

# AmeriCorps\*State Program Guidance Manual

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## Section 1 – Grant Selection Process

### A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) is the administrative entity responsible for the AmeriCorps\*State programs in Virginia on behalf of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). One of the primary responsibilities of OVCS is to receive and review proposals from organizations to operate AmeriCorps programs in Virginia. This is done through an annual request for proposal process (RFP) in accordance with the Commonwealth of Virginia’s procurement policies.

### B. Pre-Screening

All responses to the RFP for AmeriCorps\*State funding are first reviewed by OVCS staff for completeness and general compliance with mandatory requirements. Proposals are evaluated on the basis of the criteria set forth in the application instructions established by CNCS and published in the Virginia AmeriCorps RFP. Proposals not meeting the mandatory requirements as detailed in the RFP are not advanced for consideration for panel review. The review process for qualifying proposals is outlined in the following sections.

### C. Review Panel Selection and Training

CNCS requires State Commissions and administrative entities to conduct a panel review when they choose to accept new proposals. The use of “panels of experts” to evaluate new proposals is statutorily required.

A “Call for Grant Reviewers” is issued via the OVCS e-Newsletter, *Volunteer Virginia*, to generate a pool of interested individuals.

Following are the CNCS’ requirements for review panels:

1. The review panel is broad-based and diverse.
2. Panels are made up of at least three reviewers.
3. No more than half of the reviewers are also advisory board members.
4. Process ensures that none of the reviewers has a conflict of interest.
5. Panel receives training to ensure consistency and determine quality, as well as instruction on how to rank and score proposals.
6. Reviewers use the criteria noted in the AmeriCorps Application Guidelines (and additional state criteria).
7. Reviewers use a standard review form for evaluating proposals.

OVCS ensures that its review panels satisfy the above requirements. In selecting review panels, OVCS considers the person’s experience and/or knowledge of national or community service, faith-based and community-based organizations; experience with grant writing and grant review; understanding of education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and/or other human needs.

An acknowledgement is sent to all individuals who respond to the Call for Grant Reviewers with information on the selection process.

OVCS staff review and evaluate responses from individuals using established criteria. Once a pool of qualified individuals is compiled, follow-up correspondence is sent to confirm each

individual's participation and provide further details. In addition to individuals to serve on the review panels, OVCS staff identifies individuals to serve as facilitators for each panel. Facilitators receive additional instruction for their role.

The panel review process may take 2 to 3 days depending on the number of proposals received. The process begins with training for reviewers that includes guidance on the following:

1. AmeriCorps History/Background
2. AmeriCorps program design essentials
3. Proposal Requirements as detailed in the RFP
4. Current State or National initiatives/priorities
5. Instructions for scoring proposals
6. Conflict of Interest Statement\*

*\* Conflict of interest is determined before finalizing review panels.*

At the end of the training, panel members are given a copy of each proposal to be reviewed, scoring sheets, and detailed instructions.

#### **D. Review Panel Meetings**

OVCS staff convenes the panel members to formally evaluate and score the assigned proposals. A standard scoring tool is used for the process.

At the completion of the process, the facilitator of each panel compiles a written summary including consensus comments for each assigned proposal. The facilitator is also responsible for completing the proposal ranking form that is signed by each panel member. At this time all materials, including panel member notes and score sheets, are collected and filed by OVCS staff.

#### **E. Staff Review**

The second phase of the review process involves OVCS program and fiscal staff. This review uses the same process as the review panels, including the use of the evaluation/scoring tool. During this phase of review further consideration is given to factors included in the RFP in response to priorities established by CNCS and the Office of the Governor.

At the conclusion of this review phase, OVCS staff compiles a summary consisting of the scoring of the review panels and the staff. At this time funding recommendations for each proposal are developed and presented to the program committee of the Governor's Advisory Board on National and Community Service as detailed in Section VI.

#### **F. Advisory Board Concurrence**

After review and concurrence with staff recommendations, the program committee presents the funding recommendations to the Governor's Advisory Board on National and Community Service during a regular or specially convened meeting. Advisory board members vote to concur or not concur on the recommendations of the staff and program committee during this meeting.

