

5.2 – Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps Program Director Core Competencies Indicators

Materials Needed: *AmeriCorps Program Director Manual, Application Instructions & Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity, AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions, and AmeriCorps Regulations, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Guidance, and AmeriCorps Grant Agreement.*

Purpose: *To ensure that AmeriCorps program staff have the information necessary to successfully administer and manage an AmeriCorps program. This form serves as a diagnostic tool for Program Directors to help identify areas of improvement and highlight competencies they excel in.*

Instructions: *Please check the box for each statement that accurately describes the program director/staff's level of knowledge or ability to properly implement the practice in the program. After finishing this exercise, please review the form and use the information to identify areas where additional training or technical assistance may be beneficial. Reach out to the Volunteer Iowa Program Officer for assistance in identifying potential resources or training opportunities.*

A. *Effective Grant and Program Management*

Program Design Aligned with Approved Grant

Objective: To ensure that programs have an overall program design that supports the program Theory of Change and that the activities are evidence-based approaches directly connected to the identified need and underlying root causes. Ensure that program staff understand how the approved grant application and budget support the program goals, address the measurable objectives, and plan for regular programmatic evaluation.

- Summarize the Theory of Change in the program's approved grant
- Describe the evidence in support of the program's Theory of Change
- Explain how the member activities support the Theory of Change and address the underlying causes of the community need
- Describe how the member positions and terms of service support the program design
- Articulate why a program design is important and how it relates to slot and member conversions and member early terminations

Governing Documents

Objective: To ensure a thorough understanding of the Notice of Grant Award, regulations, OMB Omni Circulars, Terms & Conditions, guidance, policies, and procedures governing the management and administration of an AmeriCorps program in Iowa.

- Provide a basic overview of the governing documents for AmeriCorps and a basic description of the information found within that document
- Locate information related to various management components of the AmeriCorps program (both the information located at the physical office location and the information available on-line)
- Describe the steps the program would take to locate the answer to a question related to the governing policies of the program if it is an issue that is unfamiliar

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- Identify situations in which the program must provide notice to CNCS or Volunteer Iowa and the timeline in which most notifications must occur
- Identify changes that require prior approval from Volunteer Iowa or CNCS

Internal Staffing Levels, Communication and Coordination

Objective: To provide staffing levels that are sufficient to meet program management requirements. To ensure that individuals involved with the AmeriCorps program are aware of AmeriCorps and National Service and are well-versed in its purposes, goals and values; that they have an understanding of program requirements, reporting timelines, strategic and policy issues, and that the program is integrated into the organization at all levels.

- Name the other individuals in the organization who are also responsible for administering the AmeriCorps program and describe how the work is coordinated among staff to ensure compliance and continuous improvement
- Avenues for oversight and regular communication are in place among key staff
- Cross-training and established systems provide for back-up in cases of staff absences or other emergencies
- Describe the written internal policies and procedures that are used for management of the AmeriCorps program

Program Record-Keeping

Objective: To ensure that appropriate and complete documentation for all grant-related activities are maintained according to grant requirements.

- An organized system is used for organizing grant-related documents
- Program director and other grant staff know where various grant documents are kept, including whether any are kept in secure locations
- Identify the record retention period for the organization's AmeriCorps records

B. *Performance Measures, Reporting, and Evaluation*

Tracking, Recording and Reporting Progress

Objective: To ensure the program is collecting, documenting, and reviewing necessary data; that it is on track to meet its stated objectives; and that it submits accurate and timely reports of AmeriCorps-related performance measure objectives.

- Describe how the program will record all data relating to performance measures
- Describe how program will retrieve information from site partners
- Outline a performance measure training, collection, clarification, and reporting schedule
- Describe how staff will review data to ensure program is on track to meet its stated objectives
- Ensure required progress reports to Volunteer Iowa are on time
- Ensure National Performance Measure criteria (CNCS definitions, tools, etc.) are met
- Implement data quality components (validity, verifiability, completeness, consistency, timeliness)

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Program Evaluation

Objective: To ensure the program evaluates progress towards performance goals and meets CNCS requirements for evaluation.

- Understand CNCS evaluation requirements for competitively funded programs
- Draft an evaluation plan (that meets CNCS-approval, if required)
- Conduct evaluation activities within the necessary timeframe
- Draft evaluation report for submission to CNCS
- Utilize program evaluation results as part of continuous improvement of the program

Continuous Improvement

Objective: To ensure the program assesses and addresses the quality of its service activities which includes involving extensive broad-based representation from the following: the community served, members and potential members, site partners, community-based agencies with a demonstrated record in providing services, foundations and businesses.

