of a member's term from enrollment to exit. The eGrants system communicates directly to AC HQ and it is the official system for AmeriCorps for member enrollment, retention, positions refills, exits, and changes of terms/status. Serve Indiana also uses the OnCorps system for member timekeeping, supervisor in kind hour timekeeping, and program financial and progress reports. This system communicates only to Serve Indiana and does not transfer information to the eGrants system. Programs in Indiana are required to use both systems when managing their AmeriCorps Members and grants under Serve Indiana. A program may request an alternative timekeeping system in lieu of OnCorps but that system must still be used for other reporting requirements as directed by the Commission. For more information on such a request, review the AmeriCorps timekeeping policy in this handbook. For more information about submitting progress reports or financial reports in OnCorps, see those specific sections of the handbook.

**Serve Indiana does not manage AmeriCorps members in either the OnCorps or eGrants systems. It is the responsibility of the program to follow the [AC pre-enrollment policy](#).**

With this policy it is the responsibility of the AmeriCorps program to enroll their members in eGrants within 8 calendar days of their start date. In addition, Serve Indiana does not exit members in eGrants that is also the responsibility of the program within 30 days of the member's last day of service. When there is a change of term or early exit of a member, the program is required to follow the Serve Indiana steps listed in this policy as there are responsibilities for both programs and SI staff. Serve Indiana staff may override or update an exit/enrollment in eGrants or OnCorps if the program can submit documentation that they are unable to complete it on their own.

### Member Pre-Enrollment, Enrollment & Enrollment Rates

Program Directors must make sure members are enrolled in the **[My AmeriCorps Portal \(eGrants\)](#)**, <https://my.americorps.gov>, ***within 8 calendar days of beginning their service as part of the AC pre-enrollment policy.***

Prior to enrolling their members, programs must ensure the member is eligible to serve, have completed the necessary NSCHC steps on the member, and have opened their position on the my.americorps website. This may take several days to complete properly and with a small enrollment window, programs are encouraged to start their pre-enrollment process early in their recruitment period. The following steps must be taken by

a program to ensure proper “pre-enrollment”.

A major part of the pre-enrollment process is the release of the notice of grant award by AC HQ to Serve Indiana. Each year, once the notice of grant award (NGA) is given to Serve Indiana which signals AC HQ has made their final approval of the SI awards. SI staff will notify programs of this update. This triggers a program's ability to create a position description in the my.americorps/eGrants system. Please see the recruitment section of this handbook for more information and steps on that process. Before the NGA is released, programs may begin their recruitment and NSCHC process on any recruit as able, but they cannot begin inviting members to serve. Once the position is open and NGA is up, programs may begin inviting members to serve in their programs through that application. Before enrolling a member officially in their program, programs must go through the following required pre-enrollment steps in eGrants.

1. *Pre-Enrollment:*

- a. Set up position description in eGrants/my.americorps once NGA is finalized which creates an AmeriCorps application for the program. Program tells recruits to apply to application which then allows a program to “invite” a member to serve.
  - i. Programs are not required to use applications but are required to set up descriptions. If the program does not use the AmeriCorps application, they must manually invite recruits in the next step.
- b. Invite qualified recruits (i.e., those who have passed your recruitment efforts and received an official offer), collect required eligibility documents of members invited, conduct NSCHC on members with invite (if not before).
- c. Members complete their portion of invite (i.e., the enrollment form) and submit it back to the program. This triggers the Social Security Administrations reviews of the member’s Social Security Number listed. This is reviewed within 2 days of the submission by the member. If not valid, the program will receive an email and will be required to submit additional documentation to resolve the issue.

2. *Enrollment:*

- a. Program completes the enrollment form of the member certifying that the NSCHC is completed properly, and this member is eligible to serve within 8 calendar days of the members start date. These certifications buttons will not be able to the program until step 4 is finalized properly thus a program should review the enrollment form prior to the member’s start date to ensure no issues have arisen.

Programs should again recognize the pre-enrollment process may take several days to complete and should NOT be started once the member begins service. Serve Indiana recommends programs begin the pre-enrollment process as soon as they are notified of the NGA. Programs who would like to wait to begin this process until their grant start date should consider pushing back their orientation date to ensure that members have passed the pre-enrollment process prior to enrollment. Programs should also understand it is required that the enrollment form is completed in eGrants and started by the member. Programs may use their own application, but they must post their position as part of this policy.

If an individual signs a member contract and serves hours within the term represented on that contract, then they are an AmeriCorps member and must be entered as such in eGrants within 8 calendar days of the start of service. In most cases, the start of service is the program orientation date. If an AmeriCorps member exits prior to being entered into eGrants or within the first 30 days, programs must not withhold that member’s name from eGrants in order to enhance their retention rates.

In addition to enrolling a member in eGrants the member must be enrolled **in OnCorps**. The member is not involved in this system’s enrollment. Serve Indiana will enter all programs into the new program year before they begin their program. Programs will then need to set up their program in the OnCorps system if they are

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

new. In addition, they will need to create login information and share that with members and supervisors.

Indiana has a specific website for their OnCorps access which can be found here:

<http://in.oncorpsreports.com/>. OnCorps provides several tutorials and technical assistance for new programs. To access those, login to OnCorps or contact the help desk: [help@oncorpsreports.com](mailto:help@oncorpsreports.com)

When it comes to enrollment rates, there are minimum standards that must be met for Serve Indiana and AC HQ. Every program should aim for 90% enrollment to meet the Serve Indiana expectations and 85% to meet the AC HQ expectations. Member enrollment technically refers to the number of slots filled divided by the number of slots awarded. Refill slots are included in the enrollment rate. Programs report their enrollment rate on each progress report. Enrollment rates can be found by running the Enrollment Rate Report in eGrants.

If a program is concerned it will not be able to achieve 90% enrollment, the Program Director should contact his/her Serve Indiana contact. Serve Indiana may be able to transfer those slots to another Indiana AmeriCorps program. This would help reduce the loss of AmeriCorps funding given to Indiana in the next funding cycle due to nonuse. The possibility of slot transfers between programs is determined by the eligibility of the slot to be refilled; this is discussed in more detail in the Terms and Conditions.

Fixed-amount grant programs should be exceptionally concerned with keeping enrollment and retention at 100% so they are eligible to draw down the entire grant award. The rate of drawdown is determined by the number of hours served by the members. Therefore, any open slots will reduce the amount of grant dollars fixed-amount grant programs are able to use.

### Refilling Slots

Slots can be refilled through My AmeriCorps Portal. Not all slots are eligible to be refilled. Refill eligibility depends on whether or not the exiting member is eligible to receive an education award. Programs may not refill the same slot more than once. Additionally, the information provided in the chart below can be used as a quick reference to see if the slot may be eligible for refill.

If, the member has completed...	AND...	then...
less than 15% of their term	exits due to compelling personal circumstances	their slot <b>can</b> be refilled
more than 15% of their term	exits due to compelling personal circumstances	their slot <b>cannot</b> be refilled
less than 30% of their term	exits for reasons that do not qualify as compelling personal circumstances	their slot <b>can</b> be refilled
more than 30% of their term	exits for reasons that do not qualify as compelling personal circumstances	their slot <b>cannot</b> be refilled

When refilling a slot, a program should consider whether or not the new member would have enough time to complete his/her service term. It is best to determine whether a slot can and will be refilled before the current member leaves in order to give the program the best chance of filling the slot. The program may be able to convert 1 full time slot to 2 half time slots or a combination of reduced half, quarter, or minimum time slots.

### Slot Conversion Approval Process

Programs must receive approval and instruction for conversion of slots from their Serve Indiana Program Manager *prior* to conversion. To officially request a slot conversion, a program should email their answers to the below questions to the Program Manager.

1. What is your rationale for converting slots?
2. What are the total number of slots you have available for conversion?
3. Are they refill or unfilled slots?
4. How many slots are you requested for conversion?
5. What would you like to convert them to?
6. What is your plan to fill this new position if approved?
7. How does this affect your program (enrollment, retention, etc.)?
8. Include any documentation that supports this plan.

The Program Manager will review the submission and provide an approval or denial in less than one business week. The approval will note how this slot conversion will affect the program's total and remaining MSY. In addition, there will be directions for the program to make the conversion in eGrants and notify the Program Manager that their end is complete. This process and communication will be documented in the program's monitoring folder.

*Additional guidance:* Fixed-amount grant programs are eligible to convert slots as long as the positions are still in a full-time capacity (i.e., one full time slot to two half time slots serving at a full-time capacity). Also, there may come a point when AC HQ restricts slot refilling nationally to ensure that AC HQ resources are available. At that time, AC HQ will not permit refilling if either (1) the total national AmeriCorps program enrollment reaches 97% of the awarded slots; or (2) the number of refills reaches 5% of the awarded slots. These restrictions apply to AmeriCorps programs as a whole.

### Member Change of Service Approval Process

Throughout the program year there may be cause to change the status of a member's term of service. There are strict rules that govern the release of a member from participation. Programs should refer to their application, grant agreement, program policies and [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) for rules. Program Directors are responsible for notifying Serve Indiana within 30 days of a member's completion of a term of service in the eGrants portal for a successful completion of service exit. For an early exit or suspension, the program must communicate with Serve Indiana prior to exiting/suspending the member officially in eGrants. The program should keep all documentation in the member's file of any change of service, including a successful completion of service exit.

Serve Indiana may suspend or release members early from participation for two reasons: (a) for compelling personal circumstances; and (b) for cause. See [45 CFR § 2522.230](#) for requirements. Failure to follow the requirements set forth in regulation (e.g., releasing an individual for compelling personal circumstances when the individual is leaving to go to school) is considered non-compliance with grant requirements and may result in disallowed costs and other remedies for non-compliance. If a member is to be exited for compelling personal circumstances, documentation should be sent to the Serve Indiana Program Manager for approval.

**Programs should consult their Program Manager at Serve Indiana before taking action to suspend/early release as noted below.** All members must be [properly exited](#) regardless of the reason for exit.

The Program Manager will respond within 7 business days with an approval or request for additional information. Any approval or follow up information for the below approvals is saved by Commission staff in the program's monitoring folder on the shared drive. In the approval email, the Commission staff will communicate next steps. A program should not take any action in eGrants until this approval is received. After documented approval is sent to the program, the Commission must then approve the suspension in eGrants, but a program may complete an early exit on their own in eGrants once approved.

### Suspension/Early Exit Approval Process

To request a suspension/early release (cause or compelling personal circumstances) of a member, programs



should contact the Program Manager via email with the below information. Serve Indiana staff should respond within one business week. If the Program Manager is unavailable, this approval can be sent to the Director of Programs or Director of Grants.

1. Name of the member
2. Service term, hours completed, start date and original end date
3. Rationale for suspension/early exit
4. How does this affect your program (enrollment, retention, etc.)?
5. Include any documentation that supports this claim\*
6. Official date program would like to suspend/exit member
7. What steps have been taken to communicate with the member? Site?
8. If disciplinary, have you followed the program's disciplinary procedures?

### Compelling Personal Circumstances Additional Approval Process

To request a compelling personal circumstance specifically, programs should contact their Program Manager with the above information AND additional documentation, examples below. The following items are examples of what the Commission will take as documentation around a CPC. Additional documentation may be requested of either the program or member before approval. CPC's should not be approved in eGrants or communicated as approved to the member until the Program Manager approves the CPC in writing to the program.

1. Letter or note from doctor's office;
2. Letter from member or family describing situation and rationale for leave;
3. Military service paperwork;
4. Documentation of welfare to work transition;
5. Documentation demonstrating the situation was unforeseeable and beyond the participant's control.

Program should be mindful that Serve Indiana will follow the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) around what situations are allowed as a CPC. While there is room for interpretation, a CPC should be used for situations that are out of the member's control. These should be situations that a member could not foresee when the member accepted the position. Serve Indiana strongly discourages the use of CPC to help a member who cannot finish their hours due to constraints such as sick time, vacation time, or because of other employment or school demands got in the way of the member's service. These are issues that should be discussed when the member is recruited and checked in on throughout the member's term of service by the Program Director. For more information about what is an acceptable CPC, the program should contact their Program Manager PRIOR to offering the CPC option to a member.

### Change in Term Approval Process

If a situation arises where a program is considering changing a member's term of service, the program must first review the terms and conditions for a change in term of service. Then send an official request via email to your Program Manager. That email should answer the below questions in full:

1. What is the member's current term of service? (Include start & end date)
2. How many hours have been completed already?
3. What is the barrier that is preventing the member from completing the required hours? Or what is happening that the program wants to increase the number of hours the member is to complete?
4. How has this changed from the beginning of the service term?
5. How does this change the program design, and will outputs and outcomes be impacted?
6. Does the service site approve of the change in term request? Does the program approve of this

change in term request?

7. What is the requested effective date of the change?

### Establishing Member Files

After a program has selected an individual to serve in their program and enrolled them in eGrants and OnCorps, a member file must be finalized. It is the responsibility of the program to create a “member file policy” in addition to a file for each AmeriCorps member. The documents maintained in these files provide evidence that members are eligible for their positions at the time of enrollment and qualify to receive member benefits. All required member documentation must be retained as required by 45 CFR§2541.420. It is also imperative that these documents are kept in a safe and secure location, with access granted only to essential program staff persons. If a member submits a written request to view the contents of their file, they must be permitted to do so. Both the My AmeriCorps Portal (eGrants) and the member file must match. Updates made to one must also be made to the other.

Programs should review the program document & file management policy in this handbook to begin establishing their member files. Following that review, use the detailed list below to ensure all documents are collected properly. Programs must understand the “Member Records and Confidentiality” section of the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#).

- 1. Member Application: AC Enrollment and Exit Forms:** As all members are enrolled in eGrants electronically, programs no longer need to keep a paper copy of the enrollment form. However, if an official exemption is made for the program, then the paper copy must be kept in the file.
- 2. Eligibility documentation:** AC HQ does not require programs to make and retain copies of the actual documents used to confirm eligibility as long as the program has a consistent practice of identifying the documents that were reviewed and maintained a record of the review. Serve Indiana strongly encourages programs to retain the physical copies of documents as proof of eligibility may be later requested for review by AC HQ or Serve Indiana.
  - A consistent practice for documenting eligibility should:
    - Identify the specific original document reviewed
    - Identify the eligibility criterion or criteria that the document confirms
    - Include any identification number for the document reviewed
    - Include the signature of the reviewer confirming the review and the date of the review
    - Birth certificates, driver’s licenses and passports are examples of documents that confirm a member is old enough to serve. In some cases, the same document, such as a birth certificate issued by one of the states, can be used to confirm both age and citizenship.
- 3. SSN and Citizenship Verification:** When a program enrolls new members into eGrants, their SSN, Name, DOB, etc. will be sent automatically to AC HQ for verification. If the program does not hear a response from AC HQ, no further action is needed. However, if the member’s information cannot be verified, the program will receive an email with instructions for further action. For more information programs should consult the pre-enrollment policy by AC HQ.
  - It is important to note that if an email is received from AC HQ, it will ask the program to produce the member’s original SSN card within a short timeframe. This should be communicated to members and included in the program’s documentation process as noted above.
- 4. Member Contract/Service Agreement:** A member’s term of service should begin with the signing of their member contract/service agreement. The member contract serves as a legally enforceable

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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agreement between the host organization and the person who was offered the AmeriCorps service position and needs to be signed and dated by both the member and Program Director no later than their first day of service. The minimum requirements for the member contract are contained in the [AC provisions](#) and the grant agreement. An example member contract can be obtained from Serve Indiana upon request.

- a. The host organization is responsible for finalizing the contents of this contract and obtaining the necessary signatures prior to the member's start of service. Programs can add additional rules/regulations in their contracts but must ensure that applicable requirements from the grant agreement, grant provisions, and federal law are met.
5. **Criminal Background Check Waiver Form:** Instructions for conducting the [criminal history check](#) were found earlier in this section. Required forms and policies can be found in the appendix. The documentation for the criminal history check must be kept in a separate locked file cabinet (not in the same location of the member's file).
6. **Health and Child Care Enrollment or Waiver:** This requirement applies to full-time members only (or less than full time members serving in a full-time capacity). All full-time members must be offered both health care and childcare benefits. This choice needs to be documented (Yes, I elect coverage or No, I decline coverage) on a form that is signed and dated by the member. If a member elects coverage for either or both benefits, the program must retain proof of their enrollment. For proof of enrollment, programs may retain the member's signed and approved benefit application form. Typically, rosters are provided which specify covered members by name. For details on specific health care and childcare benefits, refer to the [Member Benefits](#) section.
7. **Publicity Release Form (signed):** Programs must obtain written consent from all members before using their names, photographs, videos and other identifying information for publicity, promotional or other purposes.
8. **Tax Documents**
  - a. W-4 (beginning of year) and WH-4 (beginning of year)
  - b. W-2 (end of calendar year)
9. **Mid-Year Performance reviews/evaluations** are required for all AmeriCorps members. Full-time and part-time members must receive both a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation. Less than part-time members must receive at least one end-of-term evaluation. The format of the evaluation is determined by each individual program, but the evaluation must be reviewed and signed by the AmeriCorps member as well as their assigned site supervisor. The evaluation must meet the requirements specified in the provisions, and include:
  - a. Whether the member has completed the required number of hours;
  - b. Whether the member has satisfactorily completed assignments; and
  - c. Whether the member has met other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service.
  - d. See [Member Supervision](#) for more information.
10. **End of Term Performance Review:** All AmeriCorps members must receive one end-of-term evaluation. The format of the evaluation is determined by each individual program, but the evaluation must be reviewed and signed by the AmeriCorps member as well as their assigned site supervisor, and at minimum include: 1. If the member has completed the required number of hours, 2. If the member has satisfactorily completed assignments, and 3. Evaluate whether the member has met other performance criteria clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service. See [Member Supervision](#) for more information.
11. **Exit Form:** The exit form is provided in eGrants. All members must be exited from eGrants within 30 days of when they actually complete their service. The document does not need to be located in the member files as it is stored in eGrants but it is best practice to have some documentation to show

the exit was completed in case there is any discrepancy later.