### **G. Letters of Intent**

Following the advisory board review, a letter is sent to each responding applicant communicating the final funding determination:

- Those who received a favorable recommendation are congratulated and provided information concerning the award process.
- Those who are not recommended for funding are notified and invited to request technical assistance for future application and notified of the appeal process. An applicant may protest the award within 10 days of posting (Virginia Department of Social Services, Agency Procurement and Surplus Property Manual - Chapter 11, Section 11.2 d.).

### **H. Continuation/Renewal Applications**

Applications are submitted each year by AmeriCorps programs in their first or second year of operation to be considered for Continuation/Renewal. These applications are submitted via eGrants and are evaluated by program and fiscal staff. Factors such as recruitment and retention as well as overall program performance are considered during the review of Continuation/Renewal applications.

Upon completion of the Continuation/Renewal application review, a recommendation for allocation of Member Service Year (MSY) is made by program and fiscal staff and is included in the funding recommendations submitted to the Governor's Advisory Board on National and Community Service for concurrence as outlined in Section F above.

### **I. Planning Grants**

OVCS may make Planning Grants available to organizations interested in developing an AmeriCorps program. These grants can range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for a one-year period. The purpose of the grants is to facilitate intense technical assistance needed to plan and prepare to become an AmeriCorps program.

OVCS may select applicants that demonstrate need for the additional technical assistance through issuance of a separate Planning Grant RFP or through selection based on the review and evaluation of proposals received in response to the annual AmeriCorps\*State RFP.

### **J. Competitive Applications**

Competitive applications are submitted by existing programs at the invitation of OVCS program and fiscal staff based on the program's performance as a sub-grantee in the AmeriCorps\*State formula program.

Recommendations for program submissions to CNCS's competitive process are made to the Governor's Advisory Board, which votes to concur or not concur with the recommendations to be forwarded.

Once submitted, the recommended programs become part of a national "pool" of applicants reviewed by CNCS. If selected by CNCS for an award, the funding award is made through OVCS and managed in the same manner as AmeriCorps\*State Formula programs.

### **K. Documentation**

All documentation of the review/grant selection process is maintained in the procurement file in an organized and accessible manner.

## Section 2 – Program Management and Monitoring

### A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) is required to monitor the performance and progress of funded programs to ensure that the individual programs are in compliance with programmatic and fiscal provisions.

OVCS has adopted a Risk-Based Strategy for monitoring its programs. The purpose of this process is to have in place the tools that will enable the office to evaluate its programs.

### B. Authorization

Compliance guidelines are set forth by the following:

1. National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (42 USC 12501, et seq) – Chapter 129
2. National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
3. Corporation Regulations (45 CFR Parts 2500-2599, 2510 et seq, Parts 2541-2543)
4. VA AmeriCorps Request for Proposal
5. VDSS Program Contract/Grant Award
6. AmeriCorps Provisions
7. Applicable OMB Circulars
8. A-133
9. Other relevant legislation, regulations, and requirements as amended or incorporated by state or federal government.

### C. Goals

- To ensure programs' continued ability to perform effectively;
- To identify potential problems in order to eliminate them or reduce their effects;
- To ensure programs' increased capacity and sustainability.

### D. Monitoring

Program Monitoring is conducted throughout the funded year to review and evaluate records, accomplishments, organizational procedures, fiscal control systems, and service impact.

The office's monitoring strategy encompasses mechanisms to provide oversight of sub-grantees, which may include the following:

- *Communicating*, maintaining regular communications, such as scheduled conference calls or advisory or policy issuances, etc.
- *Training*, to assure program staff knowledge.
- *Reporting*, receiving, and reviewing Program and Fiscal Reports, A-133 or other audits, and other reports as necessary.
- *Site Visits*, for review of compliance and/or program quality and performance issues or emergency resolution of identified problems. Site visits could also include specialized technical assistance trips or special audits or surveys.
- *Evaluating*, to assess progress toward program goals and the severity of any standards not met.