- Identify stakeholder groups
- Plan to provide information and progress to stakeholder groups
- Have at least one formal method in place to gauge member satisfaction
- Have at least one formal method in place gauge service recipient satisfaction
- Have at least one formal method in place to gauge management effectiveness
- Have a plan to continuously assess community needs
- Include a plan to consult with the community on program design
- Include a plan to consult with the community on program implementation
- Include a plan to consult with the community on program evaluation

C. *Site Management*

Site Partner Management

Objective: To ensure the program clearly outlines relationships with site partners through formal agreements and that it manages these relationships.

- Outline selection criteria used to choose site partners
- Ensure sites are accessible to people with disabilities
- Ensure written site partner agreements
- Include a plan for site partner orientation comprised of:
 - Prohibited activities
 - Program mission
 - AmeriCorps 101
 - Site monitoring tool and schedule
 - Data collection plan
 - Program feedback and evaluation tools and schedule
- Include a plan for orienting site partners absent from initial orientation
- Plan for identifying sites with AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa by displaying banner/sign
- Include a process for monitoring sites and assessing site supervisor performance

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D. *Human Resources*

Recruitment

Objective: To ensure a fair and equitable recruitment process in order to enroll a diverse potential applicant pool and staff that meets program needs.

- Describe a non-discriminatory, fair, and equitable recruitment process
- Include consultation with leaders in underrepresented communities for help with recruitment of AmeriCorps members (including persons with disabilities, persons of color, LGBTQ, individuals living in poverty)
- Include a plan to recruit locally, with a focus on recruiting a corps of members that is reflective of the community
- Include a plan to recruit a diverse corps, including potential incentives to attract individuals from underrepresented communities
- Include a plan to recruit members who meet program needs
- State reasonable accommodations can be made for interviews

Selection

Objective: To ensure a transparent and equitable member selection process by demonstrating a consistent application process followed for each applicant.

- Ensure completed member application
- Ensure uniform selection documentation
- Guarantee members are chosen based on essential functions in position description
- Assess a member's ability to complete the essential functions of the position with/without reasonable accommodation
- State reasonable accommodations can be made for service
- Notification to members who are accepted to the program

Eligibility and Enrollment/Pre-Enrollment for Members

Objective: To ensure that the program has all necessary documentation for each member in their member files and that member information and service locations are entered in the My AmeriCorps Portal within eight (8) days of member enrollment.

- Ensure member pre-enrollment is completed in the My AmeriCorps Portal prior to member start date
- Ensure member enrollment is completed in the My AmeriCorps Portal within 8-day period
- Document citizenship eligibility for members whose citizenship status is not automatically verified in the Portal
- Ensure members do not serve until eligibility documentation is on file
- Ensure member service agreement is signed on or before first day of service
- Ensure member service location entered into the My AmeriCorps portal within 30-day period

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- Ensure members are added to the OnCorps timekeeping system within 30 days of their enrollment date
- Ensure Member Service Agreements (including Member Position Descriptions) are uploaded into OnCorps within 30-day period

National Service Criminal History Checks for Prospective Members (candidates) and Staff

Objective: As part of a thoughtful process to protect members and beneficiaries, ensure that the program complies with CNCS requirements to conduct, screen, and accept members and staff based on a review of the individuals' criminal history. Fully document the process and maintain this documentation confidentially and in accordance with state and federal law.

- Ensure required National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) are conducted and adjudicated in accordance with CNCS timeline
- Obtain written consent to perform checks
- Document candidate's understanding that his/her/their position is contingent on the results of the NSCHC
- Verify the candidate's identity through government-issued photo identification and conduct the check on the candidate's name exactly as it appears on the government issued photo identification
- Document whether the candidate has recurring access to vulnerable populations
- Use state repository or CNCS vendor method to conduct checks
 - National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) – document that it was completed and adjudicated with all states and territories reporting before the member's first day of service
 - FBI National Fingerprint Check (if required based on CNCS guidance) – document that it was initiated on or before the member's first day of service
 - State Criminal Records Check of the state of residence (if required based on state of residence and CNCS guidance) – document that it was initiated on or before the member's first day of service
 - State Criminal Records Check of the state of service- document that it was initiated on or before the member's first day of service (Note: Iowa check is not required when utilizing the three-part check for individuals with access to vulnerable populations because of the NFF ASP)
- Provide accompaniment until all checks are completed (this includes adjudication)
- Maintain confidentiality and adhere to user agreements pertinent to the method being used

Member Benefits

Objective: To ensure that program staff have strong knowledge of all benefits available to members and that members maximize their use of available benefits.

