

Notice of Federal Funding Availability

Overview

Federal Agency Name: Corporation for National and Community Service
Funding Opportunity Title: Learn and Serve America Youth Engagement Zone FY10
Announcement Type: Initial Announcement
CFDA Number: 94.018

Dates: Applications are due on **June 15, 2010 by 5:00 p.m.** Eastern Time. Successful applicants will be notified by the end of September 2010.

Contact: YEZ@cns.gov or 202-606-7510

On April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA). The SAA reauthorizes and expands national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency created in 1993. This Notice of Federal Funding Availability is part of the process of implementing this Act.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

What is the goal of the Learn and Serve America Youth Engagement Zone Program?

The Youth Engagement Zone (YEZ) initiative is a new Learn and Serve America program authorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act.

The goal for the Youth Engagement Zone initiative is to improve student engagement, including student attendance and behavior, and student achievement, graduate rates and college-going rates by:

1. Engaging youth as positive contributors through service-learning to demonstrate the relevance of academic coursework and the value of civic engagement to their educational and personal development; and
2. Connecting with citizens from diverse communities, backgrounds and perspectives to provide expanded opportunities to serve; and
3. Building enduring capacity within communities to become more effective at using service as a solution to address pressing challenges.

These grants will provide support for “eligible partnerships” to build on existing resources to develop coordinated school-based or community-based service-learning opportunities for secondary school students. *(See Section III for Eligibility Information)*

Service-learning is an effective strategy to provide students with opportunities to use their knowledge and skills to address important community needs, reducing the chances that they will drop out of school. Engaging young people in solving community problems through service-learning empowers youth as active citizens, rather than simply providing services to them as beneficiaries. Applicants must involve a number of local partners – specifically, local educational agencies, community colleges, and community-based entities—in the design and implementation of the program.

Communities that offer young people positive adult role models, meaningful engagement in the community, and a safe and supportive environment help youth to develop the skills and confidence they need to become successful adults. Engaging youth in service-learning experiences can provide them with critical supports that promote community connection and a commitment to service as well as a sense of personal efficacy.

What is the purpose for this funding?

The purpose of this initiative is to build upon a community's assets to create a network of individuals, organizations and institutions that support the positive development of young people and provide those young people with a chance to serve. Service-learning activities will encourage collaborative community problem solving that increase students' academic and civic engagement while improving the odds that they will stay in school and graduate from high school.

Applicants are free to determine the geography of the "zone" where their program activities will take place. With the a reduction in drop-out rates and an increase in meaningful civic engagement by youth as the target end outcomes, programs must accomplish one or both of the following intermediate outcomes during the 3-year grant period:

- include service-learning as a part of the curriculum in all of the secondary schools served by the participating LEA(s), or
- engage not less than 90% of students residing in the zone in service-learning activities as part of the program.

Grants will support the establishment or implementation of a Youth Engagement Zone program to provide service-learning opportunities that:

- connect local education agencies (LEAs), community colleges and community and faith-based organizations;
- address specific community challenges; and
- involve an increasing percentage of out-of-school youth and secondary school students served by the participating LEA(s) in service-learning activities each year. *Out-of-school youth are individuals who have not attained the age of 27, are not enrolled in school and have not completed college or its equivalent.*

What kinds of activities will the grant support?

Through eligible partnerships, grantees will provide financial resources, training, and other assistance to community colleges, community-based entities and local education agencies (LEAs) and other partners to implement service-learning projects within a defined geographic zone that will address one or more specific community challenges. Grantee activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Building enduring capacity within a community to provide youth with meaningful opportunities for academic, civic and personal growth through comprehensive connections among local organizations, institutions and businesses.
- Providing training and technical assistance to local partners and LEAs in scaling up high-quality service-learning programs that engage increasing numbers of youth.

- Strengthening mutually beneficial partnerships among community colleges, community-based entities and LEAs for the purpose of increasing high school graduation. For example, providing access to college coaching and financial aid counseling from community college professionals, and mentoring and/or tutoring by community college students.
- Facilitating the creation of learning communities of youth and adults focused on identifying and meeting local needs through service-learning activities.
- Participating in evaluation efforts designed to measure the impact these zones have on the youth and communities in which they participate.
- Developing sustainable service-learning programs, especially through the establishment of district-level policies and inclusion in organization-wide strategic plans.
- Supporting the use of the most compelling, freely-available technology for children and youth. This may include use of the most innovative approaches to service and learning through social networks, games and mobile devices.

What is the background of the Corporation for National and Community Service and Learn and Serve America?

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. As the nation's largest grantmaker for service and volunteering, the Corporation plays a critical role in building the capacity of America's nonprofit sector and expanding the reach and impact of volunteers and organizations in addressing pressing social problems. Last fiscal year, the Corporation engaged an estimated 5.5 million Americans in service, the largest total in its history. The Corporation's core programs are Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, the Social Innovation Fund and Learn and Serve America.

Learn and Serve America grants provide support to organizations that involve young people, particularly those from disadvantaged circumstances, in service-learning projects that simultaneously support student development and meet community needs. Youth Engagement Zone programs will help communities build on existing resources and infrastructure to develop opportunities for youth to engage in school- or community-based service-learning activities.

What is service-learning?

The Corporation for National and Community Service defines service-learning as an educational method that:

- is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and
- helps foster civic responsibility; and that
- is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and

- provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

II. Award Information

How much funding is available?

Approximately \$5.4 million is currently available for this program. Funds for the first year of this grant competition are made under the authority of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-117). The Corporation anticipates making an estimated 4 to 12 grant awards that will range from approximately \$300,000 to \$450,000 per year for up to three years. Funding beyond the first year for each grant award will be subject to the availability of future appropriations.