The above considerations will be used along with a risk assessment of each grantee based on the following types of factors:

**New Grantees**

- Organizational performance in past endeavors
- Prior federal or state awards and programs
- Results of prior independent A-133s

**Continuing Grantees**

- Past history of organizational performance
- Prior site visits and findings
- Compliance issues
- Adequacy of reports—program and financial
- Timeliness of reports
- Program performance (quality of activities and accomplishments, responsiveness)
- Audit findings (A-133 or state reviews)
- Adequacy and stability of management, both of the organization and the program
- Community feedback

Information from the following sources may be used in assessing risk:

- Site visit evaluations
- Progress reports
- Financial status reports
- Invoices
- Documentation of program expense reports, time logs, enrollments, etc.
- Status of corrective actions taken for past deficiencies
- Community feedback

Program Monitoring involves the use and analysis of information gathered with several program review instruments (Modules A-E) and the use of an electronic reporting system as described below:

**Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS)**

WBRS is an electronic reporting system used to monitor program progress and expenses. Although WBRS allows OVCS to create a number of reports, the following reports are reviewed routinely by the office:

- Member Roster
- Member Hours Table
- Member Enrollment Query
- Periodic Expense Report (PER)
- Financial Status Report (FSR)

Program Monitoring targets the following areas through the review and/or collection of the following information including but not limited to:

1. Reporting Compliance – timely and accurate submission of:
  - Member Enrollment Forms
  - Change of Status Forms
  - Progress Reports
  - Periodic Expenditure Reports (PER)
  - Financial Summary Reports (FSR)
  - A-133 Audit Reports
  
2. Member Documentation – A random review of member files is conducted during one of the site visits. A minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the member files is randomly selected for review and must include:
  - Member Application
  - Eligibility Documentation
  - Social Security Card
  - Member Contract
  - Confidentiality Agreement
  - Drug Free Workplace Policy Agreement
  - Enrollment Form
  - Evidence of Education:
  - Informed Consent Statement
  - Non-Discrimination Clause Agreement
  - Publicity Release Form
  - Grievance Procedure Statement
  - Receipt of Member Handbook Statement
  - Sexual Harassment Policy Agreement
  - Substance Abuse Policy Agreement
  - Benefits Documentation:
  - Background Check Results:
  - W-4 Tax Forms
  - Timesheets
  - Member Performance Evaluations
  - Documentation for Early Termination
  - Change of Status Form
  - Exit Form
  
3. Review of Timesheets – A review of member time sheets is conducted as part of program monitoring. Time sheets are reviewed along with selected member files. Time sheets are reviewed for the following proper documentation and accuracy.
  - Signed by member, host site supervisor, **and** program director
  - Notation of actual time and date (i.e. 8/30/00; 8:00am-12:30pm)
  - Notation of hours (i.e. 4.5 hours)
  - Notation of activity (direct service hours, training hours, fundraising hours)
  - Correct addition and calculation of hours
  
4. Policies and Procedures – documentation of policies and/or procedures relating to:
  - Engagement in prohibited activities as defined by CNCS
  - A local recruitment plan that encourages diversity and insures non-discrimination

- Reasonable accommodation and accessibility
- Support of members in acquiring GED
- Encouraging, but not requiring, members to vote and allow members time to vote with no penalty
- Allowing members to serve on a jury with no penalty
- Allowing members to serve in the Armed Forces Reserves with no penalty
- Providing members with appropriate supervision
- Conducting member performance reviews
- Reporting serious injuries/deaths to OVCS
- Training that ensures that members are adequately skilled to perform their service
- Prompt notification of changes to child and health care providers
- Release from terms of service
- Child care coverage for eligible members
- Family and Medical Leave coverage for members
- Appropriate safety precautions for members
- Compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act
- Displacement of employees
- Grievance procedures that meet the Administrative Standards, 42 U.S.C. 12636 & 45 C.F.R. 2540.230

5 Benefits and Coverage – Documentation of the following benefits and/or coverage:

- Liability insurance that covers the organization, employees and members
- FICA coverage for members
- Health care coverage for eligible members

6 Organizational Strength – demonstration of:

- Evaluation tools
- Agency mission
- Staff capacity and quality

Site Visit Protocol – when it is determined that a site visit is warranted, the procedure will be as follows:

- Program Officer schedules date for site visit via email or phone at least 30 days in advance of visit
- Confirmation letter sent via email or hard copy with a copy of agenda for visit and copy of review instrument tool(s)
- Site Visit conducted
- Follow-up letter & a monitoring report sent within 30 days of visit with a copy of completed review instruments
- Required actions will be communicated as needed
- Follow-up visit, if warranted

Additional Monitoring – A variety of other methods are used by the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service to monitor the progress of sub-grantees and to assess program compliance. The following is a partial list of those methods and tools:

- Monthly Progress Reports
- Monthly Periodic Expenditure Reports

- Monthly In-Kind Contribution Forms
- Financial Status Reports
- Desk Monitoring
- Program Training and Development Teleconferences
- Program Director Teleconferences
- Program Director Meetings

## E. Reporting

1. **Monthly Progress Reports** – Programs are required to submit monthly progress reports detailing progress toward performance measures, program activities, and steps toward sustainability. Monthly Progress Reports are due **no later than** the 6<sup>th</sup> working day of each month via the [www.vaservice.org](http://www.vaservice.org) website except for quarterly reporting months (January, April, July and October). Reports are reviewed by OVCS Program Officers, who may provide feedback. Based on the report, programs may be required to provide written correspondence, participate in specific training, and/or receive additional site visits.
2. **Program Reporting Non-Compliance**

After the 6<sup>th</sup> working day, if a particular report has not been received, an OCVS Program Officer will send a "**Notice of Failure to Submit Report**" via email by the 6<sup>th</sup> working day of the month.

If the report has not been received within 48 hours of initial notice, a "**Notice of Non-Compliance**" will be sent via email with copies sent to Program Director's superior and the program's fiscal contact. This notice will communicate that reimbursements may be placed on hold until satisfactory compliance as determined by Program staff.

If the report is not received within 48 hours upon Notice of Non-Compliance, a "**Notice of Intent to Terminate Contract**" may be sent via email and postal mail, with copies sent to Program Director's superior and the program's fiscal contact.

## I. Meetings & Teleconferences

**Program Director Meetings** – Program Directors are required to attend periodic meetings for training, program updates, and CNCS and OVCS updates. Program Directors are encouraged to bring program-related staff to meetings.

**Program Director Teleconferences** – Teleconferences are held quarterly with Program Directors to discuss issues of importance or concern, receive updates on program activities, assess training needs, provide feedback, and announce upcoming opportunities for development and/or operation changes.

**Program Compliance Teleconferences** – Programs may receive calls from the OVCS to review concerns and/or recognize progress towards objectives. These calls serve as an opportunity to address program-specific issues. Teleconferences must be documented in the program's contract file and feedback provided in writing.

**I. General Non-Compliance**

If a program is determined to be out of compliance the OVCS will provide the program with written notification. Notice from the OVCS includes the required corrective action, deadlines, and consequences. Consequences may consist of delay in processing reimbursements, limitation of future grant renewal, and closure of the program. *Copies of all notices* are maintained in the program's contract file.

**H. Non-Compliance Notification Process**

If a program request has not been fulfilled by a communicated deadline (via email or letter), a program's OCVS Program Officer will send a "**Notice of Failure to Respond**" via email.

If the request has not been fulfilled within 48 hours a Notice of Failure to Respond, a "**Notice of Non-Compliance**" will be sent via email with copies sent to Program Director's superior and the program's fiscal contact. This notice will communicate that reimbursements may be placed on hold until satisfactory compliance as determined by Program staff.

If the request has not received within 48 hours upon Notice of Non-Compliance, a "**Notice of Intent to Terminate Contract**" may be sent via email and postal mail, with copies sent to Program Director's superior and the program's fiscal contact.

**I. Summary**

Every effort is made to ensure the successful completion of the funded program period. In addition to the above reports and procedures, OVCS may collect and review additional information (e.g., service hour time sheets, self-reporting fiscal assessments, audit reports, etc.). Additional reports, visits, teleconferences, correspondence, and training may be required based upon program performance and compliance.

## Section 3 – Fiscal Management and Monitoring

### A. Introduction

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) must not only exercise standard accounting procedures in the use and management of monetary funds within the Unit, but also ensure the proper management and allowable costs of its sub-grantees.