12. **AC Exit Survey:** Program Directors should encourage all exiting AmeriCorps members to enter the Portal themselves during close-out to complete both their Exit Forms and the Member Exit Survey. The survey covers 4 topic areas, and members should complete the survey within 60 days of service completion. As with the other electronic submission, some sort of documentation of completion or communication to the member is recommended but not required.
13. **Disciplinary/Change in Service Documentation:** If a member is disciplined or has any change in their service officially such documentation must be kept in the member's file.

# Program and Member Management

## *Ongoing*

### Member Supervision

The Commission does not oversee AmeriCorps members directly. However, there are standards of member supervision that Serve Indiana does require. Programs should use this section as a guide for requirements and ideas on their program's method for supervision. The method used to supervise members must be unique since members are not volunteers or paid staff. AmeriCorps supervisors should focus on the required tasks of each service position and develop members in their charge. The duties of AmeriCorps members are restricted to activities specified in your program's approved grant application. Setting the tone and explaining your expectations as a supervisor is key to member success. A good management style for supervising AmeriCorps members combines coaching, directing, supporting and delegating, rather than creating a dictatorial atmosphere. Program Directors should ask the following questions in order to create a positive supervising experience:

- How do I help members understand what is supposed to be done and how to do it?
- What additional training might the members need that I cannot provide?
- How do I consider the needs of members throughout their term (at the beginning, in month six when their enthusiasm dips, and at the end when they leave)?
- What can I do to inspire members to commit to a life of service?

Remaining consistent while providing members guidance is a great way to be effective as a supervisor and role model. Paperwork is a necessary, but at times overwhelming, part of a supervisor's job. All paperwork must be kept in a safe and secure location to maintain confidentiality.

### Member & Staff Training

The Commission does not directly oversee AmeriCorps members. Instead, the Commission sees the management of members as a direct responsibility of their funded AmeriCorps programs. In the rare instances where a member interacts with the Commission, the Commission staff member will contact the Program Director for additional information. Unless in instances of non-compliance or a grievance, the Commission staff member should then send the member back to the Program Director for assistance. In an instance where the Commission would directly oversee an AmeriCorps member the Commission would follow the standards and required training topics listed in the action steps.

The Commission values strong member experiences with their programs and Commission staff should

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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support programs towards this goal. One of the best ways a Program can succeed in this area is through trainings of members. For this reason, the Commission requires that between 12-20 percent of AmeriCorps members' time is to be spent in training, whether preparing for service or enriching their personal and professional development. A majority of the member's development can be provided through formal trainings. Training is a time when a Program Director can educate members on a variety of topics and provide them with the tools necessary to be successful during their service. It is also a time to connect to members on more professional and personal levels.

Well-trained individuals provide high quality, high impact service and increase the value of the AmeriCorps program. Training helps members develop skills in areas that they might not have been introduced to prior to AmeriCorps (e.g., effective communication, conflict resolution, diversity and inclusion, leadership, CPR/first aid, volunteer management, resource mobilization, and partnership development). In training, members can learn more about the community they serve and what national service entails. Training can also broaden attitudes and perspectives and increase their sense of empowerment, civic values and service ethic. Lastly, training can promote retention and a lifelong engagement in service. Making sure members and staff understand allowable and prohibited activities is very important. Additionally, experience has shown that when members are provided training on the program's performance measures, they are better equipped to help the organization accomplish those goals and communicate great stories to their supervisors.

To meet objectives, Serve Indiana has training standards that all programs must follow. This allows all members, regardless of the program in which they serve, to have a similar experience. All programs must train all members on the required programs listed below. In addition, they must create and maintain a training policy and calendar.

These items should include the 12-20% training requirements, the training standards, and required training topics. Compliance of these items is reviewed through the Serve Indiana monitoring process. In rare instances, Serve Indiana may make one of these training topics/requirements available to all members through a Commission event such as a Swearing In Ceremony or Opening Day. If these events are not conducted, programs must provide such trainings to their members on their own.

*Standards: Through their trainings, programs should develop members who:*

1. discuss and explore their community and the people, processes, and institutions most effective in improving community conditions;
2. develop the skills to help plan effective service projects that respond to real community needs and emergencies;
3. foster within themselves and others positive attitudes regarding the value of lifelong citizenship and service for the common good;
4. increase life and/or employment skills; and,
5. gain a greater appreciation and understanding of those from different backgrounds.

*Training Policy:* To ensure these trainings are conducted, Serve Indiana asks all new programs to create and submit a training policy before they begin their program years. This submission will be noted on the Serve Indiana calendar and will be required of all programs each year. Serve Indiana will take one business week to review this document and send it back to the program with edits or final approval. Existing programs policies are reviewed during monitoring.

All training policies should include the following information:

1. **A training calendar:**

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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- a. All Serve Indiana required trainings (as noted below) including the type of training (in person, webinar, etc.), who is required to attend and when they will take place.
  - b. All program additional trainings outside of required SI trainings
  - c. Number of hours each training will take (SI and program) with a total number of hours of training and the percentage the program offers to members.
2. **Additional training options:** If the program cannot offer the 12% minimum to members, the policy must include information on how the members will complete training on their own as well as how that will be documented as completed.
  3. **Documentation of trainings:** Serve Indiana requires that all program led/organized trainings have a detailed agenda and participant sign in sheet at a minimum.
  4. **Program requirements:** Information about who is required to attend trainings and what action is taken if a member is unable or does not attend.

*Required Trainings:* Programs must offer the below trainings to members/staff in some format. The program may decide to combine several topics into one training, but this must be documented on the training calendar submitted to Serve Indiana.

1. *Member Orientation:* Orientation is the first training that provides members with the necessary tools to be successful during their service. During orientation, create and build teamwork through a wide range of activities and strategies. As a manager and mentor, orientation is an opportunity to express your expectations to members and volunteers in a professional and fun way.
  - a. *Orientation should include:*
    - i. An overview and history of national service
    - ii. Expectations of members, sites, program
    - iii. Specific trainings to prepare for service term
    - iv. Overview of community served
    - v. Program rules, regulations, and expectations (code of conduct, prohibited activities, requirements under Drug Free Workplace, suspension/termination, grievance procedure, sexual harassment, nondiscrimination, etc.)
    - vi. Review of member benefits including loan forbearance and the [public student loan forgiveness program](#)
    - vii. Key staff/other introductions
    - viii. Review of the member contract contents
    - ix. Design of AmeriCorps program
    - x. Program-specific training related to AmeriCorps member service activities, including responsibilities and requirements related to performance measurement and progress reporting
    - xi. Team building
    - xii. Diversity and Inclusion training
2. *Supervisor Orientation:* Service Site Supervisors should also receive orientation before members begin at their site. The above information should be covered there as well. Programs can include supervisors and members in the same orientation.
3. *Ongoing Supervisor Training:* Service Site supervisors should conduct some ongoing training and/or communication from the program. This can be conference calls, email updates or additional in person trainings.
4. *Site Specific Orientation:* Members should also be given a site-specific orientation from their service site which includes an overview of placement site, introduction of key contacts, policies and procedures for placement site, roles, duties, tasks, etc.
5. *Leadership & Professional Development:* Serve Indiana requires that programs assess their members

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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at the beginning of each term. The minimum assessment should include DWD's [employability skills](#) as a skill benchmark. These benchmarks will help the program offer trainings/opportunities for members to grow. The tools and method of assessment and further leadership/professional development options are to be created by the program based on their program model.

6. *Ethic of Service/Civic Responsibility*: Part of AmeriCorps is learning the role of service and civic responsibility now and beyond the term of service. Members should understand this is part of their service and programs can decide how the training is offered.
7. *Reflection/Service Learning*: Reflection is key to members' growth as it helps individuals understand their role and a large picture of service. Reflection trainings can be incorporated into other trainings offered by the program or as part of a specific training for members.
8. *Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery*: Serve Indiana requires the availability of AmeriCorps Indiana members to acquire basic skills in, and to provide assistance with, disaster preparedness, response and recovery as needed by the State of Indiana. Waivers to this requirement will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
  - a. *Levels of training*: There are two levels of training for program disaster training, basic and advanced. Serve Indiana will provide programs with options for the basic training or programs that can partner with other agencies in their area. **The type of disaster training should be noted on the program's training calendar.**
    - i. **Basic**: Includes training members on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery on an annual basis. This may happen through partnering with local (city/county) emergency managers, members of their local COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster), the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS), or similar agencies.
    - ii. **Advanced**: Programs may also elect to provide additional training in a specific disaster focus area (for example, volunteer and/or donations management, disaster medical operations, mass care/shelter operations, etc.). In this approach, programs must offer the basic training to members in addition to the advanced approach. *Programs who choose to go beyond basic disaster training must inform Serve Indiana of how they train members. This information will help Serve Indiana be most informed if IDHS requests assistance from qualified programs.*
9. *Safety Training*: Young professionals could especially benefit from training that helps them understand basic safety practices, such as walking to their car with a co-worker if they are leaving the site late at night, checking with their supervisor if they believe a task may be dangerous, and how to handle aggressive clients. Safety practices include proper use of equipment, what to do in an emergency, CPR and much more.
10. *Volunteer Recruitment/Coordination*: If in the program model, AmeriCorps members are required to recruit and coordinate volunteers in some capacity. Programs should offer training to members to help create a successful volunteer experience.
11. *Life after AmeriCorps Training*: This is a training to help members transition from the AmeriCorps experience, including resume writing, interview skills, job resources, graduate school programs, using the education award, etc. This should be conducted near the end of the member's term of service. It should include information about resume building, using the Education Award, accessing the Education Award, successfully completing a service term and options for next steps.
12. *Sustainability*: As AmeriCorps positions are not long term or permanent, it is important that both sites and members understand how to keep their projects sustainable after the program finishes. Programs should train and prepare members/sites for this transition.

### Member & Program Staff Timekeeping

In order to be eligible to receive member benefits (living allowance, education award, health care, child care, etc.), members must have submitted timesheets which have subsequently been reviewed and approved by their designated supervisor. All meetings, correspondence and disciplinary actions must be documented for legal credibility. Serve Indiana uses the OnCorps system to manage timesheets and hours for AmeriCorps programs. All programs are required to use that system to track member hours. It can also be used to track supervisor in kind hours for match if needed. The total number of hours listed in OnCorps must match the final number listed in eGrants when a member is exited. Information on how to request the use of an alternative timekeeping system is listed below.

#### *Timekeeping Policy:*

Programs are required to create a timekeeping policy to ensure proper documentation of their member hours. That policy must include the following information:

- When and how members submit a timesheet.
- When and how supervisors approve and sign off on timesheets.
- Consequences for non-compliance including late timesheets and how to correct errors in timesheets.
- When and how the program will review timesheets for accuracy.
- Member written description or program required time codes.
- Training requirements of members and supervisors for timesheets.
- Type of hours available to log (direct, training, fundraising) and how non direct service hours are logged/documented differently than training or fundraising hours.
- When and how a program will approve or submit member hours on their behalf (i.e., a member leaves early and submits hours via email).

Serve Indiana suggests that members submit their timesheets a minimum of once per month. The Commission also recommends supervisors review timesheets within 3 business days for approval. It is also recommended that program directors audit member timesheets at least once per quarter to ensure compliance and accountability. Programs should ensure members are aware of their minimum hour requirement to complete service, the 12-20% minimum training requirements, and be communicated with if they are behind to ensure proper completion of service.

Serve Indiana will review member timesheets and policies during the onsite monitoring process. They may also review member timesheets to ensure program compliance as needed throughout the program year.

#### *Member Time Requirements:*

#### Members should not

- Log “outside” volunteering as service time.
  - Any self-initiated volunteering outside the scope of the program and the member’s position description should not be counted towards the member’s term of service. Programs should inquire with Serve Indiana if this situation arises *prior* to the member logging the hours in question
- Log “lunch” on their timesheets unless the lunch is noted as a working lunch meeting.
- Log hours (or be asked to complete activities) that are included in the list of prohibited activities or outside their position description.
- Serve from home on a regular basis.
  - Members may be allowed to serve from home in rare instances. Prior to allowing such



## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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activity, programs are required to create a policy that aligns with the [AC HQ guidance](#) around serving from home. Serving from home should be rare as a member must have a physical office location (with access to a computer and internet) and a site supervisor who meets regularly with them.

### Members should:

- Log actual time served and include a description of timecode of their completed tasks.
- Log hours in the proper time categories (direct service, training, and fundraising).
- Submit their timesheets in a consistent and timely manner.
- Have timesheets that are reviewed and approved by a supervisor in a consistent manner.

### *Maximum Average Hour Total:*

To ensure members are set up for success, Serve Indiana has a threshold for a maximum average member hours per week. Serve Indiana discourages any member to serve over 40 hours per week on average. While these instances may occur, they should be rare as this is a burden to place on a member and could cause a member to leave service early. When a program is recruiting, they should be mindful of the total number of hours the position would require per week before placing a member in that position. Serve Indiana highly discourages starting members in a position where they would have to consistently serve over 40 hours per week to complete on time. If a program does have an instant where a recruit agrees to this type of position or the member has to catch up hours (i.e., CPC situation), the program should contact Serve Indiana for guidance. Consistently placing members in positions where they serve over 40 hours per week will result in an observation or finding on a program's monitoring report.

### *Alternative timekeeping:*

Programs may request to use an alternative timekeeping system instead of the OnCorps system. These requests should be rare as Serve Indiana will not have access to such systems to ensure compliance. To request an alternative timekeeping system, programs must submit a request to the Director of Programs via email. That request should include:

1. Program Name.
2. Rationale of alternative timekeeping system.
3. Name and description of proposed system.
4. Information on how program will update regularly on member's time and how they will ensure compliance using that system.
5. Any additional information that may assist in Serve Indiana's decision.

Following that submission, the Director of Programs will respond within 7 business days with an approval or next steps. All information will be saved in the program's monitoring folder. Programs should ensure they have a final approval from Serve Indiana before moving forward with their time keeping system.

***The use of alternative timekeeping system must be approved every year.***

## Member Performance Evaluations

Serve Indiana believes that evaluating members through performance reviews can improve performance, clarify duties and provide members with constructive feedback. Formal evaluations are necessary for the retention, re-enrollment and/or termination of members.

Performance evaluations are required for all AmeriCorps members. Full and part-time members must receive both a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation. All less than part time members must receive at least one end-of-term evaluation even if the member exits early from their position. The format of the evaluation is

determined by each individual program.

The [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) state that performance evaluation should address, at a minimum, the following factors:

- a. Whether the member has completed the required number of hours;
- b. Whether the member has satisfactorily completed assignments; and
- c. Whether the member has met other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service.

### *Member Performance Evaluation Policy:*

All programs are required to have a member performance evaluation policy. That policy must include the above AC HQ and Serve Indiana guidelines and the following information:

- When and how performance evaluations of members are conducted.
- Which members are required to receive evaluations.
- Required documents and how the programs document the completion of evaluations.
- List of required staff and their roles in process.
- Information on non-compliance or member dissatisfaction in evaluation results or process.
- Information on how evaluations are used and kept confidential.
- Training requirements for staff and members.
- Performance improvement plan process for member improvement that align with program's disciplinary policy.
- Signatory process for evaluation, all individuals must sign or initial an evaluation for proper completion.

### *Suggested Process:*

Serve Indiana recognizes that the member performance evaluation process may be new to program staff and members. Serve Indiana suggests that programs create a process that includes the following information for best results.

- Train and communicate clearly with members and staff about the AmeriCorps specific process.
- Communicate with HR contacts at organization to ensure organizational and legal compliance.
- Use forms that pertain directly to AmeriCorps program (or update organizational forms) and include AC HQ language noted in this policy.
- Include more than one staff member in meetings that may include difficult conversations with a member.
- Use the same evaluation form for a member's mid-year and end of year evaluation to measure growth.
- Involve site supervisors and program director in the evaluation process, use of a 360 model is highly recommended.
- Schedule a mutually convenient time for the meeting.
- Tell members to bring the completed evaluation form and come prepared to discuss any issues.
- At the evaluation meeting, review the ratings together while discussing each component.
- Work with the member to document the member's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Include the member in the performance improvement process before finalizing.
- Include an area in the evaluation form where a member can respond in writing.

Serve Indiana is not involved in the evaluation process of members or sites. However, they do provide training and templates to programs to assist in this process. If additional technical assistance or training is needed, it may be requested by a program. Serve Indiana will review performance evaluation documentation, policy, and process at a program's on-site monitoring visit.