- Ensure that member living allowances do not exceed minimum or maximum and are paid out as required
- Ensure that all members are covered by workers' compensation or accidental death & dismemberment coverage

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- Ensure that health insurance meeting requirements is provided or made available to all full-time members who are not covered by another policy
- Ensure that childcare assistance is made available to eligible full-time members who need such assistance in order to participate
- Ensure that members know their options and how to request National Service Loan Forbearance & Interest Repayment or Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Income-Based Repayment for student loans
- Ensure members know how to use and maximize the value of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

Member Timekeeping & Term Management

Objective: To ensure that timesheets are kept in a manner that is consistent with AmeriCorps requirements and members are on track to meet the required number of service hours.

- Ensure members hours are recorded appropriately in OnCorps or other approved system under “direct service, fundraising or training hours”
- Ensure that hours are entered by members and approved by site supervisors in a timely manner
- Ensure that first timesheet corresponds with enrollment date which is noted on the service agreement as the member start date
- Ensure member remains within the allowable fundraising (10%) and training (20%) limitations
- Ensure members receive required trainings and that these hours are documented appropriately on their timesheets under “training”
- Ensure that members’ holiday/sick leave/vacation are not counted in the member service hours and that these hours are considered in ensuring that members have adequate time to complete their service
- Ensure members are on-track to meet their required service hours
- Ensure member service hours are substantiated by timesheets
- Ensure program communicates with members about progress towards completing hours
- Ensure mid-term evaluation is completed and retained in the member file (including the three required AmeriCorps questions) for all members serving more than 9 months

Suspending Members

Objective: To ensure that there is a consistent process for suspending members that includes suspension forms, documentation for compelling circumstances, suspending the member in the Portal within 30 days of the suspension date, and an established procedure for the member to return to service.

- Ensure that there is written documentation from the member detailing the nature of the compelling circumstances or written documentation from the program detailing disciplinary reason(s) for the suspension
- Ensure member suspension is entered into the Portal, OnCorps, and IowaGrants within 30 days of effective date

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- Ensure that member and program have established on-going communication process during the suspension period, including an anticipated return date
- Ensure that program disciplinary policies account for a member's failure to return from suspension as a reason for termination for cause

Exiting Members

Objective: To ensure a consistent process for exiting members that includes exit forms, documentation for early release if applicable (cause or compelling circumstances) and exiting out of the My AmeriCorps Portal with correct hours reported within 30-days of the end of the term of service.

- Ensure members have completed all hour and program requirements for successful completion before exiting
- Ensure all member paperwork is in file prior to exiting member
- Ensure members served for the length of service term outlined in the Member Service Agreement (MSA)
- Include documentation of progressive discipline (if applicable)
- Include documentation of early release for cause or compelling personal circumstances
- If member exits prior to their final pay period, the program must complete a Program Officer Notification in IowaGrants and may need to issue an amendment to the MSA
- Ensure members' exit dates coincide with last time sheets in OnCorps or other approved timekeeping system
- Ensure members' total hours in the timekeeping system match exit form in MyAmeriCorps Portal
- Ensure members are exited in the My AmeriCorps Portal within 30 days of their end date
- Ensure member end of service evaluation is completed and included in member file or stored electronically in accordance with program policies (including three required AmeriCorps questions)
- Ensure National Service Trust End of Term/Exit Form is completed in My AmeriCorps Portal by member and program official

Member Record-Keeping

Objective: To ensure that appropriate and complete documentation for all member-related activities is maintained according to grant requirements.

- Ensure the following documents are in all member files
 - Member Service Agreement (including Member Position Description)
 - Verification or copy of Government-Issued Photo Identification
 - Required NSCHC documentation, including NSCHC Documentation Checklist and results of checks (if maintained in separate file, please make note of alternate storage location in the member file)
 - Member Evaluations
 - Documentation of early exits or suspensions
 - Citizenship verification (if manual verification is required by CNCS)

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- For tutoring members, ensure these additional documents are included:
 - Verification of high school graduation
 - Pass of test documenting capability to provide tutoring services

E. *Member Support*

Developing and Implementing Member Training

Objective: To ensure that Members are prepared for service, civic engagement, and personal development through a planned, consistent, and structured method.

- Plan to provide a comprehensive member orientation including:
 - Member rights and responsibilities
 - Prohibited activities
 - Suspension/termination from service
 - Sexual harassment and other discrimination issues
 - Grievance procedures
 - Code of conduct
 - Requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act
 - History of AmeriCorps & National Service
 - Role of Volunteer Iowa
- Plan for orienting members to their service sites
- Plan for supporting members in obtaining GED (if applicable)
- Plan for encouraging members to be civically engaged
- Plan for involving members in selection of training
- Plan for providing Life After AmeriCorps training - supporting members in making the transition after end of service
- Plan to use structured activities for members to reflect on service and connect to the national service movement

Member Supervision

Objective: To ensure members receive appropriate supervision, that reasonable accommodations are made when appropriate, and that supervisors evaluate the member performance at required times during the service year.