Practices have been established to determine the following:

- accurate financial information and reporting
- match requirements
- in-kind contributions
- internal controls
- documentation to support expenditures
- documentation of member activity
- effective cash management and budgetary controls

### B. Review of A-133 Audits

Programs are required (requested in writing) to submit the most recent audit of the organization to OCVS. The reports are reviewed to ensure that the legal applicant is in compliance with financial regulations. The A-133 may alert OVCS to deficiencies in internal controls, noncompliance with grant provisions, and questioned costs. A copy of the audit report is filed in each program file.

Most state agencies (e.g., universities) will have an audit completed by the State Auditor's Office. This comprehensive audit makes it very difficult to extract AmeriCorps dollars from the reporting. However, these reports are reviewed by the State and any findings are duly noted and shared within State agencies.

When findings are noted that raise concerns as to the legal management and reporting of finances, programs must provide OCVS in writing with corrective steps taken. The office will determine if these actions are adequate and effective. OVCS may also request Management Letters from the firm that conducted the audit. If necessary, OVCS will use the additional expertise of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Accounting Department to identify weaknesses in program internal controls. Lack of continuous improvement or serious audit findings may result in an early closure/termination of the program based on the required terms and conditions of the sub grantee award agreement (or the contract under the RFP).

### C. Review of Financial Status Reports

All sub grantees must submit Financial Status Reports (FSRs/269a) quarterly. Programs use Web-based Reporting System (WBRS) to create reports that must be submitted to the OVCS on the scheduled quarterly due date. Upon receipt of FSRs, the Fiscal Officer reviews the report for accuracy and questionable costs. Review emphasis is placed upon the following areas:

1. Correct grant number
2. Proper name of program listed in box number 3
3. The grant period listed begins from the very first time the program received funding, not from the beginning of the specific program year.
4. Proper reporting period – quarter (10/1-12/31, 1/1-3/31, 4/1-6/30, 7/1-9/30)
5. Numerical figures/lines addition
6. Whether the sub grantee meets minimum budgeted matches
7. Any other items and issues referred to in the “Guide to Financial Reporting”.

#### **D. Budget Revisions**

Throughout the program year, a program may request line-item reallocations within the same budget section (B-F). Line-item changes cannot be made within Section II – Member Support Costs. Program Operating Costs funds may not be transferred between the Member Support and Operating Costs sections or vice versa.

Process:

1. Program submits a written request with details and supporting narrative to the OVCS Fiscal Officer.
2. OVCS will acknowledge the request and notify the program in writing within ten (10) working days following a review. Additional information may be requested of the program.
3. CNCS approval may be needed for some budget revisions. OVCS will notify the CNCS as necessary within ten (10) working days after its completion of the review.
4. OVCS will notify the program of the final decision in writing.

#### **E. Processing and Reporting**

##### **Periodic Expenditure Reports - PERs**

Programs are required to submit monthly Periodic Expenditure Reports (PERs) to generate program reimbursements and to provide a benchmark of expenditures, allowable costs and program activity. Programs are provided written feedback on reports. Based on the report findings, programs may be required to provide written correspondence, participate in specific training and/or receive additional site visits. This report is completed in WBRs.

1. Monthly Periodic Expense Reports (PERs) are due to OVCS **no later than** the 6<sup>th</sup> workday of each month.
2. PER Submission Process:
  - a. Program enters a PER into WBRs as “completed, awaiting approval.”
  - b. Program notifies the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service’s Fiscal Officer in writing (by email) when the PER is entered into WBRs. This notice must be received by the due date.
  - c. The Fiscal Officer will review the PER and notify the Program Director when they can change the status to “approved” in WBRs.
  - d. Once the PER is approved in WBRs, the Program Director must sign and date it.
  - e. Program then mails the **signed copy** of the approved PER. (The PER **must** be printed in **LANDSCAPE** format).

#### **F. Match Requirements**

Programs must meet the match requirements as identified in the RFP and CNCS guidelines. Programs must meet match requirements monthly as reported and reviewed on the PER. If a program does not meet its match one month, it must be brought to the attention of the program in writing. The program must then either correct the reporting and/or provide an explanation. If the explanation is justifiable (e.g., new staff not hired) as determined by the director of the OVCS, the percent match must still be achieved by a given deadline or next quarterly FSR.