### Member Benefits

Serve Indiana does not oversee any member benefits and follows the AC HQ guidance on all member benefits. The Commission requires programs to follow the same AC HQ rules and regulations as listed in this handbook and the [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#). Amounts and updates are included by AC HQ in the NOFO and application instructions annually. It is the responsibility of the program to ensure these benefits are provided to members and executed properly. Programs are responsible for understanding and providing benefits to their members as noted. Programs must understand which benefits are paid by their organization to the member and which are provided by AC HQ directly. Programs are required to train members and staff on these benefits during the annual orientation. For more information on training, see that section of this handbook. There are three benefits that require written policies, living allowance, health care, and workers' compensation, as those are provided by the program to members (mostly full-time). Serve Indiana also trains programs on member benefits annually at the program and fiscal orientations.

### LIVING ALLOWANCE

All full-time AmeriCorps members must be provided with a living allowance (member stipend). Though not required, programs have the option to provide an allowance to part-time members. All living allowances must be provided within the minimums and maximums which are provided in each year's application instructions and must align with the budget outlined in your executed grant agreement. If a program is a professional corps or education award only program, the program understands the specific regulations that guide those unique programs. For more information about the living allowance please review the [AC FAQ](#) and/or contact the Director of Programs at the beginning of the term.

AmeriCorps members are not employees, and a living allowance is not a wage. Thus, living allowances are not distributed based upon the number of hours served during each pay period. Living allowances must be dispersed to members in equal amounts throughout their term of service. Deductions should be made for federal and state income taxes, where applicable, and FICA (Social Security and Medicare taxes). The pay periods for living allowances are determined by each program. *For detailed information on living allowance distribution, see that section in this handbook.*

As long as a member is enrolled and has in-service status, they must receive their living allowance, listed in their member contract, in equal increments throughout the program year. If a member is released early for any circumstance (including a compelling personal circumstance) they may not receive a lump sum of the remaining balance of their living allowance.

If a program receives an order of wage garnishment from a court the program should seek legal counsel for how to best handle the situation. The federal portion of the living stipend is protected from garnishment, but different conditions may apply to the match portion. A member may also approach you for help if their bank account has been levied. They *may* have some protections but must seek legal counsel. Some sample wording for [Verification of Federal Funding](#) has been included in the appendix.

To document and verify that members are completing their service hours, accurate timesheets that are properly approved and signed must be processed for each pay period. Improper documentation of hours can lead to serious consequences for members, so great care must be taken in properly documenting activities and time.

### ***Living allowance policy:***

All programs are required to have a living allowance policy that includes the following information at a minimum:

- Positions that receive a living allowance and total amount available.
- Inclusion of amount, distribution amount, and initial distribution date in member contract.
- When and how living allowance is distributed, including information on recruitment cohorts (see living allowance distribution policy for more information)
- What happens if a member is suspended or leaves service early.
- Documentation of member payments and review by program staff.
- Documentation of FICA payments and member W2 distribution.

### **Federal Benefit Eligibility**

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 provides that allowances, earnings, and payments to participants in AmeriCorps State and National programs “shall not be considered income for the purposes of determining eligibility for and the amount of income transfer and in-kind aid furnished under any federal or federally assisted program based on need, other than as provided under the Social Security Act (SSA).”

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a block grant program provided under the SSA. Because TANF is under the SSA, the AmeriCorps State and National living allowance may be considered income for the purposes of determining eligibility for and the amount of aid under TANF.

Additionally, under the Heroes Earnings and Relief Tax (HEART) Act of 2008, the Social Security Administration will ignore an individual’s receipt of AmeriCorps benefits for purposes of SSI eligibility. The HEART Act contains a provision that excludes AmeriCorps benefits from being counted as income for purposes of eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This extends the long-time AmeriCorps VISTA income disregard for SSI to all AmeriCorps positions. While the law does not extend to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), it removes a significant barrier to participation for SSI recipients. The Heart Act excludes “any benefit (whether cash or in-kind)” which covers the living allowance, health insurance, child care and the education award (and related interest payments).

For more detail or questions, Program Directors should consult the [AmeriCorps State and National FAQs](#) and/or contact the Serve Indiana Director of Programs.

### **HEALTH CARE**

AC HQ requires all full-time members to be offered health care through their AmeriCorps program. Members serving in a full-time capacity (i.e., half time serve 35-40 hours per week) may be offered health care but this must be included in the written program policy. AC HQ has released specific requirements for programs in regard to providing health insurance to members. Programs are required to read through the Health Care section of the AC HQ Terms and Conditions carefully to ensure your program fulfills the criteria. AC HQ has additionally released a Health Care FAQ found on the [AC Grant Management Page](#) that is updated occasionally based on questions posed by state commissions.

### ***Health Care Policy:***

All programs must have a written health care policy that includes the following information:

- Type of health care policy provided to members.
- When and how members are offered health care benefits.
- Documentation practices for member enrollment.
- When and how member benefits may change or stop.

- Documentation practices for member enrollment or waiver forms.
  - If a FT member waivers coverage by the program, they must provide documentation of coverage elsewhere (i.e., copy of insurance card in member file).

If a program does not have full time members or offer health care to less than full time members, they may request to waive the creation of this policy by Serve Indiana. Such a waiver must be requested in writing to Serve Indiana and documentation of approval must be kept on file by the program.

### Child Care

Child care must be made available for full time members and is provided free of cost to a member by AC HQ. Programs must maintain a copy of the member's completed child care enrollment/waiver in the member's file. Programs must notify the childcare provider when there are specific changes. Please refer to the [AC FAQs](#) for specific requirements regarding eligibility and notification. Costs incurred due to the failure to notify the child care provider of the changes outlined by AC may be charged to the sub-grantee.

### Eli Segal Education Award

Upon successful completion of their term of service, members are eligible to receive an Eli Segal Education Award. The amount of the award received is aligned with the member's minimum service hours. Members have up to seven years after the completion of service to make use of the award. The award is considered taxable income in the year that it is used. Members aged 55 and over have the option to transfer the education award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. Education award amounts fluctuate each year. The amounts are included on the below website and in the grant application instructions released by Serve Indiana each fall. For more information about the Education Award, visit the AC HQ [Segal AmeriCorps website](#).

Members access their Education Awards through the my.AmeriCorps system, the system used to apply and enroll in AmeriCorps. It is important that members understand how and when to use their award, something that should be covered during a program's Life after AmeriCorps training.

### Loan Forbearance and Interest Accrual

Enrolled Full Time AmeriCorps members are also eligible for forbearance and interest accrual payments for most federally guaranteed student loans. Less than full time members may be eligible but the program should review the [AC HQ terms and conditions](#) and encourage the member to discuss this option with their loan officer. Applying for forbearance gives members the opportunity to postpone repayment for qualified student loans. While in forbearance, interest will continue to accrue. However, if the member successfully completes their term of service, the National Service Trust will pay all, or a portion of, the accrued interest. The interest accrual payment is considered taxable income in the year that it is provided to the member. Programs are required to communicate these benefits to their members and document such communication.

To gain access to the necessary forms, members must use their own [My AmeriCorps](#) account.

### Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program

Members should also be aware of the [Public Student Loan Forgiveness](#) program. This federal program can help students who have a large amount of public debt. AmeriCorps service can be included in qualification for this program, and this should be communicated to members during their orientation.

### Unemployment

In Indiana, AmeriCorps members are not eligible for unemployment. AmeriCorps State programs do not include their AmeriCorps members on their unemployment insurance and should not pay unemployment to

former members. This information is noted in the DWD policy as clipped below.

- (1) Indiana Code 22-4-8-2 states: "Service performed after December 31, 1971, by an individual in the employ of this state or any of its instrumentalities (or in the employ of this state and one (1) or more other states or their instrumentalities) for a hospital or institution of higher education located in this state; and,
- (2) Service performed after March 31, 1981, by an individual whose service is part of an unemployment work relief or work training program assisted or financed in whole by any federal agency or an agency of this state or a political subdivision of this state, by an individual receiving such work relief or work training is excluded." (Emphasis added).
- (3) An AmeriCorps State sub-grantee organization shall not remit unemployment insurance taxes payable to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) on behalf of an AmeriCorps State Member.
- (4) Under Indiana law, AmeriCorps State service is deemed ineligible from those periods of employment for which an AmeriCorps State Member may be eligible to receive unemployment benefits.
- (5) eVerify: AmeriCorps State and National members are not considered to be employees of the program with which they serve, or of the Federal government, and service in an AmeriCorps State and National program does not count as Federal service. All AmeriCorps members undergo Social Security Administration verification checks for eligibility.

### Workers' compensations

While it is not a direct function of Indiana's workers' compensation law that those participating in this program be covered. By default, of the condition of participating in the program members would be covered by whatever coverage mechanism is held by the sponsoring organization. Programs are required to include AmeriCorps members in their organizational workers' compensations policies and procedures.

## DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Neither Program staff nor AmeriCorps members are staff of the Commission. Program staff are staff of the applicant organization or host organization. AmeriCorps members are not employees of the program, AmeriCorps, or host organization but are directly overseen, and the responsibility of, the program (sub-grantee). As Program Directors are not employees of Serve Indiana, the Commission does not have a specific discipline process for them. However, there can be issues of noncompliant programs or organization. In those cases, Serve Indiana will follow their remediation process listed below. The Commission does not have direct contact with Programs' AmeriCorps members as noted in the member management section of this handbook. For this reason, the Commission does not discipline or mediate internal conflicts with members, volunteers, or program staff. The Commission does require programs to create and follow their own disciplinary policy of members and service sites. The Commission also requires programs to follow the Commission approval process for changes in a member term (i.e., early exit, suspensions) or instances of discipline as listed below. Commission staff may provide additional assistance through resources and options. When appropriate, Serve Indiana can provide management training upon request. AmeriCorps State programs are encouraged to collaborate and share best practices, while maintaining confidentiality. It is the responsibility of the program to maintain all proper documentation. If, in the future, the Commission oversees AmeriCorps members directly at their office this policy/procedure would be updated.

### Member Discipline Process:

The Commission requires programs to create disciplinary policies and procedures that can be implemented in an objective, consistent, fair and equitable way that will result in the desired outcome. If an incident occurs

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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that warrants disciplinary action for a member or service site, the Program Director should notify their Serve Indiana contact.

The Commission values strong retention rates and encourages Programs to act as the program's human resources contact to mediate and oversee the implementation of a disciplinary policy. In addition, Serve Indiana encourages program staff to be the final program approval of an early exit of a member for cause or compelling personal circumstances, as well as suspensions or disciplinary actions. Program Directors should take great care to communicate with a member before an issue rises to the level where a disciplinary action would occur. All disciplinary steps must follow the discipline procedure outlined in the member or service site contract.

The Commission trains programs on this process during the Program Orientation and throughout the year with technical assistance. It also provides examples of member disciplinary processes through the member service contract template.

### *Commission Involvement in Member & Service Site Disciplinary Procedures:*

Serve Indiana requires approval of all suspensions and early exits before a program moves forward. When a program communicates to Serve Indiana staff the Serve Indiana staff member will:

1. Request information from the program about the situation and what action steps have already been taken.
2. Review the program's disciplinary process for compliance and counsel the program on additional next steps if needed.
3. Encourage the program to take into consideration all sides of the situation and treat all program/members fairly and equally.
4. Take into consideration a need for high retention and member development while ensuring disciplinary policy compliance.
5. Document the conversation with the program with a follow up email and save all documentation in the program's monitoring folder.
6. Instruct the program on any necessary next steps including the suspension/early exit process and continued communication on the member.
7. Instruct the program on how this exit/suspension will affect the program including their enrollment rate, retention rate, and MSY totals.
8. Instruct the program on how this exit/suspension will affect the member and site. Including, but not limited to, a possible end of member benefits, the member's education award, required paperwork/documentation, and the use of AmeriCorps in the future.

Most disciplinary assistance is provided by the Director of Programs. Commission staff are encouraged to have another staff member attend any calls or conversations such as these.

### *Member Change of Service Process:*

Throughout the program year there may be cause to change the status of a member's term of service. There are strict rules that govern the release of a member from participation. Programs should refer to their application, grant agreement, program policies, and [AC HQ Terms and Conditions](#) for rules. Program Directors are responsible for notifying Serve Indiana within 30 days of a member's completion of a term of service in the eGrants portal for a successful completion of service exit. For an early exit or suspension, the program must communicate with Serve Indiana prior to exiting/suspending the member officially in eGrants.

The program should keep all documentation in the member's file of any change of service, including a successful completion of service exit. To understand the documentation and approval process, the program should review that section of this Handbook.

### Program Grievance Policy

AC HQ requires AmeriCorps State programs to have a grievance procedure for members, sites, and recruits. Each program is required to use one of the grievance policy forms provided by Serve Indiana in member contracts, service site agreements, and all other MOU's or contracts utilized for the AmeriCorps program. The two templates are available in the template/example section of this handbook.

Additionally, the program must provide the grievance procedure to other interested parties/individuals and the grievance must be listed publicly by all programs (i.e., on the program's AmeriCorps webpage). The wording cannot be altered without prior written approval from Serve Indiana.

Each program is also responsible for developing a procedure for handling grievances that ensures the program meets the basic requirements. Specific elements that need to be incorporated into your procedure are dictated by the grant agreement, AC regulations, and provisions.

If an AmeriCorps State program has a grievance with Serve Indiana or one of its employees, they must follow the grievance procedure available on the Serve Indiana website. This procedure is only for the sub-grantee and should not be distributed to members or service sites. Serve Indiana monitors the proper use of grievance procedures in the onsite monitoring process. For more information about that process, see the monitoring section of this handbook.

### Community Development

One of the primary goals of AmeriCorps is to strengthen and develop communities by engaging Indiana residents in service. Now more than ever before, AmeriCorps State programs must seek additional avenues to sustain their efforts. Volunteer participation, outreach at AmeriCorps events, and the resulting collaborations and partnerships can advance a program's impact on target community needs. The following section explains Serve Indiana requirements around National Days of Service and Member Volunteer Recruitment.

### Volunteer Recruitment

The majority of AmeriCorps State programs are expected to recruit volunteers to assist in community projects. Serve Indiana does not require all programs to have a volunteer recruitment component to their program, but it is strongly encouraged to promote program sustainability. Only programs who list volunteer recruitment and management in their executive summary of their application will be required to track and communicate such data.

Volunteers are a key component for building stronger organizations and communities. It is up to the program director and other key staff to utilize volunteers effectively to maximize community impact. Program directors oversee the recruitment of volunteers that are recruited directly due to an AmeriCorps member.

Programs may use existing organizational volunteer recruitment tracking but must ensure the difference between an AmeriCorps member recruited volunteer and regular volunteers.



## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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Depending on the nature of your program, members (under the supervision of the program director) may have volunteer management responsibilities. If so, outlining the duties of volunteers, training volunteers to understand their role, and instructing members on how to direct volunteers are necessary measures to ensure effective and compliant member-driven volunteer management.

Serve Indiana tracks programs' recruitment of volunteers during the grant application review process and progress report submission. In the Executive Summary template, programs indicate if their program will recruit and track volunteers. During the progress report, programs submit data on their AmeriCorps specific volunteer recruitment efforts. This data is then compiled by Serve Indiana staff. For more information on data collection, see the AmeriCorps program evidence section of this handbook. For more information about the member volunteer training requirement, see the member training requirements section of this handbook.

# Program Reporting, Fiscal Management, and Monitoring

## Reporting

### Program Evidence

The Commission values programs that use evidence-based interventions and are continuously improving their approach to and use of evidence. A program's proposed evidence process is submitted in the grant application review process (GARP). All applicants must submit a logic model, performance measures, program evaluation plan, and evidence section in their AmeriCorps application. The implementation of the evidence process is the responsibility of the funded program throughout the program year. Programs must follow their approved logic models, performance measures, and evaluation plans. They are also responsible for managing their data collection process and using the results of these processes to improve their programs. Serve Indiana tracks this information in bi-annual progress reports and continuation/re-compete applications. They also provide programs with training and technical assistance as appropriate.

**Performance measurement** is the systematic, ongoing tracking of a program's outputs and outcomes. Performance measures are used to gauge a program's progress toward addressing its defined community need. Program staff must have detailed and accurate procedures for tracking performance measures. Program Directors, key staff, and AmeriCorps members should be informed about the program's performance measures and how that data is collected, maintained, and assessed. Serve Indiana encourages the use of one aligned national performance measure with one output and one outcome. Only programs with a history of strong data collection will be encouraged to take on additional performance measures.

**Program evaluation** is a powerful tool for improving a program and increasing its ability to serve people more efficiently and effectively. It gives programs an opportunity to test their interventions, adjust services to best meet community needs, and collect data to support their work. A program evaluation is required by AC and Serve Indiana to be submitted every three years as noted in the NOFO/Application Instructions.

**Progress report** is a tool used by Serve Indiana to track a program's advancement towards meeting their performance measures. It also provides data around a program's demographics and how the program is functioning overall. This report is then compiled and submitted to AC on behalf of programs.

