



Funding Note

Corporation for National and Community Service

Funding Opportunities for Afterschool

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Overview

Recent research has identified the critical role that strong relationships among staff and participants plays in producing positive outcomes for children and youth in afterschool programs. Efforts to provide young people with mentors or tutors, and to provide meaningful service opportunities for youth are common features of high quality out-of-school time programs. However, finding tutors and funding to support these initiatives is a challenge for many afterschool programs. An increasing number of programs are addressing this challenge by using AmeriCorps members, VISTA volunteers, and Learn and Serve funding to support these types of opportunities. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) offers a host of initiatives that can assist afterschool programs by providing staff, mentors, tutors, infrastructure support, and opportunities for service to the community.

This Funding Note focuses on the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency charged with fostering civic engagement for citizens of all ages through service and volunteering. Established in 1993, CNCS manages the national AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America programs, as well as the VISTA program. CNCS's mission includes:

- Providing support to volunteer organizations which provide needed services to communities across the country;
- Promoting the volunteer sector and the role it plays in the community;
- Creating career and educational opportunities through volunteer experiences;
- Developing knowledge that enhances the success of volunteer programs; and
- Cultivating a culture of citizenship.¹

¹ Corporation for National and Community Service, "What we Do," http://www.nationalservice.org/about/role_impact/what_we_do.asp

This Funding Note also provides an overview of how CNCS's programs and funding are organized and the current priorities of the agency with an emphasis on funding sources with relevance for afterschool. Funding sources and amounts may vary in coming years given changing funding priorities and appropriations.

With total funding of over \$856 million in fiscal year 2008, CNCS is an independent federal agency which operates under the auspices of a Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Nine departments under the direction of a Chief Operating Officer manage a suite of programs that support volunteer opportunities for school-age children through senior citizens. CNCS staffs 47 federal field offices across the United States, and supports state level initiatives through Governor's Commissions. Below is a description of the major programs administered by CNCS.

Senior Corps: Funds the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion program, and RSVP programs. Senior Corps members provide service to children, adults, and their peers through this network of programs.

AmeriCorps: Provides a stipend/living allowance and an education award upon completion of their service to adults participating in one of three programs: AmeriCorps State and National grants, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Conservation Corps).

Learn and Serve: Provides discretionary and formula grants to support schools, higher education organizations, and community-based organizations that engage in service learning. Learn and Serve provides direct support of service learning, technical assistance, and recognition programs.

Senior Corps

Foster Grandparents: Links volunteers ages 60 and over with local organizations (including schools, faith- and community-based organizations, and other youth organizations) to provide one-on-one tutoring.

RSVP: Works locally to connect seniors with more flexible volunteer opportunities. The service need could be short-term and limited or longer-term and comprehensive. Senior Corps provides funds directly to organizations providing support in a number of areas, however the funding priorities of most interest to afterschool programs include: children of incarcerated parents, bridging the digital divide, and literacy and tutoring.

AmeriCorps

There are a host of AmeriCorps programs that can provide useful services to afterschool programs. Typically grants pay for some or all of the staff costs incurred by the organization. Most CNCS grants have a matching requirement. Additionally, planning grants are available through the AmeriCorps National programs to assist in the design of a multi-state or Tribal program.

AmeriCorps State: State-administered discretionary grants. Organizations working in one state, may apply to their State Commission to receive funding to recruit AmeriCorps members working to meet the following needs:

- Mobilizing more volunteers;
- Ensuring a brighter future for all of America's youth;
- Engaging students in communities;
- Harnessing baby boomers' experience;
- Helping communities recover from and prepare for disasters.

AmeriCorps National: Discretionary grants made to organizations operating in two or more states wishing to engage AmeriCorps members in providing direct service to address unmet community needs. Programs design service activities for a team of members serving full- or part-time for up to one year. Sample activities include tutoring and mentoring youth, assisting crime victims, building homes, and restoring parks. Members also help to recruit community volunteers to expand the reach and effectiveness of the organization where they serve. Funding opportunities include:

- National Direct,
- National Education Award Program,
- National Professional Corps,
- Indian Tribes,
- Indian Tribes Planning, and
- National Planning grants.

AmeriCorps VISTA: Federally-administered discretionary grants that provide volunteers to work specifically in low income communities to address critical anti-poverty needs. Projects must focus on building organizational infrastructure to effectively bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps NCCC: Discretionary program that places AmeriCorps members with a sponsoring organization for a short term service project. There is no direct financial support available through this program.