**G. Monthly In-kind Contribution Forms**

In-kind Contribution Forms accompany each monthly PER submission. This form is used to document in-kind match as specified in the proposal and/or in-kind services and/or monetary support provided by the grantee. These reports are completed in a template provided by OVCS.

**Financial Status Reports (FSRs)**

Programs are required to submit quarterly Financial Status Reports (FSRs) to provide a summary of the financial status of the sub-grantee. Reports are reviewed and approved by OVCS before being submitted to CNCS. This report is completed in WBRs.

1. Financial Status Reports (FSRs) are due to OVCS **no later than** the 10<sup>th</sup> workday of January, April, July and October.
2. FSR Submission Process:
  - a. Program enters an FSR into WBRs as “completed, awaiting approval.”
  - b. Program notifies the OVCS Fiscal Officer via email when the FSR is entered into WBRs. This notice must be received by the due date.
  - c. The Fiscal Officer will review the FSR and notify the Program Director when they can change the status to “approved” in WBRs.
  - d. Once the FSR is approved in WBRs, the Program Director must sign and date it.
  - e. Program then mails the **signed copy** of the approved FSR. (The FSR **must** be printed in **LANDSCAPE** format).

## Section 4 – Communication

### A. Introduction

All significant correspondence between AmeriCorps program directors and Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) program and/or fiscal officers should be documented in the appropriate program file. OVCS program and fiscal officers are given the responsibility to determine what constitutes significant correspondence.

### B. Significant Correspondence

Below is a partial list of items that may constitute significant correspondence between program directors and OVCS staff:

- All programmatic changes to include program policies and procedures;
- All programmatic changes pertaining to AmeriCorps program service activities;
- All programmatic changes or questions pertaining to AmeriCorps special events;
- All budget modifications and financial changes in the approved contracts;
- Any change in organizational capacity (e.g., financial status, legal restraint, etc.)
- Any information regarding AmeriCorps Living Allowances;
- All accounting issues including fraud and program waste;
- All changes that reflect a variance in program objectives;
- All compelling circumstances with supporting documentation;
- All issues or questions pertaining to replacing AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members returning to the program;
- All issues or questions pertaining to an AmeriCorps member transferring to another program;
- All issues or questions pertaining to AmeriCorps member suspensions, prohibited activities, and rules of conduct;
- All issues pertaining to law suits, grievances, and injuries of any kind;
- All organizational changes such as personnel being hired or resigning from the program. This includes any changes in the management structure of the program;
- All issues pertaining to criminal history checks and/or reference checks;
- All requests for program no-cost extensions;
- All issues that pertain to fundraising risks;
- All issues that involve AmeriCorps members' injuries while serving in the program;
- All AmeriCorps program issues (i.e., Sexual Harassment, Racial Harassment, General Harassment, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues, Insurance issues, Workers compensation issues, AmeriCorps Disciplinary action issues, and Grievance procedures);
- All program complaints or concerns pertaining to Office on Volunteerism and Community Service staff;
- All program appeals of non-compliance notifications;
- All program training requests for staff and AmeriCorps members;
- All program evaluation issues;
- All site visit responses and requests for additional information;
- All general program requests and changes in any part of the approved contract.

**C. Lines of Communication**

OVCS's primary customer is always the program director. The program director's primary customer is the AmeriCorps member. AmeriCorps members should not be directed to OVCS unless the office is clearly identified as a step in the program's internal grievance procedures. Communication should occur between OVCS and the AmeriCorps program staff only. The program is responsible for relaying information and support to the member.

**D. Routine Programmatic or Budgetary Changes:**

When OVCS receives the program request, the office will acknowledge the receipt within 5 working days.

OVCS will review the request and notify the program and applicable CNCS staff within ten (10) working days of the completion of the review and its final determination.