*Program submission process:*

### Progress Reports

Serve Indiana requires semi-annual progress reporting from AmeriCorps sub-grantees. Reports are to be submitted either through email (word document template) or OnCorps on or before the due date(s) specified in the program calendar. Serve Indiana will communicate submission instructions to programs the month prior to the due date. A sample progress report is available in the appendix of this handbook which should be used as a guide for data collection and training sites/members. The progress report process is updated annually by Serve Indiana and the submission process and tool is released to programs at least one month before the due date. With the report data, programs are asked to submit each PM support documentation of aggregate materials. They must also answer questions around the data collection process and its validity. Starting in the 2017-18 program year, a sample of a completed tool of at least one beneficiary must also be submitted.

It is expected that all reports will be received by the due date provided. Late submissions are noted in the deadline compliance tracking sheet.

It is expected that programs collect data prior to submitting the progress report to Serve Indiana. If a data point cannot be collected, a program must contact Serve Indiana prior to submission to request an extension. If this does not occur, Serve Indiana will require additional information, a corrective action plan, and/or a resubmission from the program.

### *Serve Indiana review process:*

Serve Indiana will then review and analyze the measure results as well as data collection tools (logs, pre/post tests). Within one business week, Serve Indiana will respond to the progress report and tools. If further clarifications are needed, Serve Indiana will update the program and the program will have 3 business days to submit responses. After the clarifications are received and approved, Serve Indiana will communicate that no further information is needed until AC reviews the data.

Progress reports are reviewed and approved by the Director of Programs. If assistance is needed, other Serve Indiana staff are trained on the review process and review as well. SI staff use a checklist to review all progress reports for accuracy. After the initial review, clarifications may be requested, and it is the goal of the Commission to collect all necessary information to avoid additional clarifications with AC once submitted.

All data is saved within the Serve Indiana progress report folder by program year. Each program has its own sub folder within that file with a "midyear" and "end of year". Once a report is approved, it is saved within the proper folder by program and by type. Any additional documentation is saved there as well.

Data is compiled in excel spreadsheets by the Operations Manager. One excel spreadsheet includes the proposed and actual totals of all approved performance measures of all programs. It also includes all programs recruitment, retention, enrollment/retention dates, percentage of performance measures met, and any additional information needed. Demographic information and volunteer recruitment are then compiled in their own separate spreadsheets as well.

### *Serve Indiana submission to AC HQ:*

By the AC deadline, the Director of Programs takes the aggregate data and information and submits it to AC in eGrants. Once submitted, the Director of Programs works with the AC HQ Portfolio Manager for follow up, clarifications, and final approvals.

### *Serve Indiana use of data:*

The Commission uses data on programs for a variety of purposes. It may be used to communicate Commission impact in marketing/communications or Commission performance measures. It is used to create technical assistance plans for programs. Finally, data is also used in the grant application review process to communicate whether or not programs met the Commission expectations.

### *Serve Indiana technical assistance plans & corrective action process:*

Sub-grantees whose data indicates at any point in the year that performance targets will not be achieved must take action to address the issue(s). One of the following two steps may be taken in order to address performance measures that are behind target:

1. Develop and submit to Serve Indiana a corrective action plan that includes:
  - a. The factors negatively impacting performance goals
  - b. The strategy and corrective action the sub-grantee is using to get back on track toward the established performance measure target(s)
  - c. The timeframe for getting back on track with the performance measures
2. Submit a request to amend the approved performance measures
  - a. Amendments in performance measures are rarely approved and it is usually recommended a program make changes during a grant continuation/re-compete process
  - b. Amendments must be approved by both AC and Serve Indiana. It is encouraged that programs keep Serve Indiana updated on any areas of concerns around meeting performance measures
  - c. Programs should review the “Updating/Changing Performance Measures” section below for additional steps

Indications that a program needs to submit a corrective action plan include, but are not limited to:

- The program does not meet their output target by the mid-year report
- The program does not meet 90% of their performance measures (outputs/outcomes) by the end of year report
- All outputs and outcomes are met at midyear report or exceed by 200% at either mid-year or end of year report
- No targets are met by end of program year
- Data collection tool or process does not match the approved performance measures
- Program expectations levels are not on track by mid-year or not met by end of year
- Number of MSY assigned to performance measures does not match approved application

Serve Indiana saves corrective action plans in program’s progress report folder for documentation. If technical assistance is needed beyond the corrective action plan, SI will communicate the TA plan after submission. Any need for change in application is communicated to the Director of Programs for GARP follow up at this point.

If, after a period of corrective action, a sub-grantee continues to under-perform, or fails to collect appropriate data to allow accurate performance measurement, the AC, the Commission, or Serve Indiana may: reduce or suspend the AmeriCorps grant, use the information to assess any application from the sub-grantee’s organization for new a new AmeriCorps grant, or any other corrective action deemed appropriate by AC, the Commission, or Serve Indiana.

## Program Evaluations

All AmeriCorps programs are required to conduct a program evaluation within each 3-year grant cycle. The AmeriCorps regulations require AmeriCorps State and National sub-grantees receiving more than \$500,000 of Corporation grant funds to conduct an independent evaluation (45 CFR§2522.700-740). Independent evaluations must use an external evaluator with no formal or personal relationship to the organization. All other AmeriCorps State formula and competitive programs in Indiana may submit an internal evaluation.

The evaluation report is based on the program’s prior 3-year cycle and is required to be submitted with the grant application in any re-compete year. Guidance on submission will be outlined in the appropriate year’s grant application instructions. Applications who do not follow the evaluation report submission process listed

in the NOFO will be considered incomplete. Organizations are encouraged to use the completed evaluation report as a tool to enhance their program in future years. Programs are also encouraged to use the AC Evaluation Resource Page for more information: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>

It is expected that programs will use the results of their program evaluation to inform their continuation and/or re-compete application. Serve Indiana reviews the evaluation reports during the application process. Serve Indiana may request to review a program's evaluation plan and/or reports at any time during the program year. During an onsite monitoring visit, the evaluation plan and status may also be discussed and/or reviewed with the program.

### Changes to performance measures, logic model, and evaluation plan

Organizations are encouraged to think through their evidence plans thoroughly before submitting an AmeriCorps application. This means being realistic but also challenging in their targets for performance measures and the goals of the logic model. Changes in a logic model, performance measures, or evaluation plan are difficult to obtain but Serve Indiana has listed out below the steps programs may take in those cases. It is highly recommended that a program communicates early and often with Serve Indiana when an issue rises that would affect their evidence.

#### *Continuation applications:*

A continuation application is a brief update between year 1 and year 2 of a program cycle. Major changes to a program's logic model and theory of change are not recommended. However, Serve Indiana will consider the following updates:

- Minor updates to logic models that do not affect the program's theory of change.
- Updates to performance measures around realistic targets, data collection tools, alignment with national performance measures, or a deduction in the number of performance measures.
- Updates to program evaluation plans that improve the process, align it more fully with logic model or intervention, or develop the process more fully.

All changes must be based on program evaluation results or evidence. They must be approved by Serve Indiana staff prior to the program making direct changes to their application.

#### *Re-compete applications:*

Re-compete applications are submitted in the third year of a program's cycle. Serve Indiana strongly encourages programs to use their program evaluation results to update and improve their program. It is expected that programs would rework their logic model, performance measures, and program evaluation unless they can provide evidence for why no changes are needed. Common approved changes in re-compete applications include, but are not limited to:

- Improved logic model based on new program evidence and research.
- Expansion of logic model to include more member activities to reach more individuals.
- Reduction of logic model to create a clearer program intervention.
- Change in intervention based on research or program evaluation results.
- Updated evidence section with program evaluation results and up to date research.
- Movement up in evidence tiers.
- Change or improvements in logic model around data collection process.
- Changes in data collection tools and processes based on program evaluation and new research.

- Changes in performance measures targets based on previous program year results. SI encourages an increase in targets unless there were major challenges in performance measures data collection not for seen until implementation.
- Alignment of performance measures with AC performance measure instruction updates.
- Reduction in performance measures to align better with logic model or to ensure better data collection methods

All re-compete applicants are encouraged to meet with Serve Indiana prior to submitting their grant to discuss such changes.

*During program year:*

If a program would like to update its performance measures, logic model, or evaluation plan during a program year it must be approved by Serve Indiana (and AC) prior to those changes. Serve Indiana will not consider changes to a program's theory of change during a program year. The Commission will also not consider changes to performance measure targets to ensure a program is more likely to meet a measure. Change requests should be sent to the Director of Programs with a strong rationale, the effect on the program, and the proposed changes. SI staff will then review the results with their assigned AC Portfolio Manager and document the information in the program's monitoring file. Changes can take several months to process, and the SI staff will keep the program updated as it progresses or is approved.

## Program Fiscal Management Requirements

Program Directors are ultimately responsible for the overall administration of the program and effective financial management is essential to this. Ineffective financial management will have a negative impact on the success of a program, such as bad publicity, or major audit findings leading to funding being delayed, withheld or having to be repaid. Programs are required to have accurate information, supporting documentation, an efficient accounting system, internal controls, cash management and budgetary controls, and organizational policies and procedures to establish and maintain a high-quality AmeriCorps program. Program directors and financial managers should be familiar with the financial components of their program's grant agreement. This agreement outlines the approved budget and budget narrative, as well as key financial and programmatic reporting requirements. The parameters set forth there will provide much of the information needed to establish systems and policies at the program level.

Serve Indiana uses several systems around fiscal management. Programs use the OnCorps system to submit period expense reports or fixed grant invoices and the State of Indiana reimbursement process. Information on that process is available in the reimbursement section of this handbook. Serve Indiana monitors fiscal compliance through these submissions, DWD reports, and fiscal monitoring. See the monitoring section to better understand that process. If they should arise, Serve Indiana should be notified of any potential financial problems.

## AmeriCorps Budgets

The AmeriCorps program budget (as approved in the state contract agreement and approved grant application) is the blueprint that helps an organization meet its goals and objectives and ensure that match requirements are met. It is the responsibility of the program to review and compare the budget to actual expenses, assure that any necessary budget changes are properly approved, and verify that any movements between line items fall within provision guidelines. It is crucial to have a reliable and accurate accounting system that will enable you to keep track of the program's financial progress.

## Program/Host Organization Requirements

An *organization's* accounting system must be capable of:

- Distinguishing grant vs. non-grant related expenditures
- Identifying costs by program year
- Identifying costs by budget category
- Differentiating between direct (program) and indirect (administrative) costs
- Accounting for each award/grant separately
- Maintaining Federal/non-Federal matching funds separately from grant funds
- Recording in-kind contributions as both revenue and expense
- Allowing management to easily obtain financial reports at both the summary and detailed levels
- Correlating to financial reports submitted to Serve Indiana or AC

An *organization's* internal controls must include:

- Documented policies and procedures
- Adequate review process for financial reports and budgets
- Adequate cash management procedures (e.g., monthly bank reconciliations)
- Physical safeguarding of assets
- System to track members' & employees' activities
- System to follow-up on problems identified to ensure resolution



*An organization's fiscal policies and procedures must include a:*

- Master calendar of all grant reporting deadlines
- System to communicate effectively between staff
- Tickler for grant file outlining programmatic requirements
- Tickler for financial components of grant to ensure compliance
- Cross training notes for daily, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual duties in case of turnover

### Allowable Expenses

All sub-grantees are responsible for reading and utilizing the [OmniCircular](#) titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for federal awards. With that information, this portion of the handbook explains allowable expenses, how to document such expenses, and additional information on match specific rules and regulations. Serve Indiana expects programs to follow these rules and regulations to properly manage the fiscal side of their AmeriCorps and will review such practices during the fiscal monitoring.

In accordance with 45 CFR §2540.100 all programs must adhere to ensuring that funded activities are compliant in the governing of Corporation fund restrictions around: supplantation, religious use, political activity, contracts or collective bargaining agreement, non-duplication, and non-displacement.

First, it is important for programs to understand what “allowable” means. To be allowable under a grant, a cost must be reasonable and allocable for the performance of the award, conform to grant award limitations or cost principles, be consistent with policies and procedures that apply to both federally-financed and other activities of the organization, be given consistent treatment, be in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), not be included as a cost or used to meet cost sharing or matching requirements of any other federally-financed program, and must be adequately documented.

#### ***A cost is reasonable if:***

- It does not exceed what a prudent person would do under the circumstances at the time the decision was made to incur the cost.
- Consideration should be given to:
  - Whether the cost is ordinary and necessary for the operations of the organization.
  - The restraints or requirements imposed by generally accepted sound business practices. Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence.
  - Significant deviations from established practices which may unjustifiably increase the award costs.

#### ***A cost is allocable to the grant if:***

- It is treated consistently with other costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances and if it;
- It is incurred specifically for the award;
- It benefits both the award, other work, and can be distributed in reasonable proportion to the benefits received (any cost allocable to a particular award may not be shifted to other Federal awards to overcome funding deficiencies or to avoid restrictions imposed by law or by the terms of the award).

### Documentation of Expenses

All expenditures and financial transactions must be supported by documentation, e.g., brief descriptions, agendas, reports, and invoices, that support why the transaction is allowable for grant purposes. With this, accounting records



must trace back to source documentation and AFR/PER/Invoices must trace back to such documentation. In this section, programs can understand how to document specific expenses at the organization. It should be understood This type of documentation applies to the AC and match side of a grant. There are additional match regulations listed in the next section of the grant.

*In general, documentation must demonstrate that costs are:*

- Reasonable, allocable, and allowable;
- Within grant limits;
- Treated consistently; and
- Determined in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the applicable OMB cost principles.

### Documentation of personnel costs

All salaries and wages charged to AC grants must be supported by signed time and attendance records, except:

- State, local, and Indian Tribal governments must comply with [OMB A-87](#), and
- Educational institutions must comply with [OMB A-21](#).

For salaries and wages, there are several items required to demonstrate proper documentation.

- Information is needed that substantiates the amount paid to the employee, proof of the amount paid, and proof that the employee received the payment.
- Typical documentation for salaries and wages includes:
  - Timesheets signed by employee with written approval by the immediate supervisor;
  - Quarterly payroll returns (Forms 941) or payroll register;
  - Personnel files with salary/wage information, employment contract, or other information that clearly describes duties and wages; and
  - Canceled checks or direct deposit schedule.

Timesheet information:

- Staff and member timesheets must be completed accurately, signed and dated by a supervisor after completion, and submitted regularly.
- Members must submit their time in OnCorps
- Timesheets cannot be based on budgeted amounts – actual work ONLY
- Best Practice: periodically conduct your own timesheet review
- Fixed-Amount Grants are exempt from timekeeping requirements Program should avoid the following common timesheet errors:

- Segregation of training and/or fundraising hours; hours exceed limits (training should be 12-20% of total hours, and fundraising hours should be no more than 10%)
- Timesheets are not signed AND dated by BOTH the Member and the supervisor
- Timesheets do not support the hours certified for the education award at end of a program year, approved hours in OnCorps do not match hours in eGrants (completed hours in both systems must match exactly and there should be no pending hours at member exit)
- Excessive “catch-up” hours, especially towards end of PY
- Unallowable time, such as lunch, holidays, and sick leave, is counted as service hours

### Document of personnel fringe benefits

Program budgets generally reflect an estimated fringe benefit calculation. However, each organization must have supporting documentation for actual amounts charged to the AC grant.

Typical documentation includes:

- Health insurance receipts and other benefits-paid invoices, and
- A cost allocation plan of how the amounts were equitably distributed.

### Document of staff/member travel

Typical travel documentation should include:

- Travel authorization, if required;
- Agenda of meeting/training/conference attended;
- Original paid travel-related receipts or invoices;
- Per diem rates (applicable to region);
- Mileage calculations (indicating location and reason for travel);
- Travel reimbursement requests;
- Reconciliation of advances to payments; and
- Site visit reports, if any
- *Ensure your organization’s policies are consulted and include these regulations*

### Documentation of supplies

*Documentation for program supplies should include:*

- Paid invoices/receipts that clearly show amount as reported on the FFR and other financial reports;

- Clear allocation methodology, if used to allocate expense, that demonstrates consistency of treatment; and
- Uniform treatment of costs for both federally financed and other activities within the organization

### Documentation of program evaluation

Programs should keep the following documentation on evaluation services performed:

- Consultant agreement,
- Paid invoices,
- Evaluation results, and
- Other relevant documentation, such as salary documentation if in-house staff used as a trainer

### Documentation of staff/member training

Typical training documentation should include:

- Training agenda,
- Course description and cost,
- Sign-in sheet,
- Consultant/trainer agreement, and
- Paid invoices.

### Record retention documentation

The financial records for all programs must be retained for three (3) years from the date the grantee submitted the final Federal Financial Report (FFR). If an audit is ongoing, the records must be maintained for three (3) years after the final audit resolution. Serve Indiana encourages programs to maintain fiscal documentation for (7) years and to follow the policies of your organization.

### Program Match Requirements

Program match requirements are dictated by the Commission’s practice to follow federal regulation, and program’s approved grant. All programs shall adhere to the basic matching requirements set forth by AC HQ. Recipients should be aware of the regulatory match table below and how their match shall increase to a dollar-for-dollar match by year 10. This information is also always available in the application instructions or NOFO.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10+
<b>Grantee Share Requirements</b>	24%	24%	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

A program may decide to budget beyond the minimum, “regulatory”, requirement. In these instances, a program

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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must adhere to their “budgeted” match level. The Commission encourages programs to stay within the minimum “regulatory” match levels, especially in the first three years. This is due to the variety of rules and regulations a program must oversee. In the first few years, managing those items and a high match can cause a program to fall out of compliance.