- Provide site supervisor training and ensure that members receive adequate supervision
- Describe how to monitor member service activities and ensure alignment with member position description and that members are not engaging in prohibited activities
- Describe how to make reasonable accommodations for members as requested based on the essential functions of the position description
- State who is responsible for overseeing member grievances
- Provide a member evaluation schedule
- Include a mid-term member evaluation (if applicable)
- Include an end-term member evaluation
- Describe accompaniment of members with pending NSCHC checks

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F. *Fiscal Oversight & Management*

Accounting Knowledge

Objective: To ensure an understanding of key grant documents (Notice of Grant Award, regulations, OMB Circulars, Terms & Conditions, guidance, policies and procedures) governing the financial management and administration of an AmeriCorps program in Iowa in order to work collaboratively with financial personnel to maintain program compliance and ensure effective fiscal operations and reporting.

- Provide a basic overview of the governing documents for AmeriCorps and a basic description of the information found within each document
- Describe what is meant by the accounting terms, “allowable, reasonable, allocable and consistent treatment” and how these apply to the AmeriCorps grant
- Describe the financial staff and their role in budgeting, financial tracking, and reporting.
- Detail how the financial and program personnel work together for budgeting, tracking, and reporting purposes
- Highlight key internal policies that are in place to support AmeriCorps financial management
- Identify what types of changes require prior approval from Volunteer Iowa or CNCS

Budget Development

Objective: To ensure that the program develops and implements a budget designed to maximize resources in support of a fully compliant AmeriCorps program.

- Describe the basic components of an AmeriCorps budget, including the amount of federal funds and matching resources identified in the current budget
- Discuss the administrative section of the budget and, if the program will claim admin, describe the basis for admin for the AmeriCorps program
- Detail the sources of cash and in-kind match in the AmeriCorps budget
- Describe how the budget is tied to the objectives and goals of the program
- Describe the tools and information needed to develop the AmeriCorps budget
- Describe how the program director works with financial personnel on developing the budget

Manage Program Expenditures

Objective: To ensure that grant-related expenses are properly reported; that programs maintain financial management systems that include written cost allocation procedures and systems that distinguish expenditures attributable to this grant as well as expenditures not attributable to this grant; and that adequate supporting documents for expenditures are maintained.

- Describe how a bill or invoice related to the AmeriCorps program is processed
- Articulate how a payment or in-kind match is received and recorded by the program.
- If the program utilizes federal funds as match, describe how the program tracks and reports this information.

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- Explain how the costs associated with AmeriCorps are labeled or coded in the accounting system
- Describe how the accounting system separates AmeriCorps costs from other agency costs and how these costs are tracked by grant year (as opposed to agency fiscal or calendar year)
- If a cost is attributable to more than one program, describe how the organization assigns costs to each program
- Detail the people who are involved in processing payments and recording match for the AmeriCorps program
- Describe how the program director works together with financial personnel to manage AmeriCorps expenditures

Monitors Budget

Objective: To ensure the program plans for and monitors expenditures and matching resources for compliance with CNCS and Volunteer Iowa requirements. Works in partnership with the financial personnel to identify budget variances, make corrections and develop options for maximizing resources within program requirements.

- Describe how the program director works with financial personnel to monitor the budget and make adjustments, if necessary
- Detail how the program compares budget to actual costs and makes adjustments based on “overages” or “underages”
- Describe how the program can project/anticipate costs in order to make budgetary adjustments or report unexpended funds to Volunteer Iowa
- Describe Program Income and detail how the program accounts for and ensures that program income is recorded appropriately
- Articulate how the program ensures that it is meeting the matching requirements and makes adjustments, if necessary
- Describe how and when a budget amendment is needed and how one is requested.

Financial Reports

Objective: To ensure the program submits accurate and timely financial reports for the AmeriCorps program.

- If requesting reimbursements, describe the system and the forms used to make these requests
- If requesting advance payments, describe the system, forms and documentation that must be submitted with these requests
- Describe the program director’s role in submitting the claim and reimbursement request (or advance), FFR, and Unexpended Funds Report
- Describe the program director’s role in submitting the closeout packet
- Describe how it would be handled if a mistake were noted on the financial report prior to submission.
- Describe how this would differ if the mistake were discovered after the financial report was submitted to Volunteer Iowa.