

## **New York State AmeriCorps\*State Funding Process**

The New York State Commission on National and Community Service is required by the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 to conduct a grant award process according to the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation) and New York State regulations and guidelines. The Corporation issues a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcing the anticipated availability and level of funding to award for AmeriCorps programs subject to the availability of appropriations for the next fiscal year. Applications are solicited from organizations by states through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

### ***Procurement/RFP Process***

The Corporation issues a NOFO in late Spring which provides anticipated funding, a program description and application submission information. The Corporation also sets forth its strategic initiatives and any initiatives that would receive special consideration, for example in 2010-11, programs designed to engage veterans as service recipients or providers. At a later date in summer, the Corporation releases the application instructions. The Office of National and Community Service (ONCS) commences during this time period, planning and development work resulting in a draft Request For Proposal document and Procurement Timeline for the procurement which then is submitted for review and final clearance. The completed draft RFP document must be cleared through the formal NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Internal Clearance process, the Executive Chamber and finally through the Division of the Budget.

ONCS follows guidelines set forth in the New York State Procurement Law. The goal of the State's procurement process is to procure commodities, services and technology that enable State agencies to fulfill their respective missions while ensuring fair and open competition. The State's procurement process is designed to: (a) guard against favoritism, improvidence, extravagance, fraud and corruption; (b) ensure that the results meet agency needs; and, (c) protect the interests of the State and its taxpayers. To ensure these goals are met, State statute provides for checks and balances to regulate and oversee agency procurement activities. ONCS maintains a Procurement Record each funding cycle which documents all decisions regarding the procurement process which must be submitted to and approved by the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) before contracts can be awarded.

### ***RFP Development***

Following procurement guidelines, ONCS is responsible to bring all the stakeholders together prior to the development of the RFP. Relevant stakeholders include staff from OCFS Bureau of Budget Management, Bureau of Contract Management (BCM), Office of Legal Affairs, Strategic Planning and Policy Development, Grants Management Office, and other OCFS agency representatives as appropriate. The purpose of the RFP is to specify the required qualifications of applicants, New York State mandatory contract terms and conditions, and any priorities set forth by the Commission.

### ***RFP Issuance***

Once the draft RFP is approved for the public, notice must be posted, but not limited to, notification in the State's Register, announcement issued to registered users of the OCFS On Line Bidder's list, and announcement/postings on RFP's on the OCFS website. The RFP, Corporation's NOFO and Application Instructions are thereby available to the public on the OCFS website, or upon request by hard copy which is mailed.

Subsequent to the issuance of the RFP, bidders' conferences are conducted regionally across the state by ONCS staff to present the RFP, NOFO and Application Instructions, to provide clarification and to answer questions. Questions are recorded at each bidder's conference and are published as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) on the OCFS website. Offerers may submit written questions which will also be included in the FAQ's.

*This document is intended to provide a summary of the AmeriCorps\*State application and funding process as conducted by the Corporation for National & Community Service and the New York State Commission on National & Community Service. Information in this document is not considered final guidance and is superseded by the New York State AmeriCorps\*State Request for Proposals (RF) for the current year and the Corporation for National & Community Service Notice of Funding Available (NOFA).*

### ***Application Submission and Review Process***

The application review and selection process must be documented prior to the receipt of applications and is presented in a format that is consistent with the evaluation process set forth in the RFP.

All applications must be submitted through the Corporation's electronic grants management system (eGrants) by the due date stated in the application. Documents required by and related to the New York State Contracting Process must also be submitted in hard copy to ONCS by the due date. No application can be opened or reviewed until the close of business on the due date. At that time, applications are opened and reviewed for completeness of required components and documents. Those applications that are considered complete are then logged into the ONCS electronic database. Applications that are not considered complete may be sent to the Office of Legal Affairs for a final determination. Applications that do not meet the mandatory requirements specified in the RFP will not receive any further evaluation.

Prior to the submission deadline for applications, independent reviewers for the review process are identified and trained to participate in the RFP review process. The scoring tools are explained and each reviewer is asked to sign a Conflict of Interest form for each application they read. Each application is reviewed by three independent reviewers. Scores are recorded and averaged. If there is a disparity of more than 10 points between scores, reviewers are informed and have the option to reconsider their score after dialogue facilitated by ONCS staff. After the reconsideration process, all scores are final. Applicants and pertinent information are then entered on a chart that is rank ordered by average score, from the highest scoring applications to the lowest. Thereafter, that ordered is never altered.

### ***Competitive Recommendations/Funding***

Applications with the highest average scores that meet or exceed the criteria set forth in the procurement record are then identified, i.e. all applications with an average score of at least 80 points or above. Those application recommendations are subsequently reviewed by the Executive Chamber and presented to the Commission for its review and approval to be sent via the electronic eGrants system to the Corporation to compete with other states for Competitive funding.

The Corporation conducts its own review process for the applications it receives from all the states to select applications for Competitive funding. Announcements of Competitive grant awards are made in late Spring.

### ***Formula Recommendations/Funding***

All applications that were not sent to the Corporation for Competitive funding and all applications that were sent but were not selected for Competitive funding, are then considered for Formula funding. Formula funding charts are then created and applicants are included on the charts using the same average score and in the same rank order originally determined.

Formula funding for states is finite and limited. To maximize those resources, ONCS staff uses the charts to create options for funding, i.e. funding all applications at requested levels, funding all applications at a percentage of requested levels, funding all applications at last year's funding levels, etc. Options are then applied to the charts going down the list until funding is expended. The rank order does not change. Options are then presented to the Executive Chamber and then to the Commission for its review and approval of Formula grants to be awarded. The Formula Recommendations are then submitted via eGrants to the Corporation.

The Procurement record is then submitted to the Office of the State Comptroller for approval before the formal Contracting process is commenced.

The funding process is a year-long process beginning with the issuance of the NOFO in the Spring of one year and ending with the Formula grant awards in early summer of the next year.

*This document is intended to provide a summary of the AmeriCorps\*State application and funding process as conducted by the Corporation for National & Community Service and the New York State Commission on National & Community Service. Information in this document is not considered final guidance and is superseded by the New York State AmeriCorps\*State Request for Proposals (RF) for the current year and the Corporation for National & Community Service Notice of Funding Available (NOFA).*