The type of grant is also taken into consideration and the Commission follows the AC guidance on these specific match requirements as listed below.

Grant Type	Match Requirement
Cost Reimbursement (including Professional Corps, States and Territories without Commissions, and Indian Tribes)	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first 3 years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by the 10 <sup>th</sup> year of funding and any year thereafter.
EAP Fixed-Amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost in the NOFO provided by AC.
Professional Corps Fixed-Amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost in the NOFO provided by AC.
Stipend Fixed-Amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for full-time fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the maximum cost in the NOFO provided by AC.

The Commission deems it important to communicate specific situations, allowable/unallowable match expenses, and proper documentation of a program’s match. Programs are required to adhere to the below rules and regulations based on their grant type. Commission staff monitor and provide training/technical assistance to programs around such items. Detailed information on program match monitoring is located in the AmeriCorps monitoring section of this handbook. Match is also reviewed by the Commission staff lead for their Grant Application Review Process (GARP) during the application review and award period. This is documented in clarification communication with application if a program’s match is below the required levels or unallowable match option. The Commission does not keep back up documentation of match unless fiscally monitoring a program. It does provide programs options for documenting in-kind match, shares AC fiscal training resources, and uses the OnCorps system to track overall percentage of match per line item and overall budget.

**Special Situations:** The following actions are taken in the specific situations below for current and new programs.

- If a sub-grantee receives two non-consecutive formula awards, then the Commission shall hold the entity to the level of overall match it provided in the previous competitive grant cycle.
  - If a sub-recipient fails to receive formula or competitive funds for a period of five (5) or more years,

or can document a comprehensive change in program model, then the minimum overall share defaults to year one of a three-year grant cycle upon the sub-grantee's receipt of Commission funds.

- A sub-grantee must contribute matching resources by the end of the grant period in an amount equal to the share requirements for each year of the grant period. This is documented in the OnCorps system through the periodic expense reports YTD feature and verified by the Commission's Director of Grants.
- A sub-grantee may be eligible to receive a waiver from the minimum overall share provided it meets the requirements set forth in 45 C.F.R. 2524.60(3)(c)-(f)(2) and 2521.70.
- Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations at 45 CFR §2521.60(b). To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. Applicants who plan to request an alternative match schedule must submit a request at the time the application is submitted to Serve Indiana. The Commission submits on behalf of their state applicants and communicates the result to the applicant. Such requests are saved within the applicant's monitoring folder or application review file.
- Generally other federal funds sources cannot be used as match. If an applicant would like to use a federal source as match, they must discuss their intent with the Serve Indiana GARP contact who will discuss it with the Commission AC Portfolio Manager. The Commission's staff member will then communicate next steps to the applicant and document the result in their application file or monitoring folder. Serve Indiana strongly discourages the use of federal fund sources for programs as a way to promote cash sources for program sustainability.
- Generally, the Commission discourages the use of state grant funds as match. Some sources are ultimately federal sources of funds in which case the applicant must follow the above federal funds steps. In addition, Serve Indiana promotes cash sources over state grant funds to assist in program sustainability. However, an applicant may discuss the use of state funds during the application period with the Commission GARP staff member. That staff member will communicate with AC, discuss next steps with the applicant, and document the results in the applicant's review file.

### Allowable Match Expenses

Overall, the Commission allows cash and in-kind contributions as part of the sub-grantee cost sharing or matching when contributions meet all of the following criteria.

- Approved match options are:
  - Verifiable from the sub-grantee records and adequately documented
  - Necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives
  - Allowable under the applicable OMB cost principles
  - Not paid by the Federal Government under another award (i.e., federal or state grant), except where authorized by Federal statute to be used for cost sharing or matching
  - Provided in the approved program budget
  - Reasonable and allocable for the performance of the award
  - Appropriate with the grant award limitations or cost principles
  - Consistent with policies and procedures that apply to both Federally financed and other activities of the organization
  - In accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)

*Definition of Reasonable, Allocable, Consistently Applied*

- A cost is reasonable if:
  - It does not exceed what a prudent person would do under the circumstances at the time the decision was made to incur the cost.
  - Consideration should be given to:
    - Whether the cost is ordinary and necessary for the operations of the organization.
    - The restraints or requirements imposed by generally accepted sound business practices.
    - Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence.
    - Significant deviations from established practices which may unjustifiably increase the award costs.
- A cost is allocable to the grant if:
  - It is treated consistently with other costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances and if it;
  - It is incurred specifically for the award;
  - It benefits both the award, other work, and can be distributed in reasonable proportion to the benefits received (any cost allocable to a particular award may not be shifted to other Federal awards to overcome funding deficiencies or to avoid restrictions imposed by law or by the terms of the award).
- Sub-Grantees must be consistent in assigning costs by:
  - Using the same practices whether a direct cost or an indirect cost action is the same and regardless of the source of funding, (i.e., federally or non-Federally sponsored activities.
  - Following written cost allocation plan, as applicable.

*Examples of allowable match sources:* The following are approved Commission examples of program match.

- Staff time spent on program:
  - Including training, member/volunteer supervision, and program oversight, as well as other staff time working on necessary staff functions relating to meet the goals and objectives of the program. Programs must track actual time and use salary and benefits paid (i.e., signed timesheets).
- Space devoted to the AmeriCorps project.
  - If an AmeriCorps member is using a specific area a program may calculate the square footage of that space and multiply by the rate the space costs. For program staff, a program must take the square footage of that individual's work space, multiply it by the actual percentage of time that person spends on the grant in a given month, and multiply by the rate the space costs. The value of utilities and maintenance for that space can also be counted as match.
- Variety of supplies necessary to run program including:
  - Photocopying, office supplies and materials, postage, AV equipment, phone, fax.
- Indirect or Administrative costs.
  - Organizations that have a federally approved indirect cost rate can use it as match (less the amount in sub-grantee share), organizations that do not have a negotiated rate can use 10% of total costs.
- Cash or in-kind contributions, from community organizations or individuals.
- Transportation provided at no cost to the project:
  - Possibly bus, truck or car transportation; programs can use the state approved mileage rate multiplied by the number of miles traveled.

- Donation of project supplies including items necessary to accomplish program goals and objectives.
  - For example, plants, seeds, trees, film, masks, gloves, books.
- Additional discounts above and beyond those available to the general public provided by local vendors.
  - Best practice is to have the vendor note the additional discount directly on an invoice.
- Grants or other funds that are obtained and used to further the goals and objectives of the service-learning project,
- Program Income or Service Site Fee
  - Either asking community partners to contribute funds towards the program in exchange for an AmeriCorps Member or providing a service such as clearing trails in exchange for a fee.
- Services that contribute to organizational functions required for program use:
  - e.g., accounting or training of staff or members that are elements of the sub-grantee's cost allocation plan or budget narrative, such as a training related to the performance measures.

*Cash vs. In-Kind Match:* There are two types of program match, cash and in-kind. Cash match are contributions received by cash, check, electronic funds transfer, credit card or payroll deduction. Examples include cash donations, leases/sale of goods/service, local government grants, state appropriations, foundation grants and corporate contributions. In-Kind support is defined as the value of a non-cash contribution provided to the program by non-Federal third parties. Third party in-kind contributions may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies, and the value of goods and services directly benefiting the program and specifically identifiable to the project or program. In-kind match is approved by Serve Indiana as an option for a program to reach their match levels. However, the Commission does not support a program solely providing in-kind match on a budget. A program must document some cash match to support the program costs incurred. Specifically, the Commission suggests all programs have the equivalent of three months of program costs in cash match to support the program in case of a slow contract process and to work towards a sustainable program.

The following are approved options for *in-kind* match options for AmeriCorps programs.

- Donated supplies used in the service activities (e.g., paint, construction materials, computers, office supplies, etc.).
- Donated transportation costs related to the service activity.
- Building costs if doing an indoor project (e.g., people's time to open the building, cost of renting out such a space, security costs, cost of using the space for the time of the project).
- Advertising and outreach costs for getting the word out about the project.
- Donated equipment, buildings, and/or land.
- Donated staff time for planning, set up, and implementation from collaborating organizations.
- Donated professional and technical services such as accounting, consulting, training, legal services, etc.

More information about documentation of cash and in-kind match is available in the "match documentation" section of this policy.

### Unallowable Match Expenses

The following are examples of unallowable match expenses:

- Salaries and wages made to the grant without documentation of signed timesheets
- Expenses without proper documentation
- In-kind contributions that are not supported with after-the-fact documentation
- Other federal or state agency funds used as match without authorization

- Expenses not necessary to operate grant
- Unreasonable or excessive expenses
- Expenses not included in the approved budget
- Expenses incurred outside of the grant award period
- The value of direct community services performed by volunteers
- Services that contribute to organizational overall functions, not specific to program
- The value of direct community services performed by national service members and volunteers specific to program community impact objectives.

### Documentation of Match

It is essential to the Commission that program match is appropriately documented. The Commission requires that matching funds be verifiable from the recipient's (program host organization) records, meaning, entered into the general ledger and supported with documentation. For all match, cash and in-kind, the Commission requires programs to account for match in the following ways.

- Maintain adequate documentation to support the amounts claimed as match;
- Maintain the same type of documentation that the organization would to support any expenditures claimed as AC or grantee share;
- Ensure the documentation of the expense is similar to other program expenditures and consistent with organizational policies and procedures;
- Record the donation and value of the item in detail; and
- Enter the amounts used as match into the general ledger as income and as an expenditure.

An organization must record the value of the in-kind contribution in the general ledger as revenue and as an appropriate expense. In other words, the in-kind contribution must be verifiable in the organization's accounting system. The contributor or donor must always complete, sign, and submit an in-kind contribution form. An organization should never book the delivery of the good(s) or service(s) in the general ledger if documentation to support the contribution does not exist. In the absence of an internal in-kind contribution form, a host organization may tailor the in-kind contribution form, provided on Serve Indiana website, to fit its needs.

In order to apply the value of in-kind contributions to the matching funds requirements of an AC grant, documentation is necessary. The documentation must:

- Identify the service or goods obtained
- Describe why the transaction is allowable for grant purposes
- Record the value of the contribution
- Obtain written confirmation from the donor with a signature or official invoice that includes the following information:
  - Name and signature of donor
  - Date and location of donation
  - Detailed description of contributed item or service
  - Estimated value of contribution
  - How value was determined
  - Who made the determination
  - Whether the contribution was obtained with Federal funds
- Determine how the contribution can be traced back to source documentation.
- Keep a copy of the invoice/receipt and documentation in file for review during



monitoring/audit To calculate an in-kind match contribution, a program must also:

- Use fair market price
- The IRS defines fair market value as the price that item would sell in the open market
- Consider what it would cost to obtain similar goods or services
- Ensure the donor provides the value of the donation
- Review the donation letter or form to ensure the value is reasonable

### Commission Training & Review of Match

Additional information around monitoring, training and review of match can be found in other sections of this handbook. Information on the match monitoring/review process is found in both the Monitoring and Reimbursement sections of this handbook. In instances where programs are found to be out of compliance with their match, the Commission may:

- Disallow match, causing minimum match to not be met
- Disallow Federal funds if minimum match cannot be met
- Decide to audit or question all match if unable to confirm match is reasonable or allocable

Annually, fiscal contacts are trained on all fiscal requirements including the best practices of meeting match. More information on the Commission program training requirements are found in that section of this handbook.

Information on updating or changing match amounts or types can be found in the AmeriCorps program budget modification section.

### Reimbursement Process

The Commission is committed to the accurate and timely processing of payments to sub-grantees (programs). The Commission utilizes OnCorps Reports to interface with the AmeriCorps programs during the payment process as well as the State of Indiana Request for Funds (RFF) process for all funded programs (AmeriCorps and non-AmeriCorps). The Commission uses the OnCorps system to communicate approval and/or need for changes with the AmeriCorps programs. The Commission uses the Request for Funds process for programs to submit requests for funds based on what is communicated in the monthly PER or Fixed Grant Invoices. Additionally, the Commission utilizes two separate Excel spreadsheets, one dedicated to AmeriCorps programming and one dedicated to all funds not relating to AmeriCorps, to track and report any accounting activity of the Commission. Beyond this process, Serve Indiana's larger Division, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), manages the payment process for all sub-grantees and programs.

Each month, operational funded programs submit their Periodic Expense Report (PER) through the OnCorps reporting system. This report of expenditures details the program's AC and match expenses incurred in the previous month. Fixed-Grant programs submit an invoice found on OnCorps in lieu of a PER. The invoice is created using currently enrolled members timesheets that are pulled automatically in OnCorps based on the date of invoice creation. The invoices are not based on actual expenses but instead based on this data to ensure compliance with fixed grant rules and regulations.

PERs and Fixed-Grant Invoices are due no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month for the prior month's expenses.

Commission staff (primarily the Operations Manager) review the PERs for accuracy against the program's approved budget and the grant narrative. If the request is not approved, the submitting program will receive notice through OnCorps. The Commission staff will use the comments section to detail what is incorrect on the report and what needs to be fixed to grant approval for payment. The programs will continue to resubmit the PER until approval is

granted by the Commission's staff. The Commission staff member will note the PER as approved by writing in the comment box their initials, notation of approval and date of approval. For Fixed Grant Invoices, the Commission staff will work through a similar process but instead of reviewing a budget, the staff member will review the members' time included in the invoice to ensure accuracy of enrollment and retention.

The review process by Commission staff is conducted within 2 business days of the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month unless Commission staff are out at a training or event in which case it is conducted upon return to office.

The submission of the Invoices or PERs is recorded in Serve Indiana's Deadline Compliance tracking sheet each month. Once the Operation Manager reviews the Invoices/PERs, the Operations Manager updates the Deadline Compliance sheet with submission dates noting if programs were "on time", "late" or had an "approved late". A submission is considered on time, even if it needs correction, if submitted on or before the deadline.

Once the PER or Invoice is approved, programs submit their Request for Funds (RFF) for the prior month's expenses to [info@serveindiana.gov](mailto:info@serveindiana.gov) managed by the Operations Manager. The RFF is a State of Indiana form that includes the purchase order number, state contract number, dates of expenses and a staff signature. The purchase order number tracks year to date expenditures on state contracts. This RFF must be attached with the corresponding monthly PER or Fixed Invoice that has been approved prior in OnCorps.

RFFs are due no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> day of each month for the prior month's expenses.

When an RFF is received, the Operations Manager emails it to the Director of Grants for review. The Director of Grants reviews the RFF for accuracy against the program's prior month's PER or Fixed-Grant invoice. If the amount matches and all other information listed is correct, the RFF is approved with a signature and date of the Director of Grants. It is then saved in Serve Indiana's shared drive, and submitted to the Department of Workforce Development's Accounting Department. The programs' name, invoice number, amount, and date it was sent to DWD is inputted into the Serve Indiana Invoice Tracking System by the Operations Manager. If not approved, it is sent back to the program contact for re-submission and not recorded in the Serve Indiana tracking system. The submission of RFF is also recorded in Serve Indiana's Deadline Compliance tracking sheet. After the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month, the Operations Manager reviews the info email box for RFF submissions and updates the Deadline Compliance sheet noting if programs were "on time", "late" or had an "approved late". A submission is considered on time, even if it needs correction, if submitted on or before the deadline.

The review process by Commission staff is conducted within 2 business days of the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month or from when they are submitted to the info box unless Commission staff are out at a training or event, in which case it is conducted upon return to office.

The Request for Funds payment process takes up to 45 days to complete from when the RFF is submitted to when a program is paid. After Serve Indiana submits the RFF to DWD, the DWD policies and procedures around reimbursement take over. Each month, Serve Indiana receives a purchase order report from DWD's fiscal team for all open purchase orders or state grants (programs). The Operations Manager and Director of Grants review this report and compare it to their records (OnCorps, invoice tracking systems). Any errors or issues are communicated to the DWD fiscal team for correction. Serve Indiana will also work with programs on any issues at this point in conjunction with DWD as needed.