Learn and Serve

Learn and Serve programs provide support, training and technical assistance to K-12 schools, institutions of higher learning, and other education organizations that provide service learning experiences. A number of state and local education agencies promote student engagement through volunteering and service learning. This teaching and learning strategy allows academic content to come alive as students draw links from more static classroom learning to the real world. The flexible timing and structure of after-school programs are a natural match for this active learning strategy. For more information, visit: http://servicelearning.org/what_is_service_learning/service_learning_is/index.php.

School-based programs: Formula grant funds are administered by each state education agency (SEA). SEAs have significant flexibility in how they structure their grant competitions, with some being open only to local education agencies (LEAs) while others host competitions open to community and faith-based institutions as well as individual schools. School-community partnerships are a key requirement of these grants. Federally-administered discretionary grants are a second component of school-based programs. Nonprofit organizations are eligible to compete for these innovation awards alongside SEAs and

Indian Tribes to provide technical assistance and/or implement and evaluate programs that provide opportunities for disadvantaged youth to serve others.

Community-based programs: Organizations operating in one or more states may apply for federally-administered discretionary funds that support training, technical assistance, and evaluation as well as direct service activities. In the past these funds have been used by organizations interested in providing training to organizations interested in developing service learning programs.

Tribes and Territories grants: Per law, 3% of all Learn and Serve funding is reserved for tribal and/or territory programs that create community service opportunities for disadvantaged youth that create opportunities for partnership with tribal elders.

Other programs: Learn and Serve also administers programs directed towards higher education (Higher Education Program, President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, Universities Rebuilding America Partnership) and general support of community engagement (Learn and Serve Challenge, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, and Helping America's Youth).

Tips for Programs:

Contact your state field office and/or Governor's Office on Service: CNCS has a variety of programs that can provide assistance to afterschool programs at the management/infrastructure level as well as at the point of service level. By meeting with a local contact, you can work collaboratively to discuss the needs of your program and identify the CNCS funding streams that will be most useful in meeting those needs.

Review the web-based technical assistance: CNCS and its partners offer several websites that provide technical assistance to both grantees and those interested in weaving service opportunities into their program. Especially helpful sites include: The Resource Center (www.nationalservicelearning.org), The Service Learning Clearinghouse (www.servicelearning.org), and NYLC (www.nylc.org).

Talk with current grantees: Talk with programs in your community that have received CNCS grants. Many CNCS grants require a grantee match and have extensive reporting requirements. Programs considering applying for a CNCS grant should identify if their organization has the capacity and resources to take advantage of this funding stream.

Visit CNCS's website and register for eGrants: Notices of Funds Availability (NOFAs) are posted within the individual program areas on the CNCS website at: www.nationalservice.org. Program periods and application deadlines vary. CNCS posts detailed information detailing grant requirements. All grant applications must be made through eGrants.gov. It is useful to register for an eGrants account well in advance of application deadlines.

Resources:

www.nationalserviceresources.org: This website serves as the web-based technical assistance site maintained by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The website has a wealth of resources including a library of effective practices, a selection of online courses,

an online lending library, e-newsletters, sample grantee forms, e-mail discussion lists, and a calendar of events.

www.servicelearning.org: This website, also maintained by the Corporation for National and Community Service, is a one-stop resource for programs interested in offering service-learning opportunities to its participants. The website includes service-learning fact sheets, a library of resources, publications, and SLICE (Service-Learning Ideas and Curricular Examples) submitted by experts and educators.

www.nylc.org: The National Youth Leadership Council offers an annual service-learning conference boasting numerous sessions on how to infuse service learning and/or community service into school day, afterschool, and summer programming. The organization's website has significant resources to help guide the development of your program.

Your state's Office of Service and Volunteerism: Some CNCS programs are administered through the state Office of Service and Volunteerism. A governor-appointed commission advises the office on funding decisions and applications.

Overview of State Policies on Service Learning

A 50-state policy scan conducted by the Education Commission of the States in March 2001 found that:

- Seven states (AR, CT, DE, MN, OK, RI, WI) permit community service or service learning activities to be applied toward high school graduation requirements.
- One state (MD) includes service learning as a requirement for high school graduation.
- Eight states (AR, CA, GA, ID, IL, LA, MT, UT) have policies regarding rules, regulations, and the creation or purpose of programs related to service learning.
- Ten states (CA, CT, FL, IN, MI, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX) plus the District of Columbia encourage the use of service learning as a mechanism for increasing student achievement and engagement.
- Six states (ID, MI, MN, NJ, NM, VT) include service learning in the state's education standards.
- Six states (MA, MN, MS, NJ, NM, VT) have policies regarding the authorization of funding appropriations and the creation of service learning activities and programs.
- Twenty-three states have no mention of service learning in any state policy.²

² Learn and Serve, "K-12 Facts," http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/policy/expanded.php.