**E. Compelling Personal Circumstance**

Compelling Personal Circumstance is defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in the AmeriCorps Provisions. Final decisions on all compelling personal circumstances are rendered by the appropriate OVCS program officer. Procedure:

1. Program staff must determine if a member's situation meets the general criteria of compelling circumstances as outline by CNCS.
2. If a program determines that a member issue does meet the general criteria a written request for approval of a prorated Education Award is forwarded to the appropriate program officer. Requests for prorated awards should be submitted in a timely manner (as soon as the circumstances and the member's inability to complete the service term have been identified – not at the end of the program year).
3. A request for approval of a prorated education award based upon compelling personal circumstance should include:
  - a. Member's name
  - b. Number of hours and percentage of time completed
  - c. Detailed description of the circumstances
  - d. Supporting documentation (i.e., medical notes)
  - e. Letter from member to the program requesting approval (if applicable)
4. A response will be provided to the program within 5 working days of receipt of the request. A decision will be rendered or additional information will be requested.
5. A program does have the right to appeal a decision (within 5 days of the rendered OVCS decision); this appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 days of the original decision.

## Section 5 – Member Issues

### A. Member Concern Protocol

Oftentimes, a member will contact OVCS to voice concerns or inquire about proper procedures, National Trust information, or other issues. When members contact the OVCS, the office will respond within two working days.

A written record of all correspondence with members will be placed in the appropriate program file.

OVCS will hear the concern of the member and provide guidance when possible. However, if it is a program complaint or grievance the member will be directed to follow his/her program grievance procedure.

All programs are required to have a grievance procedure and must notify OVCS if it is to serve as a part of the steps to resolution.

### B. Member Disciplinary Action at Office on Volunteerism and Community Service

#### Sponsored Events

OVCS sponsors a number of events throughout the program year. All AmeriCorps members are expected to behave professionally while attending these events. If inappropriate behavior is demonstrated, the office will alert the appropriate program director, who is required to follow the program's disciplinary procedures. If illegal activity or violent behavior is identified, the member should be immediately terminated from the program and removed from the event grounds/premises.

### C. National Trust Inquiries

For all questions concerning the Segal Education Award, members should be directed to the My AmeriCorps Web site at <https://my.AmeriCorps.gov/mp/login.do>.

## Section 6 – Training and Technical Assistance

### A. Introduction

The Office of Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) is responsible for providing ongoing training support to national service programs within the state of Virginia. Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) funds are available and can be used to support attendance at sponsored events, training activities, and member/program staff development. OVCS conducts annual training surveys to AmeriCorps State and National programs to assess training needs for the program year. Training and resources are provided to AmeriCorps programs to promote continued program effectiveness and sustainability. The training received is offered through accessing national training providers, local training consultants, and staff.

Training and technical assistance are provided to AmeriCorps state/national direct programs through the following activities:

- Program Director and Program Staff Training Meetings
- Training sessions and topical workshops (conferences, events and meetings)
- Program Director/staff and Program Development Assistance and Training (PDAT) Teleconferences
- Annual Statewide Conference on Volunteerism and Community Service
- Staff coaching and one-to-one direct technical assistance
- Training and resources available at the OVCS website:  
<http://www.vaservice.org/go/training/assistance/>.

### B. PDAT Fund Usage

PDAT funds are the principal resource available to commissions for enhancing and sustaining high quality AmeriCorps\*State and National service programs. All policies and guidelines are set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service. All proposed activities sponsored by OVCS must be consistent within these guidelines.

PDAT funds are used to the extent allowed by funding provisions and the extent available.

State level PDAT funds are used to:

- Offer training resources to enhance and sustain high-quality, effectively functioning AmeriCorps\*State and National service programs;
- Strengthen multiple programs, rather than individual AmeriCorps programs, program staff, and members;
- Supports collaborations through training that crosses all of Virginia’s national service programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn & Serve America).

Service member/participant training for a single local program should be funded from the sub-grantee’s budget.

**C. Annual Needs Assessment/Evaluation**

The annual Training Needs Assessment is conducted by OVCS to assess and evaluate the training needs of Virginia AmeriCorps programs. The responses and feedback are used to guide the implementation of an annual training plan and the allocation of training resources for the program year. Each AmeriCorps sub-grantee is expected to conduct evaluations and surveys to assess AmeriCorps members' in-program training needs and to track progress in member development each year.