### Special requests/requirements for programs/contracts

In rare instances, programs/contracts may require some special attention, requirements or approved requests. Special requests must be made in writing to the assigned Commission staff member and approved before action is taken. Below are cases of special requests/requirement examples that Serve Indiana will review:

- If a program needs to submit a PER, invoice or RFF after the due date, they can be given an “approved late” on the Deadline Compliance document. The program must contact the Director of Grants or Operations Manager prior to the deadline to receive an “approved late”. This request must be sent via email, and it is then saved to the program’s monitoring folder. The Commission staff member will then communicate with all necessary staff around this update for accurate recording.
- If the Director of Grants or Operations Manager are not available to review assigned PERs, Invoices or RFFs, the Director of Programs can approve, document, track or document in their place. If the Director of Programs is not available, the Executive Director may also take over a task or approve.
- If an AmeriCorps program has an approved alternative timekeeping practice and does not use the OnCorps system, they still must use the OnCorps system to submit monthly. In cases such as this, a fixed grant will submit a PER instead of a Fixed Invoice each month. The program will use the member cost section of the PER to denote the member’s costs incurred. The Commission staff will request additional documentation (i.e., copies of member timesheets) in these cases.
- In rare cases, an organization may not be able to consistently submit their AmeriCorps PER on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month due to their internal organization fiscal practices. If this is demonstrated several months in a row, an organization can request to have a different due date later than the 15<sup>th</sup>. If an organization would like to request a new due date, they must contact the Director of Grants with a rationale reason and until approved they must submit on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month to be considered on time.
- There are some cases where a State contract can be executed after the start of the program. A program may incur expenses on their program or start their members' time within their approved budget period and should continue to submit an on-time PER or Invoice during this time. They cannot, however, submit an RFF until the state contract is executed and a purchase order is received. When the purchase order is not received until after several months of programming, a program may submit an RFF with several approved PERs or Invoices in one to expedite the process. The only case where this would not be true is if the notice of grant award (NGA) has not been executed by AC by the start date. In rare cases such as this, Serve Indiana staff would communicate that update.
- State agencies have a slightly different process than listed above for the contracting and reimbursement process and DWD policies around this should be followed by Serve Indiana. State of Indiana agencies do not have contracts with DWD instead they have an MOU. They are still required to submit an Invoice or PER if they are an AmeriCorps program and an RFF. Once the RFF is submitted and approved, the agency must draw their funds in PeopleSoft but may only draw the amount requested in the RFF. If this step is not finalized the agency will be considered out of compliance until corrected and matching the RFF YTD totals.
- As they come up, other instances must be discussed with the staff member and the Director of Grants before approval.

### Program Financial Reporting & Modification Requirements

Beyond the monthly submission of Periodic Expense Reports/fixed invoices and the request for funds process, Serve Indiana has other fiscal reporting and modification request requirements of programs. Serve Indiana communicates due dates for fiscal reports in the annual calendar and through updates via email as appropriate. Budget modifications can be submitted at any time until the final due date listed in the Serve Indiana calendar.

Serve Indiana utilizes the OnCorps system for the AFR and budget modifications once approved. Budget modification requests, extension requests, and the unexpended funds reports are submitted via email to Serve Indiana. For all items with due dates in the calendar, Serve Indiana tracks program submissions in the deadline compliance sheet. For other requests and updates, Serve Indiana documents those changes in the program's monitoring folder. Some modifications or due dates must be approved by AC as well as Serve Indiana.

### Aggregated Financial Reports

Each organization with a cost reimbursement grant must submit two Aggregated Financial Reports (AFR) that captures the information submitted on the organization's PERs during a designated period. Fixed grants do not require any AFR submissions. These are due in OnCorps and deadlines are provided in the AmeriCorps Calendar issued to programs. This information is compiled and submitted as a Federal Financial Report (FFR) to the AC by Serve Indiana.

The Aggregated Financial Report (AFR) is submitted by AmeriCorps programs every March (30<sup>th</sup>) and September (30<sup>th</sup>). It pulls together all Periodic Expense Reports (PER) for that period on OnCorps. Serve Indiana reviews AFRs within 7 business days of submission. The submission date is recorded in the deadline compliance tracking sheet for compliance. The Director of Grants reviews the AFR to make sure the AC share and match amounts are correct as submitted in the PERs.

Once reviewed, Serve Indiana approves the AFR and saves it to the Fiscal FFR folder on the shared drive. Sub folders are then grouped by program year. Once saved, the Director of Grants reviews all AFRs before sending them to DWD. All AFRs are sent up to DWD's fiscal team between 7-10 business days prior to the AC FFR submission due date. DWD's fiscal team submits the FFR on behalf of Serve Indiana.

### Budget Modification

Serve Indiana acknowledges that budget modifications are sometimes unavoidable and sometimes are required more than once in a program year. Budget modifications allow a program to decrease their budget in one or more line items so that you can increase the budget of another line item.

*Budget modifications are required of programs when:*

- If a program would like to make a change to cumulative and/or aggregate budget line items that amount to 10 percent or more of the total budget. The total budget includes both the AC and grantee shares.
- If a program would like to add an expense or line item not previously included in their budget.

*Budget modifications are not required of programs if a program wants to:*

- Transfer funds among approved direct cost categories when the cumulative amount of such transfers does not exceed 10 percent of the total budget.
  - The program ***must*** make a notation in each one of the PERs to notify the Director of Grants of the changes that they are making, including the rationale, and which line(s) the funds will be subtracted from so the program will not exceed the total budget.

*All budget changes* must be in compliance with all applicable standards and requirements articulated in the grant agreement, NOFO, OMB Circulars, and AmeriCorps Regulations (45 CFR§2543.25), and Provisions.

### Budget Modification Process

Programs are required to submit a budget modification if they are moving funds over 10% of the program's total budget or they want to add an item not previously approved in their budget. A program must submit a request to Serve Indiana prior to submitting a budget modification in OnCorps.

The following steps must be followed to request a modification.

1. Submit a budget modification request email to the Director of Grants. The email should include the following information:
  - a. Rationale for budget modification including a rationale for each line item affected.
  - b. Line items affected with calculation of amount moved.
  - c. Amount requested to move between or type of expense requesting to add.
  - d. Calculation showing the amount of programs AC or match will not be affected by such requests.

Serve Indiana reviews budget modifications within 7 business days of submission. The Director of Grants reviews the requests and the program's approved budget/narratives for compliance. The Director of Grants then emails the programs with an approval, denial, or additional information request email. If approved, the email includes information on how the program should submit their modification via OnCorps for final approval. Once submitted in OnCorps, the Director of Grants will review the modified budget for compliance and approve the budget as appropriate. Any documentation of the request is saved in the program's monitoring folder.

### Unexpended Funds Report

Near the end of the program year, Serve Indiana asks each program to note the amount of funds they will not use for the remainder of their grant period. This information is requested of Serve Indiana by AC and helps Serve Indiana plan for the reallocation of funds if necessary. Programs should be realistic in their amounts as this could result in a decreased or amended award.

Serve Indiana staff save this information in the AmeriCorps Unexpended Funds folders within the Fiscal folder. There is then a subfolder by program year where this information is saved and compiled. Following the program submissions, Serve Indiana communicates with AC on totals and with the DWD fiscal team on next steps. The DWD contracts team may decide to amend current program contracts to ensure unexpended funds are available in the following program year. If this happens, Serve Indiana will work with the programs and DWD to ensure this process is completed properly.

Serve Indiana may also use the unexpended funds totals to add additional technical assistance for a program. The total amount used is also used in the grant funding decision meeting with the Commission.

### Grant Extension Requests

Serve Indiana does not encourage the use of grant extensions by its programs. Programs should work to complete their members' terms of service and program goals within their budget and contract periods. There are instances where this may not be possible but they should be rare instances.

If a program is unable to complete their proposed project within the grant term, they may request a one time, no cost, extension. This request can only be made one time within a three-year grant cycle. Programs should familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations around extensions as noted in the AC terms and conditions prior to requesting an extension.

To submit a request, a program should email the Serve Indiana Director of Grants with the following information:

- Rational for extension
- Members affected by extension
- Extension end date
- Amount of funds projected for use in following program year
- Any additional documentation or information that may explain the extension

The Director of Grants will review the extension request for compliance and communicate with AC on next steps. If approved by AC, the Director of Grants will work with the DWD contracts team on a grant extension or use of carry over funds in a following year grant agreement. Programs cannot use funds beyond their grant agreement until the grant extension has been approved. Serve Indiana saves any communication and documentation around an extension in the program's monitoring folder. Serve Indiana communicates an extension due date in the annual calendar. After this date, extension requests cannot be submitted.

### Distribution of Living Allowance

Serve Indiana recognizes programs need guidance for how to distribute a living allowance properly as the requirements can be confusing. Serve Indiana also recognizes that programs have a variety of start/end dates for members. To keep programs in compliance while understanding these facts, Serve Indiana has specific living allowance distribution parameters and requirements. These requirements were finalized in the 2017-18 program year and starting in the 2018-19 program year all programs are required to have implemented these requirements.

Programs are required to create a distribution process as part of their overall living allowance policy. This process should be used consistently across a program year, regardless of member start/end dates. Programs are allowed to use "living allowance cohorts" as an option to cluster living allowance distribution amounts. A program is not required to use living allowance cohorts and if they do not, all members in the same slot type must have the same distribution amount no matter when they begin or end their service. Programs are required to review the below distribution amount requirements, the member benefit section, and the AC Terms and Conditions before creating their living allowance policy. This policy is reviewed by Serve Indiana at the program's monitoring visit and/or during the fiscal monitoring process. Non-compliance with AC/Serve Indiana's policies and/or the program's living allowance

policy, may result in a finding and/or disallowance repayment. Any errors in distribution should be communicated to Serve Indiana immediately.

### Living Allowance Payment & Distribution Requirements for ALL Programs

The living allowance is not a wage; it is designed to help members meet the necessary living expenses incurred while participating in the AmeriCorps program. Programs must not pay a living allowance on an hourly basis and it should not fluctuate based on the number of hours members serve in a given time period. Programs should pay the living allowance in increments, such as weekly or bi-weekly. For information about member benefits and living allowance policy requirements, review the Member Benefits section of the handbook.

A program cannot disburse the full living allowance to a member who completes his or her required hours before the end of the agreed-upon term of service or play “catch up” when starting late.

Example One: A member completes 1700 hours in 9 months instead of the program’s anticipated 11-month term of service. Even if a program provides the living allowance in semi-monthly allotments, it cannot pay the remaining 2 months of the living allowance as a lump sum payment as the member exits the program.

Example Two: A member who starts late cannot receive a “catch up” amount for the first three months so that the member will receive the same living allowance as other members who started earlier but will end at the same time.

Neither of these two examples reflects the intent of the living allowance distribution guidance. The living allowance is “designed to help members meet the necessary living expenses incurred while participating in the AmeriCorps program.” In addition, members who complete hours on an abbreviated schedule may be depriving the service site of important service it needs for the expected term of service.

A member who completes his or her service early or starts service late should receive the portion of the living allowance that would be provided for that period of participation under the program’s living allowance distribution policy. The amount should not vary based on the number of hours served during a particular time period. For example, if the program is designed to run for 11 months, and the living allowance is paid monthly, a member who starts in the second month will receive 10/11ths of the total living allowance, unless the member serves a month longer than the members who started in the first month of the program. See the chart below for additional clarity.

Member Situation	Length of Service	Amount per Month	Total Living Allowance Provided
Member A starts and finishes on time	10 months	\$1,090	\$10,900
Member B starts on time and finishes early	9 months	\$1,090	\$9,810
Member C starts late and finishes late	10 months	\$1,090	\$10,900
Member D starts on time and finishes late	11 months	\$1,090	\$10,900
Member E starts late and finishes on time	9 months	\$1,090	\$9,810

The member contract MUST reflect that the living allowance is provided for expenses while serving and should not be linked to completion of hours. The contract should specify how the living allowance is distributed (e.g., bi-weekly, semi-monthly), and in what increments, and should note that members will receive the living allowance as long as they are serving. The contract should also delineate the expected term of service (e.g., 10 months, 12 months).

### *Additional Guidance for all Programs:*

- If a member completes their hours early, then they can be exited, **but** they will then not receive their full living allowance.
- Programs should include clear guidance on the final living allowance payment if a member exits their service on time versus early.
- Programs should ensure their member contracts mirror the distribution process of the program. Specific language is required to be included in the contract as noted above.
- Living allowance totals should be pulled from a program's approved budget.
- Living allowance policy (and distribution schedule/amounts) should be updated annually.
- Slot conversion may occur during a program year and the distribution section of a policy should be updated at the time by the program.

## Living Allowance Cohort Option

The only adjustment programs may make to the above distribution rules/regulations is by adding a "living allowance cohort" section to their distribution process in their living allowance policy. Living allowance cohorts **are not** required by programs and programs should review the guidance for non-cohort to understand that option. Serve Indiana strongly encourages new programs to use the non-cohort option as it is a simpler way to stay in compliance.

Serve Indiana defines a living allowance cohort as a logical grouping of AmeriCorps members who will be paid the same living allowance distribution based on the first member of a slot type who begins in that cohort. In most cases, a cohort is a group by a distinct start or end date but not both. Programs may use the word cohort to define other groups of members that may not align with a living allowance distribution. It is the responsibility of the program to understand the difference between their recruitment cohorts and the Serve Indiana living allowance cohort definition if those two items differ.

Serve Indiana also strongly encourages any program who is updating their living allowance to include cohorts to contact Serve Indiana for approval prior to this change.

### *Serve Indiana Cohort Rules:*

- Programs are allowed a maximum of 3 cohorts in their policy unless otherwise approved in writing by Serve Indiana.
- Cohorts must be based on a logical grouping of members (i.e., heavy recruitment periods-fall, spring, summer).
- Cohort specific information must be included in the program's living allowance policy. This information must include the start/end dates included in the cohort and how each slot type available is affected.



- Living allowance cohorts only allow a program to reset a living allowance distribution total, not the total living allowance available.
- Living allowance cohort total amount available must be based on the program's grant approved budget for that program year.
- Cohorts should only adjust the distribution amounts and all other aspects of the living allowance should remain constant. Programs are required to have consistent practices across cohorts.
- Cohorts must be more than one month apart in start dates unless a distinct grouping can be documented and communicated to Serve Indiana.

**Cohort Approved Example:** *Serve Indiana strongly encourages programs to follow the below example for their cohorts. These groupings are based on heavy recruitment periods for most programs. For a full policy template, see the template section of the AC handbook.*

- **Group 1: Fall Cohort**
  - Start Dates: Anytime between September 1<sup>st</sup>-December 31<sup>st</sup>
  - End date: August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - Stipend Allocation:
    - Full Time Member Amount:  $\$15,000/12 \text{ months} = \$1,250/\text{month}$ 
      - Bi monthly distribution amount: \$625
    - Half Time Member Amount:  $\$7,500/12 \text{ months} = \$625/\text{month}$ 
      - Bi monthly distribution amount: \$312.50
  - *Even if a member begins after the September 1st date, he or she will still receive the same amount of stipend each month if their start date falls between 09/01-12/31. They will not receive a lump sum at the end of their service or an increased amount per month*
- **Group 2: Spring Cohort**
  - Start Dates: Anytime between January 1<sup>st</sup>-April 30<sup>th</sup>
  - End date: August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - Stipend Allocation:
    - Full Time Member Amount: n/a
    - Half Time Member Amount:  $\$7,500/8 \text{ months} = \$937.50/\text{month}$ 
      - Bi monthly distribution amount: \$468.75
  - *Even if a member begins after the January 1st date, he or she will still receive the same amount of stipend each month if their start date falls between 01/01-04/30. They will not receive a lump sum at the end of their service or an increased amount per month*
- **Group 3: Summer Cohort**
  - Start Dates: Anytime between May 1<sup>st</sup>-June 1st
  - End date: August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - Stipend Allocation:
    - Full Time Member Amount: n/a
    - Half Time Member Amount:  $\$7,500/4 \text{ months} = \$1,875/\text{month}$

- Bi monthly distribution amount: \$937.50
- Quarter Time Member Amount: \$3,750/4 months = \$937.50/month
  - Bi monthly distribution amount: \$468.75
- *Even if a member begins after the May 1<sup>st</sup> start date, he or she will still receive the same amount of stipend each month if their start date falls between 05/01-06/01. Members are not allowed to start after 06/01. They will not receive a lump sum at the end of their service or an increased amount per month*

### Non-Cohort Guidance

Programs are not required to include living allowance cohorts in their distribution process. A program may take the simpler approach of paying the same distribution amount to all members in the same slot type throughout the full program year. If a program does not include cohorts in their living allowance policy, Serve Indiana will assume all members will be paid the same distribution amount based on the first member who started in that slot type. Programs who chose this option, are strongly encouraged to list a distribution example as noted below to ensure compliance by the organization's fiscal team and to reduce confusion from Serve Indiana.

#### September 1<sup>st</sup>-August 31<sup>st</sup> Non-Cohort Example:

- *Full Time:* Receive up to \$15,000 (less taxes) for the living allowance; \$2,000/month; \$1,000/pay distribution amount (less taxes).
- *Half Time:* Receive up to \$10,000 (less taxes) for the living allowance; \$950/month; \$475/pay distribution amount (less taxes).
- *Quarter Time:* Receive up to \$7,500 (less taxes) for the living allowance; \$700/month; \$350/pay distribution amount (less taxes).

## Program Monitoring

The Commission expects AmeriCorps programs to strive to be high performing and achieving. The staff and Commission of Serve Indiana recognize that without clear expectations of what a strong program entails, organizations may not achieve the best results. In the fall of 2017, the Serve Indiana Commission voted in the below expectations for all programs. It is the expectations of the Serve Indiana Commission and staff that programs meet said thresholds annually. AC HQ also has their own expectations as communicated below. A program should be aware that while they may meet Serve Indiana’s expectations, AC HQ expects a higher level of success. It should also be noted that these expectations may change as programs more consistently meet the below standards.

The Commission uses these expectations as part of their overall monitoring strategy. Serve Indiana is committed to addressing challenges by working with sub-grantees to find adequate technical assistance to meet their needs. To that end, Serve Indiana has developed a monitoring strategy that increases opportunities for guidance and intervention. This approach, the communication of Commission expectations and strong monitoring practices, allows the Commission to guide and strengthen programs to best meet the needs of their communities.