PlusTime New Hampshire leverages CNCS funds:

PlusTime New Hampshire has successfully accessed several funding streams available through CNCS to support afterschool programming in the state. Using AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps, and CNCS Challenge grants, PlusTime has been able to advocate for increased afterschool funding, provide technical assistance to communities, and create a nine-month sustainability planning course for afterschool programs in the state. Specific support provided by AmeriCorps members includes:

- Program Management Operations: database and website development, data collection and tracking, creation of policy and procedure manuals, creation of volunteer management systems.
- Program Activities and Enrichment: collection of research on best practices and national trends, compiling and offering training on innovative curriculum materials, organizing professional development opportunities for staff and/or volunteers.
- Engaging Communities Through Strategic Communication: implementation of volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition strategies, coordination of PR and media campaigns, advancing networking and collaboration with local businesses and organizations, identifying and connecting with stakeholders.
- Technical Assistance in Resource Development: coordinating fundraisers and other special events, collecting research on funding trends and opportunities, securing and tracking in-kind donations, creation of donor recognition material.

AmeriCorps staff members have contributed to a statewide evaluation of academically-based afterschool programs; worked with the Governor's office, state agencies, local government, school districts, higher education institutions, and community organizations to develop new partnerships and strengthen existing ones; and have enabled programs participating in Sustainability University to leverage CNCS funds for a 2-to-1 match with private dollars to support future efforts.

eGrants: eGrants is the Federal Government's web-based grant application program. Organizations interested in accessing Federal discretionary funds must apply through the eGrants site. Users must register for an eGrants account, after which they receive a username and password within a few days. Entering information into eGrants can be challenging, so it is recommended that users follow the directions carefully, and complete the uploading process a few days ahead of grant deadlines.

www.nationalservice.org: is the main portal for all CNCS programs. Visitors to the website can locate information about current grant opportunities, details about each of the CNCS programs and grants, and information on how to participate in CNCS programs.

www.volunteeringinamerica.gov: provides visitors with research detailing trends and data regarding volunteer activities in all 50 states and regionally, as well as links to information on volunteer training, recruitment, and retention.

Your state department of education's website: Many states have an office of service learning, or provide service learning resources through the state office of public instruction or the state's office for service learning.

Iowa AmeriCorps Program Supports Afterschool and Community Programs

Since 1999, the Governor's AmeriCorps Afterschool Initiative has enhanced afterschool and youth programs throughout the state. In 2002, the Iowa State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development received a \$300,000 grant to support afterschool and youth programs in 19 sites across Iowa. The impact these AmeriCorps members have had on the state is significant. In its first three year report, the Extension reported that as a result of this program; 2,262 youth ages 10-14 participated in these programs, AmeriCorps members recruited 427 volunteers that provided 11,441 hours of service to the community, and 448 new partnerships were formed. During these three years, AmeriCorps members accounted for 16 full-time equivalent positions. Grant funds support AmeriCorps members to provide:

- academic assistance;
- community building/capacity building;
- program management;
- volunteer recruitment and training;
- support to service learning initiatives;
- support to youth philanthropy initiatives; and
- mentor recruitment.

As the fiscal agent for this grant, The Cooperative Extension coordinates the matching of AmeriCorps volunteers with programs. The grant pays for a full-time grant administrator who completes fiscal reports and ensures that member enrollment, eligibility, and activities are processed. This grant does have numerous reporting requirements, both to the state entity that directly grants the funds, as well as to CNCS. Grant administrators see the reporting as positive, however, in that it keeps a focus on the outcomes of the program and provides regular feedback as to the initiative's impact on the community.

According to Keli Talman from the Iowa State Cooperative Extension, one of the greatest benefits of this funding is that it has fostered sustained, strong community partnerships that did not exist previously. For example, in one rural community, students designed a food drive that invites participants to attend a private movie screening. This annual service project has brought together middle school students, local grocery stores, the community movie theater, and local police and sheriff's departments. The screenings have become so successful that the student organizers have had to meet with local police so that the main street can be closed after the movie so students in attendance can get home safely. A principal who uses this program to support an afterschool program at his middle school reports that this program offers the best return on investment of any of his school's discretionary funds. For more program details, contact: Judy McCarthy at: jmccarthy@iastate.edu.

The Out-of-School Time Technical Assistance Project

This tool is part of a series of technical assistance resources on financing and sustaining out-of-school time and community school initiatives developed by The Finance Project with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. These tools and resources are intended to assist policy makers, program developers and community leaders in developing financing and sustainability strategies to support effective initiatives. To access these resources visit: <http://www.financeproject.org/index.cfm?page=25>.

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