**D. Training and Technical Assistance Resources**

Training and Resources for AmeriCorps \*State and National programs and members are available online at the Training, Tools and Resource site <http://www.vaservice.org/go/training/assistance/>. A variety of workshops, seminars, and program events are listed on the AmeriCorps Training/Event calendar, Funding/Grants, and Resource Portal. The VAservice.org Web site has links to the Corporation for National and Community Service Resource Center, national training providers, online resources for program staff and AmeriCorps members, and resources in volunteerism.

**E. Program Staff Training**

AmeriCorps Program Directors and program staff receive training in program effectiveness, sustainability, and resources through various activities and training events. The Office of Volunteerism and Community Service staff provides facilitation, specialized training, and resources for new and returning programs. Training for program staff is required and covers administrative functions, policies, program reporting, training/technical assistance resources, and fiscal accountability. Topical training may also be provided by staff and local or national training providers. The attendance at these trainings for program staff is required and mandatory. Activities/events that involve training for program staff include: AmeriCorps New/Renewal Program Director/Program Staff Orientation (bi-annually), AmeriCorps Program Director/Program Staff Training Teleconferences, Virginia Statewide Conferences, National Conference on Volunteering and Service, cross-partner training, and specialized or topical training.

**F. AmeriCorps Member Training**

AmeriCorps members should receive continuous member development and on-site training through their assigned AmeriCorps program. Possible topics for AmeriCorps member training include leadership skills, teambuilding, peer-to-peer, public speaking/outreach, life after/beyond AmeriCorps, diversity, conflict resolution, and emergency preparedness. Attendance at program-sponsored trainings is mandatory for AmeriCorps members. OVCS also provides training opportunities across programs for members through use of its PDAT funds. Opportunities for training specific to AmeriCorps members include AmeriCorps state launch activities, conferences on volunteerism and service, Virginia InterCorps Council (VAIC) related activities, as well as other cross-program training and specialized or topical training.

## Section 7 – Sponsored Events

### **A. Introduction**

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) sponsors a number of events to promote citizenship and service across the Commonwealth. Attendance at certain designated Office on Volunteerism and Community Service-sponsored events is mandatory, as determined by the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service.

### **B. AmeriCorps Launch**

The AmeriCorps Launch is an annual event used to kick off the service year in Virginia. All AmeriCorps programs in Virginia are represented, the pledge is taken, and training is usually provided. The event is held at the beginning of the program year.

### **C. Statewide Conference**

The Statewide Conference is an annual event held to provide an opportunity for training, networking, and collaboration among the various national service groups, volunteer, and service communities.

### **D. National Service Days**

OVCS encourages programs to coordinate service projects for National Service Days, which include Make a Difference Day (third Saturday in October), Dr. Martin Luther King Day (second Monday in January) and others. Projects are also encouraged during Virginia Volunteer Month, National Volunteer Week, National Youth Service Day, and Join Hands Day.

### **E. Governor's Community Service and Volunteerism Awards**

The Governor's Awards are used to recognize outstanding volunteer service efforts of companies, organizations, groups, youth, seniors, families, etc. across the Commonwealth. These esteemed annual awards promote civic responsibility, national service, and achievement.

### **F. State Service Plan Meetings and Events**

The State Service Plan is a document that identifies the service priorities of the Commonwealth as well as the overarching vision of promoting an ethic of service within the state that includes national service, community service, volunteerism, and service learning at all levels.

The common theme of the State Service Plan is to create regional service networks to share information and explore collaboration leading to the provision of comprehensive and holistic services to people in need.

State Service Plan meetings and events are arranged by OVCS, which is guided by the needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth and the State Service Plan Collaborative Partners.

## **Section 8 – Program Close-Out**

If a program contract is ended by the sub-grantee or the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS), specific financial information must be gathered and filed. The required time frame to complete the close-out documentation is ninety days from the grant termination date. These requirements are determined by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

OVCS requires programs to maintain records for a period of seven years after the end of the last program year. This is due to the seven-year time allowance for the use of an educational award.

Upon close-out, OVCS staff will provide all required documentation and instructions. This may include but is not limited to a certification of sub-grant close-out and inventory of residual supplies over \$5000 and an equipment inventory with a fair market value over \$5000.