Data Point:	CNCS Expectation	Serve Indiana
<b>Recruitment/Enrollment Rate</b>	100%	90%
<b>Retention Rate</b>	85%	90%
<b>Performance Measures Met</b>	All measures met	90% of measures met
<b>Deadline compliance</b>	100% compliant	90% compliant
<b>Monitoring Visit Report Results</b>	Dependent on type and risk of finding.	1 Finding and/or less than 5 observations on most recent report
<b>Risk Level</b>	Low risk	Low risk for existing programs (Over 3 years in existence)

Serve Indiana uses the approved expectations to monitor programs, guide technical assistance, and during the grant application review process (GARP). For technical assistance, the Director of Programs tracks these expectations for each program. If a program falls below these expectations, the Commission creates a program specific technical assistance plan. The previous year totals of these expectations are also provided to Commissioners during Commission meetings where funding decisions are made. Lastly, they are used in communicating areas of improvement in monitoring.

While these expectations communicate the Commission’s requirements of programs, specific monitoring of programs is also needed. The Commission takes the following steps to monitor all AmeriCorps programs throughout their time within the portfolio to ensure compliance and achieve high functioning programs. To make monitoring as transparent as possible the Commission provides its monitoring tools and process to programs prior to visits and within the AmeriCorps program handbook and website as possible. Each program also has a monitoring folder with monitoring documentation by program year. Any monitoring, official or not, is documented in said monitoring folder.

## Risk Based Monitoring

The Risk-Based Monitoring Policy guides Serve Indiana in determining a sub-grantee’s risk relative to

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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monitoring and evaluation of the program for legal, financial, and programmatic compliance. An example of the Risk-Based Assessment Tool is included in the example appendix at the end of the AmeriCorps program handbook for program review. Serve Indiana completes a Program Risk Assessment (PRA) for each AmeriCorps sub-grantee near the beginning of each program year, utilizing the standardized Program Risk Assessment Tool. Serve Indiana then assigns each sub-grantee a risk level based upon the review and analysis of the PRA, based on considerations which may include, but are not limited to, the following factors:

- Funding cycle year
- Ability of the sub-grantee to meet statutory, regulatory, and budgeted match requirements
- Turnover of key and/or experienced sub-grantee staff
- Demonstration of a critical need for technical assistance or guidance
- Programmatic quality
- Accuracy of financial reporting in previous program years
- Timeliness in correcting previous programmatic and fiscal issues
- First-time recipient of an AmeriCorps State grant
- Organizational/financial stability of legal applicant
- Ability to achieve performance measure objectives
- Participation in staff and member meetings and trainings
- Challenges/issues identified during the sub-grantee's last monitoring review
- Member recruitment/retention
- Member management

At the completion of each sub-grantee's Program Risk Assessment, Serve Indiana assigns one of two levels of risk, and based on the assigned risk level, sub-grantees must comply with the aligned review processes. All first-year sub-grantees are automatically deemed as high risk. Deadlines for completion are established and communicated by Serve Indiana with a reasonable amount of time for programs to comply. The high-risk level results in more monitoring activities. Programs should strive to keep their risk rating low.

### All Risk Level Programmatic Monitoring

The following items are required of all programs, every program year, no matter what risk level. Due dates are communicated around such items in the AmeriCorps Calendar provided by Serve Indiana at the beginning of the program year and posted to the Serve Indiana website. Additional information, including due date changes, are communicated via email by Commission staff.

#### **Deadline Compliance Monitoring:**

All AmeriCorps programs are required to adhere to deadlines set forth by Serve Indiana regarding fiscal submissions, required training and events, and required documentation. All due dates and deadlines are listed in the AmeriCorps Calendar which is sent to programs at the beginning of the program year and readily available on Serve Indiana's website. All deadline changes will be communicated by Serve Indiana to appropriate program staff.

For a program to be "Excused" from a missed deadline or required training (not due to serious illness or injury), the program must contact their Program Manager at least business two days in advance to offer an explanation why the required deadline will be missed. It is up to Serve Indiana staff's discretion to excuse the program from a missed deadline.

All compliance will be noted in the "Deadline Compliance PY\_\_\_\_" Excel file the day after each deadline by

the Operations Manager.

### **National Service Criminal History Check Monitoring:**

The Commission follows the AC HQ rules and regulations around National Service Criminal History Check for all covered program positions and Commission staff. To ensure compliance, Serve Indiana follows the [AC National Service Criminal History Check Enforcement Guide](#) to review all program's results and conduct a disallowance process as needed. In addition, Serve Indiana requires all programs and Commission staff to complete the [required annual training](#). The deadline to complete the training is communicated in the AmeriCorps Calendar and programs are required to have at least two program staff members complete the training. Documentation of completion is submitted to Commission staff by the communicated deadline and Serve Indiana saves the documentation in the background check folder on the shared drive. Staff also note completion in a background check tracking spreadsheet as well as compliance in the Deadline Compliance document. This process is managed by the Operations Manager with assistance on communication from the Director of Programs.

#### *NSCHC Monitoring Review Process:*

Commission staff follow the steps outlined by AC HQ to 1) assess the level and severity of the non-compliance and whether an expanded review must be completed 2) initiate any corrective action required, and 3) calculate the disallowance amount based on existing mitigation and risk level using the AC provided disallowance matrix. Serve Indiana amounts will mirror the AC disallowance matrix. Below is a step-by-step process conducted by Serve Indiana staff annually.

#### **1. Commission Communication & Program Submission Requirements:**

- a. Once during the program year, Serve Indiana staff begin the NSCHC review process with an email notifying programs. Deadlines are also listed in the AmeriCorps Calendar released prior to this email. There may be instances where the Commission is unable to meet the deadlines listed in the calendar due to workload. In those cases, the Commission will communicate a deadline change to programs via email. This email communicates the below submission and self-reporting requirements.

##### *i. Submission requirements:*

1. All programs must submit a National Service Criminal History checks (NSOPW, FBI, State Limited) of 5 members and 2 new covered positions (i.e., new service site supervisor).
2. Commission staff gives each program a list of the 5 members and 2 covered positions needed for submission. Programs are required to submit the CHC results of each member, contracts of said members, site MOU, any accompaniment, or other mitigating factors to show program's willingness to comply.
3. Programs have a minimum of 15 business days to submit the requested initial items.

#### **2. Serve Indiana Commission Documentation Requirements:**

- a. Serve Indiana uses their excel spreadsheet template to document each program's NSCHC review. This is saved in the "Background check" folder within the monitoring folder of the S: drive.
  - i. The first tab includes the following information: Documentation of written assessment of deficiency, mitigation ratings and an associated disallowance amount.
  - ii. The second tab includes the following information to cover the AC required deficiency documentations and information about each individual reviewed:

1. Date of notification of monitoring, date of monitoring or date of self-review, whichever is earlier, the name of the individual, start date of work/service on the grant, level of access to vulnerable populations, when checks (NSOPW, State of residence, State of service, FBI) were initiated, what other checks/conditions were present and relied on in determining the assigned mitigation rating (e.g., vendor checks), when results were adjudicated, whether accompaniment was performed, when accompaniment ceased, and which checks were missing, incomplete or late.
  - iii. If the individual is ineligible to serve, SI must also document: the full name of the individual, the date they started on the grant, the date ineligibility was identified, the date they were removed from the grant, the number of hours charged to the grant, the assessment of checks conducted against which checks were required, the basis of ineligibility identified through the NSCHC (e.g. false statement, murder conviction, etc.), and the calculation of all associated grant costs from federal and match funds, as applicable.
3. **Commission Review and Initial Response Requirements:**
- a. Commission staff review all submitted documents and save documentation in the program's monitoring folder. This information will be used in the disallowance process if necessary.
    - i. If two or more individuals' NSCHC checks are noncompliant, Serve Indiana will expand the scope of review to include all of the currently serving individuals in covered positions, as of the date of the monitoring activity.
    - ii. If one file is noncompliant, Serve Indiana creates a corrective action plan for the file and disallows costs for the one occurrence of non-compliance. Corrective action plans will follow the AC HQ guidance.
    - iii. For any issues of non-compliance, Serve Indiana requires the program to immediately establish "eligibility" of said member or staff member.
  - b. Following the initial review, Commission staff communicate initial findings of the review via email to programs within 7 business days of the deadline. If a program submits late, the Commission will respond within 7 business days of that submission date. This email will communicate any necessary expansion of the review, immediate corrective action and preliminary levels of mitigation and disallowance.
4. **Disallowance process & final response:** Following the above review process, Serve Indiana finalizes the documentation of non-compliance/ineligibility and how those translate into disallowances using the AC matrix. Serve Indiana communicates this final disallowance amount to the program and AC simultaneously. Both communications are saved to the same background check folder. Once AC updates the Commission on next steps for repayment, Serve Indiana communicates those to the program.

### *Additional Information:*

Serve Indiana does not allow the sub-grantee to replace the disallowed costs with other costs (either by moving match or adding new costs not yet charged to the grant). However, this can be reviewed and waived by Serve Indiana in exceptional circumstances if a sub-grantee is otherwise unable to pay the disallowance. Alternatively, Serve Indiana may work with sub-grantees to develop a payment plan, as needed. In most cases, Serve Indiana will apply the disallowance to the current year even if the issue occurred during a prior grant year. If a previous year disallowance was not paid or communicated to a program, Serve Indiana will do so during the current program year disallowance. Below are the steps that will be taken if a disallowance is found:

## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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Remove any disallowed costs from the grantee share through a PER. If the amount removed keeps them above the statutory match, no further disallowance action is needed. The commission would update the recipient share on the next FFR submission, and if the disallowed costs were from a prime that has closed out and the Final FFR was already submitted, the commission would notify their Grants Officer.

If the amount removed drops them below the statutory match, then they could move in new allowable match costs to bring them above the statutory match minimum. Same process as above on changes to the FFR if the recipient share needs to be updated.

If there are not other allowable match items to move in, then the commission would need to disallow costs on the AC share in order to ensure their reported match meets the statutory minimum.

AC and/or the IPERIA office may also review program's NSCHC files. In the instance that either office finds additional disallowances, those are communicated to programs through Serve Indiana. Serve Indiana then works with the program to resolve said payments.

If a program does not comply with the above steps, a manual hold may be placed on the program. This may result in the inability of the program to request reimbursements on their grant.

**Miscellaneous Reviews:** Serve Indiana reviews other documents throughout each program year, and sub-grantees must submit the requested documents by the deadline provided (for ex., training agendas, position descriptions, volunteer tracking tools, supporting documentation, etc.)

### Low Risk vs High Risk Programmatic Monitoring

In addition to the above requirements for all risk levels, low risk, high risk, and new programs have separate, additional, monitoring requirements. The difference between a low risk and high-risk program is the expectation of compliance issues by the Commission. For this reason, Serve Indiana has additional requirements of high risk (and new programs) versus low risk for year-round monitoring. The types of actions taken throughout the year are listed below, additional monitoring or technical assistance may be required depending on how the program progresses throughout the program year.

#### *Low Risk Programs:*

- Required to receive an onsite monitoring every 3 years
- Required to send at least one staff member to all "all program" trainings/events
- Required to complete and submit documentation of AC Core Curriculum if Program Director has under 5 years' experience

#### *High Risk Programs:*

- Required to receive an onsite monitoring every year
- Required to send at least one staff member to all "all program" trainings/events and "new staff" calls as deemed appropriate by Serve Indiana
- Required to complete and submit documentation of AC Core Curriculum if Program Director has under 5 years' experience
- Required to receive additional technical assistance (required calls, meetings with Commission staff)

#### *New Programs (High Risk Automatically):*

- Required to receive an onsite monitoring every year
- Required to send at least one staff member to all “all program” training/events and all “new staff/program” training calls and events.
- Required to complete and submit documentation of AC Core Curriculum
- Required to submit training calendar and policy for review. At the start of the program year, new programs must submit their policy and training calendar by the stated Serve Indiana deadline. SI will review this in comparison to the information noted in the training section of this handbook. Feedback will be given to said programs on their policies and calendars.
- Required to receive additional technical assistance (required calls, meetings with Commission staff)

### Onsite Programmatic Monitoring Visit Overview

During an onsite monitoring visit, a program (and their organization) will have program data, files and policies/procedures reviewed as they pertain to their AmeriCorps program. In addition, key program staff, members and site supervisors are interviewed around their experience and compliance. Serve Indiana uses the same excel spreadsheet template to record the results of this review. This template includes the AC Terms & Conditions and Indiana AmeriCorps Handbook references for each reviewed item. It also includes a place for notes and comments. The visit is conducted over a three-day period, a desk audit for data review of the program by Commission staff, an onsite visit at the program office to review files and policies/procedures, and a final day of interviews/site visits with members (and their supervisors) at their service sites. Following the visit, a monitoring report is completed by Commission staff as noted in the monitoring report section below.

Monitoring visits are scheduled based on the current year risk level of a program. Following the risk assessment process, Commission staff communicate the risk level results to programs and begin scheduling onsite monitoring visits to all high-risk programs and low risk programs who have not received a monitoring visit within three years. The Commission attempts to schedule these visits so at least the onsite visit portion is completed by the end of the program year. The Director of Programs conducts all monitoring visits, but other Commission staff may assist depending on workload. New Commission staff who assist in this process are trained by the Director of Programs on the monitoring process before attending one on their own.

*Items reviewed:* For an onsite monitoring visit the following items are reviewed at a minimum for all risk levels of programs.

- **Member Contract Review.** A minimum of one member contract is reviewed as part of the pre-visit documents. Serve Indiana communicates a deadline for submission of such documents when the monitoring visit is scheduled. Member contracts included appropriately in the member files are also reviewed by Serve Indiana at the time of the visit.
- **Member File Review.** Serve Indiana will select, at minimum, five (5) member files to review during each onsite visit. The names of selected member files are given at the time of the visit.
- **Self-Assessment survey.** The sub-grantee must fully answer all programmatic and fiscal questions provided in the Monitoring Questionnaire and return it to Serve Indiana by the deadline provided by Serve Indiana.
- **Service site Agreements/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).** A minimum of one site agreements/MOU will be reviewed as part of the pre visit documents. Serve Indiana communicates a deadline for submission of such documents when the monitoring visit is scheduled. Site MOU/agreements that are included files at the visit are also reviewed by Serve Indiana at the time of the visit.



## Indiana AmeriCorps State Grant Program Handbook

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- **Policies and Procedures.** The sub-grantee must provide Serve Indiana with written policies and procedures required according to the Grant Agreement, AC regulations, federal law, AC Terms and Conditions, and the Serve Indiana AmeriCorps Director handbook.
- **Additional Documentation.** Serve Indiana may review living allowance distribution schedules, healthcare rosters and supporting documentation, child care documentation, and other documents required for the AmeriCorps program.

*Interviews:* Key staff, members and site supervisors are interviewed during this visit as well. The goal of these interviews is for Commission staff to understand the program more fully, collect great stories, and detect areas of improvement around compliance or program development. Ideally the Commission conducts these interviews in person but the staff may be flexible with a conference call if needed. The following positions are interviewed at a minimum during this process.

- **Program Director/Program Staff:** An in-depth interview around program success/challenges, policies/procedures, Commission support/technical assistance needs, and general compliance.
- **Executive Director:** A short interview conducted with or without the Program Director present, depending on program or program staff past performance. This includes an overview of how the program is meeting expectations and performing during that program year, and previous years is applicable to the conversation. Commission staff pull data and information on the program in the pre visit prep to share with the Executive Director. It is also a chance for Commission staff to understand the Executive Director's role in the program and communicate what role they should have with program management.
- **Member & Site Supervisors:** The Commission interviews a minimum of two members and their site supervisors at two separate sites. If the program does not have external sites, members serving at the program's host organization are interviewed along with appropriate direct supervisors. Interview questions center around the members/sites experience with the program, how well they were prepared for their roles, what they have learned from their roles, compliance and any areas of improvement.
- **Any additional program staff as appropriate**

Interviews may bring up concerns from staff or members and Commission staff are asked to use best judgment on program staff involvement. In most cases, member and staff comments are kept confidential unless an issue needs immediate assistance from the Commission and program staff. Otherwise, the information used in these interviews is compiled in the monitoring report without reference to specific interviewee comments. If a severe issue arises, the Commission staff member is encouraged to bring in another Commission staff member to assist in an immediate follow up conversation with the program staff member.

### All Risk Level Fiscal Monitoring

In addition to the programmatic monitoring activities listed above, all programs participate in fiscal monitoring. These activities are conducted in conjunction with DWD's fiscal monitoring/reviews of sub-grantees/programs. Below is a list of activities the Commission staff are involved with throughout a program year or cycle.

**Monthly Review:** Monthly, the Director of Grants reviews PERs/Invoices/RFFs for appropriate and timely drawing of funds, cost per MSY totals, and match/AC spend percentages in comparison to the approved grant budget. In addition, a purchase order report provided by DWD is reviewed by the Operations Manager and Director of Grants. This report communicates the amounts programs have drawn based on DWD records or reimbursement. The amounts listed are cross referenced with Serve Indiana records (i.e., OnCorps, invoice tracking sheet). Any errors are communicated as appropriate to the program and/or DWD for correction.

**Quarterly/Biannual Review:** Throughout the program year the Commission reviews the percentage spent by programs, how funds are spent and the cost/MSY. It is expected that programs will spend at least 90% of their AC funds. The program should be consistently working towards that amount as the program year moves forward. If, for example, a program has not spent 50% of AC funds (or met 50% of required match) by half way through the program year, this indicates to the Commission the program is not on track to spend their funds. Not spending funds translates to the Commission that there are larger program issues at play (i.e., low recruitment/retention). This information is reviewed quarterly at a minimum by the Director of Grants and then communicated to the Director of Programs so an additional technical assistance plan can be created.

**Close out Review:** DWD manages the official state close out process for Serve Indiana, but the Commission's Director of Grants does have some oversight for compliance purposes. Around two weeks before the program year ends, programs are sent an end of year checklist from Serve Indiana and a close out report from DWD. The Serve Indiana checklist includes information on how programs properly complete members' terms, files, record retention, final draw information and more. Once submitted, it is reviewed by the Director of Grants for compliance. Simultaneously, the Director of Grants works with the DWD fiscal team on correct close out of programs. This includes a final comparison of reimbursement amounts to expenses reported by the programs. Any errors are worked through with DWD, Serve Indiana and the program before a close out letter is issued by DWD.

**Single Audit Monitoring:** In accordance with AC policy and utilizing DWD monitoring tools, all programs will receive monitoring of their single audits. This monitoring will be conducted via desk audit and will include the following procedures:

- a) Identify all subgrantees with AC expenditures for each State fiscal year and determine which of the subgrantees underwent Single Audits. Using the Single Audit monitoring tool, each applicable program will be monitored by Serve Indiana staff or member of the DWD Monitoring Team in a process separate from other programmatic or fiscal monitoring;
- b) Review the audit reports for findings that affect AC grants to determine if Serve Indiana records require an adjustment. Serve Indiana staff will adjust their internal records as needed, in the event subrecipient single audit reports that contain findings against the AC award necessitate adjustments. Examples could include disallowed costs arising from questioned costs (accounting records and potential FFR adjustment), staff turnover previously unidentified at a subrecipient which could have implications for program management and compliance, and other developments or changes at subrecipient organizations; and
- c) Retain documentation of Serve Indiana monitoring and reviews of subgrantee audit reports, along with management decisions made or corrective actions implemented, on a secured internal network accessible by Serve Indiana staff. Any corrective actions resulting from the monitoring will be tracked and followed up by key Serve Indiana program staff until resolution.

**Full Fiscal Monitoring Visit/Audit:** A full fiscal monitoring visit/desk audit is conducted by a fiscal consultant, Serve Indiana staff or Department of Workforce Development staff at least once every three years on all programs. Fiscal monitoring consists of a review of at least one month of expense activity. Fiscal monitoring is not conducted on fixed-amount grant programs unless deemed necessary by Serve Indiana. Additionally, a fiscal monitoring tool is provided to programs to self-assess their program's fiscal controls. For these reviews, sub-grantees are asked to provide (at minimum) the following information. Serve Indiana may also request additional information not listed here:

1. General Ledger report that includes income and expenses for MONTH/YEAR that support the expenses submitted for reimbursement.

2. If the reports from the General Ledger do not exactly align with the expenses submitted for reimbursement, please complete a reconciliation to the PER for either/both MONTH/YEAR
3. All supporting documentation for MONTH/YEAR for both federal and non-federal share PER separate by line item. Be sure to include staff timesheets, member timesheets, beginning enrollment dates for all members listed on those two PER reports, payroll registers for both staff and members, any in-kind documentation including letters or vouchers.
4. List of ending payroll date for all exited members
5. Liability Insurance Certificate (that properly covers organization, staff, and members)
6. Agency fiscal policy and procedures
7. Agency most recent audit report and management letter
8. Agency annual budget
9. Agency cost allocation plan
10. Separation of duties completed form (Form to be provided)
11. Self-assessment form (Form to be provided)

### Monitoring Reports

Following an official onsite programmatic or fiscal monitoring visit, a program receives a monitoring report by the Commission. This report documents the program's year to date performance, the monitoring visit, any challenges, any past performance as necessary, and the findings and observations from the visit. There are several steps before, during and after the report is written for the Commission staff and program. The same template is used for all programs and is reviewed annually for updates/changes before the first report is sent out. The Commission staff member who led the monitoring visit draft the outstanding items and report and oversee the collection of follow up items. Monitoring reports are reviewed by the Director of Programs before sending on to the program via email. All reports and monitoring visit items are saved within the program's yearly monitoring folder on the Commission shared drive.

#### *Outstanding Items*

At the conclusion of onsite and fiscal monitoring visits, Serve Indiana staff inform the program of any "outstanding items" no later than 10 business days following the visit. This document communicates any items that were not made available at the time of the visit or any item that needs additional review for Serve Indiana staff. The program has 10 business days to collect and resubmit these items.

#### *Monitoring Report: Observations & Findings*

Following the collection of this information, Serve Indiana staff communicate findings and/or observations discovered during the review process through a formal, written report to be issued no later than **30-45 business days after submission of outstanding items**. Any new staff to the Serve Indiana Program Team will be thoroughly trained to ensure compliance with all stated deadlines of the monitoring process. Any failures to adhere to policy or compliance infractions shall be designated as either a finding or observation by Serve Indiana. Findings are egregious or consistent errors realized during the monitoring process. In the report they are referenced with appropriate AC Terms and Conditions and the Serve Indiana AmeriCorps Director Handbook. Observations are less prevalent or severe errors and, for this reason, are not referenced unless the Commission deems appropriate. The designation between observations and findings are made taking into account factors such as (this is not an exhaustive list):

- the severity of the infraction
- the prevalence of infraction (i.e., every file vs. one out of five files)
- the program's past history in adhering to a specific policy (repeat infractions will automatically be deemed as findings)
- the potential and/or real consequences of the infraction

Consistency across sub-grantees when designating findings or observations is maintained whenever possible by Serve Indiana.

### *Response*

Observations do not require a response from the sub-grantee, unless explicitly requested by Serve Indiana. If a compliance finding(s) is/are noted, a sub-grantee shall have no more than thirty (30) calendar days to make corrections acceptable to Serve Indiana. If acceptable compliance is not achieved by the required due date, a sub-grantee shall be determined to be in a status of non-compliance. Serve Indiana may withhold grant funds until evidence of correction is submitted and accepted. A sub-grantee's non-compliance status shall be a determining factor in future funding decisions. If additional finding(s) is/are discovered when Serve Indiana concludes its final analysis and before the final monitoring response is issued, then Serve Indiana may require a sub-grantee to submit: (a) additional documentation in an effort to prove compliance; (b) documentation of training of pertinent staff and/or members and/or, (c) a corrective action plan. This policy shall not preclude Serve Indiana from conducting a site visit or a desk review at any time or requesting any pertinent programmatic or fiscal information as Serve Indiana may deem appropriate.

### *Monitoring close out*

Once the Commission staff member is satisfied with the response and compliance of the program, he/she will send a letter to the program noting the completion of the monitoring visit. This can come in the form of an email or letter with Serve Indiana letterhead. This is saved in the program's monitoring folder along with the other monitoring documents.

## Non-Compliant Program or Organization Remediation Process

In the event that a program or applicant organization is found to be out of compliance with AC or Serve Indiana rules and regulations, the Commission will take the following action. Before any action is taken, issues of non-compliance are communicated immediately to the Commission Director of Programs or Executive Director by staff. The team should then create a plan of action around the issue and communicate with their AC Portfolio Manager for additional guidance. Once those steps are complete, the Commission will follow the below steps with the program/organization. All steps in this process are to be documented and saved within the program's monitoring folder.

Serve Indiana staff will:

1. Communicate to the program/organization to immediately stop the non-compliant action.
2. Send the program/organization a corrective plan which includes a training requirement of all necessary program/organizational staff.
3. Collect a response from the program and communicate that update to the Commission's Director of Programs/Executive Director and AC Portfolio Manager. Additional documentation or training/technical assistance may be required depending on the infraction.

If the non-compliance continues or is a more severe issue Serve Indiana may:

1. Hold reimbursements of the program's state contract.
2. Begin the disallowance process on behalf of the program and begin the debt collection process with AC.
3. End a program's contract/grant agreement immediately with no further payment allowed. In those cases, the Commission will work with the enrolled members to either transfer them to a new program or end their service with a Compelling Personal Circumstance Exit.

### Program Staff Turnover

In the event that a Program Staff is released from their job the applicant organization must contact Serve Indiana within 24-48 business hours of this staff release, and who the new/temporary contact will be. If there is Program Staff resignation, the applicant organization should contact Serve Indiana within 14 business days of the Program Staff's notice to the applicant organization.

Serve Indiana will then set up a meeting or call with the organization to discuss their transition plan. Once the position is filled again, Serve Indiana requires an in person or conference call meeting with the new staff member within 30 business days of their start. The Serve Indiana staff will train the new staff on the Commission's expectations, resources, AC trainings, the Serve Indiana calendar, and more. A sample agenda is available on the Serve Indiana shared drive and should be used as a guide. Documentation of this transition and meeting should be saved in the program's monitoring folder. The Director of Programs manages most of these meetings, but other Serve Indiana staff may also attend or conduct the meetings.

### Grant Close out Process

All sub-grantees must close out their grants at the end of each program year. Closeout documentation may include submission of final budget and progress reporting. Proper close out of sub-grantees by Serve Indiana includes funding specific documents from Serve Indiana and state contract close out documents from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). At the end of the program year, Serve Indiana and DWD send instructions to the program for closing out the grant. The close out process includes a financial reconciliation to ensure all payments have been received and the program has no outstanding payments.

Serve Indiana has specific close out processes for AmeriCorps sub-grantees. Serve Indiana sends out detailed instructions to all AmeriCorps sub-grantees as noted in the annual calendar. DWD sends out their close out instructions and reports separately within 45 days of the final date of the state contract. Programs are responsible for watching for that communication from DWD. Serve Indiana assists as needed in DWD communication to ensure correct contact is made and programs submit their required documents.

Serve Indiana instruction emails include due dates, the below final steps for programs, and an attached “close out checklist” for programs to properly close out their program year around AmeriCorps rules and regulations. Due dates and instruction release dates are included in the AC calendar.

#### *Program close out steps:*

1. Submit final PER/Invoice by 10<sup>th</sup> of month following grant end date
  - a. August 31<sup>st</sup> end date means a September 10<sup>th</sup> PER date
  - b. The PER/invoice must be marked as “final” using the check mark provided on the form
  - c. Extensions must be communicated prior to the PER submission date per the Serve Indiana calendar
2. Submit final RFF by 30<sup>th</sup> of month following grant end date
  - a. August 31<sup>st</sup> end date means a September 30<sup>th</sup> RFF date
  - b. The RFF must be marked as “final” using the check mark provided on the form
  - c. Extensions must be communicated prior to the RFF submission date as noted in the calendar
3. Following the approval of the final PER, submit final AFR in OnCorps.
  - a. Fixed grants do not submit an AFR.
  - b. AFR submission dates and included PERs are communicated in the AC calendar
4. Submit Serve Indiana close out checklist by due date.
5. Submit DWD close out forms by due date.
6. Once all is finalized, the program should receive a “close out letter” from DWD.

#### *Serve Indiana process*

As programs submit their documents, Serve Indiana reviews them within 3 business days. Additional information on the PER, RFF, or AFR review process should be reviewed in their specific sections of this handbook.

- Following the final PER submission, Serve Indiana reviews YTD AC and match totals for compliance. Any

errors result in the return and re-submission of the PER.

- Following the final RFF submission, Serve Indiana reviews for accuracy. Any errors result in a program resubmission.
- As these two steps are finalized, the Director of Grants communicates program progress to the Operations Manager for close out process management.
- Following the AFR submission, Serve Indiana reviews for accuracy. Any errors result in a program resubmission.
- The Director of Grants reviews the final RFF submission with the monthly purchase order report to ensure all program reimbursements have been paid by DWD. Any errors are communicated with DWD and/or the program for resolution.
- Once a program submits all required documents, the AFRs are compiled and submitted to DWD at least 1 week prior to the FFR deadline.
- As programs submit all required documents, Serve Indiana works with DWD's close out team to communicate a program's records match SI's records. SI staff collect a copy of the official DWD close out letter as programs are closed out officially. An excel spreadsheet is used to track all required close out documents and the deadline compliance is updated as well. This excel spreadsheet is shared with the DWD fiscal team to ensure knowledge and compliance of FFR and other grant deadlines.

Any additional close out steps (i.e., FFR submission) are conducted by DWD and can be reviewed in their policies and procedures. Including, the DWD Property Management Surplus policy included below.



DWD Property  
Management-Surpl

## Appendix: Links, Example Forms and Templates

### Template Disclaimer:

*The appendix of this handbook includes example forms and templates that are offered to programs by Serve Indiana. With this, some templates may be out of compliance and should only be seen as starting points for programs to create their own program-catered templates. Programs should be aware that it is their responsibility to review these forms based on AC HQ rules and regulations and any Serve Indiana updates across program years. Templates that are required of programs that cannot be modified, are noted in the handbook. Specifically, the criminal history check templates and grievance templates are examples of required templates that cannot be modified. Those should be used as listed and any modifications should be approved by Serve Indiana, in writing, prior to use.*

### LINKS

[Calendars](#)

[List of Current Indiana AmeriCorps\\*State Programs](#)

[Program Handbook](#)

[Grantee Example Forms and Templates](#)

[Forms](#)

[Guides and Resources](#)

[Training](#)

[Useful Websites](#)

[FAQ's](#)

### Calendars

[2022-2023 AmeriCorps Deadlines and Events](#)

### List of Current Indiana AmeriCorps\*State Programs

[2022-2023 AmeriCorps Program Directory](#)

**2022-2023 INDIANA AMERICORPS STATE FORMULA APPLICANTS NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO) [NOFO](#) & [Application Instructions](#)**

### Forms

The following forms are provided online for use by current Indiana AmeriCorps\*State program directors. The instructions and guidelines for the forms listed below are in the program handbook. All of these forms (\*except the one noted) can be edited by program directors to fit each individual program, however, each form must adhere to legal requirements, the grant agreement, AmeriCorps regulations and provisions.

**The following NSCHC forms are required to be used by all programs. Each member/staff must have these completed documents kept in their NSCHC files.**



[\\*Criminal History Check Consent Form \(for members & staff\)](#)

[\\*Criminal History Check Checklist \(for member & staff\)](#)

[\\*Criminal History Check - under 18 memo](#)

[\\*Criminal History Check- Verification Form](#)

[\\*Criminal History Check-Fieldprint not cleared memo](#)

[Bi-Weekly Time Sheet \(to adapt and use with member\)](#)

[Exit Form \(to be completed by Program Director & Member\)](#)

[Member File Checklist \(for member files\)](#)

[Financial Management Getting Started Checklist](#)

[Health and Childcare Benefit Form \(for members\)](#)

[In-Kind Contributions](#)

[Match Waiver Request: please submit to info@serveindiana.gov](#)

[Photography and Publicity Release \(for members\)](#)

[Residency History \(for applicants\)](#)

[\\*Request for Funds \(this form cannot be changed\)](#)

[Signatory Authority Form](#)

[Time Distribution Report \(monthly\)](#)

[Verification of Eligibility \(for members\)](#)

## Guides and Resources

These handouts, powerpoint presentations, and guides are optional resources to aid in the development of new programs. They can also be used by current programs to help streamline existing programs.

### For Programs:

[NSCHC FAQs \(effective 5.1.21\)](#)

[Using Truescreen & Fieldprint \(updated 11.1.21\)](#)

[Creating an eGrants Account](#)

[Evaluation Resources](#)

[Pre-Recorded Training: ASN Evaluation Requirements](#)

[ASN Evaluation FAQs](#)

[ASN Evaluation Plan Template](#)

[Evaluation Plan Language](#)

[Fixed Amount Grant Guide](#)

[Checklist for New AmeriCorps Programs and Program Staff \(updated 2018\)](#)

[Program Start Up Guide](#)

[Member Enrollment Flow Chart](#)

[Creating a Service Opportunity Listing in eGrants](#)

[AmeriCorps Lingo](#)

[Inclusion Resources](#)

[Recruitment Guide](#)

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[Stages of Group Development](#)

[Allowable and Prohibited Activity Exercise](#)

[Answer Sheet](#)

[Writing Great Stories PowerPoint](#) (Make sure you actually play to the slide show to make it interactive)

[Indiana Specific AmeriCorps Facts and Statistics](#)

[Marketing Best Practices](#)

[AmeriCorps Media Guide](#)

[AmeriCorps Logo Guide](#)

## **For Members:**

[Childcare Benefits](#)

[How Members Can Use Their Education Award](#)

[Money Saving Tips](#) -A list of ways to help members live on the AmeriCorps living allowance (developed by Indiana Campus Compact)

[Marketable Skills Gained through Service](#) Ways for members to market their AmeriCorps experience after their term of service (developed by Indiana Campus Compact)

[College Cost Reduction and Access Act](#) - Member Loan Forgiveness

## **Useful Websites**

[AmeriCorps.gov](#)

[National Service Criminal History Check Resources](#)

[Manage AmeriCorps State & National Grants](#)

[eGrants](#)

[National Service Inclusion Project](#)

[AmeriCorps Week](#)

[AmeriCorps Alums](#)

## Serve Indiana Contact Information

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