III. Eligibility Information

Who is eligible for this funding?

Eligible partnerships must include:

1. one or more community-based entities with demonstrated records of success in service-learning programs with economically disadvantaged students,
2. a local educational agency serving a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students (a free and reduced-price lunch eligibility rate of 70% or more) and where the graduation rate is less than 70%;
3. a community college with existing connections to the LEA and/or youth serving organizations; and
4. a geographic area where less than 30% of the secondary students are already engaged in service-learning.

Eligible partnerships may also involve other entities that could include, but are not limited to, higher education institutions, State Commissions on National and Community Service, faith-based organizations and local government agencies.

For the purpose of this competition, a *community-based entity* is a public or private nonprofit organization that has experience with meeting unmet educational, environmental or public safety needs.

NOTE: The lead applicant must be physically located in the designated zone and have the organizational capacity to manage the grant.

All partnerships must include, at a minimum, at least one LEA, one community college, and one community-based entity. The Corporation seeks applications from two types of partnerships:

1. Existing partnerships of two or more community entities that have an established track record of working together to address a particular community issue. The YEZ grant will bring expertise in service-learning and experience working with the target youth population to the partnership in order to integrate youth engagement and leadership. For example, a group of community and faith-based organizations work together to address the issue of hunger; they partner with a LEA to involve young people in service-learning

activities that are connected to the health unit at the school. Nutrition students at the community college serve as additional volunteers and tutors for the youth.

2. Existing partnerships of youth-serving organizations/social service providers that have an established track record of collaboration. The YEZ grant will assist those partners as they develop meaningful opportunities for youth to participate in service-learning activities with other community entities. For example, the local department of social services for youth and a coalition of advocates for runaway youth work with the LEA and community college students to provide opportunities for the youth they serve to participate in service-learning activities that address energy efficiency and inform them about potential career and college options.

Are there matching requirements for these grants?

Yes. Applicants must propose to provide at least 50% of the total program budget as cash or in-kind matching funds. (For example, if the applicant is requesting \$400,000 from the Corporation, the budget should also include \$400,000 in matching resources for a total program budget of \$800,000.)

Because expanding volunteer service is the purpose of the Corporation's programs, the Grantee may not include the value of direct community service performed by volunteers. However, the Grantee may include the value of volunteer services contributed for organizational functions such as accounting, training of staff, etc.

IV. Application and Submission Information

When are applications due?

Applications are due no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 15, 2010.

Where can I request application information?

This *Notice* may be found on the Corporation's website:

http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp or by contacting YEZ@cns.gov or 202-606-7510.

Are letters of intent to apply required?

If you intend to apply, please send an email to: YEZ@cns.gov by May 28, 2010.

Although submission of the notice of intent to apply is not mandatory, your email will help the Corporation to plan more efficiently for the review. In your email, please include the name of your organization, address, contact person, and phone number.

What is a DUNS number and is it required to apply?

The DUN and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is used as a Universal Identifier. Applications must include a DUNS number on the Standard Form 424. The DUNS number is an identifier that helps the federal government improve statistical reports on federal grants and cooperative agreements. The DUNS number does not replace your Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (800) 333-0505 or (866) 705-5711 or by applying online at www.dnb.com.

The website indicates a 24-hour email turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, we suggest registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. Expedited DUNS numbers may be obtained for a fee by calling the DUNS number request line. Applications without DUNS numbers or with invalid DUNS numbers will be rejected.

How are applications submitted to the Corporation?

The Corporation requires that all applicants make every effort to submit their applications electronically utilizing its web-based application system, eGrants. The eGrants website is: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>

If extenuating circumstances make this impossible, send a hard copy of your application to the following address, via overnight carrier (non-U.S. Postal Service because of security-related delays in receiving mail from the U.S. Postal Service). All requirements described herein apply to hard copy applications.

Corporation for National and Community Service
Attn: Office of Grants Policy and Operations/LSA Application
1201 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20525

Late applications may be accepted only in extenuating circumstance if the applicant submits a letter explaining what caused the delay. Such letter must be sent to the Corporation via email to YEZ@cns.gov no later than one business day after the application due date. Late applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

We strongly recommend that you create your eGrants account and begin your application at least three weeks prior to the final submission deadline and begin pasting your application into eGrants no later than ten days before the deadline. This will allow you time to address technical issues prior to the deadline.

Contact the eGrants Help Desk at 888-677-7849 (talk to an associate or leave a detailed message) or e-mail egrantshelp@cns.gov immediately if a problem arises while you are creating your account, preparing, or submitting your application. Be prepared to provide your application ID. If technical issues are preventing you from submitting your application in eGrants by the deadline, you must contact the eGrants Help Desk prior to the 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time deadline to explain your technical issue and get a ticket number. If your issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, you must continue working with the eGrants Help Desk to submit your application.

In the event of prolonged unavailability of the eGrants system on the date of submission, the Corporation reserves the right to extend the eGrants submission deadline. A notice will be posted in eGrants and on <http://www.nationalservice.gov>.

What must be included in an application?

Please carefully read this *Notice* and the Application Instructions for this competition. All documents are available at: http://www.learnandserve.gov/for_organizations/funding

Application Instructions are approved under OMB Control#: 3045-0045, Expiration Date 9/30/2011. They are formatted to correspond to fields in eGrants.

The application must provide a well-designed plan with a clear and compelling justification for awarding the requested funds. In evaluating applications, reviewers will assess the narrative on the basis of program design, organizational capacity, and budget adequacy/cost effectiveness.

The completed application will consist of the following components, described in detail below.

- A. Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Facesheet
- B. Narratives (maximum length – 30,000 characters)
 - 1. Program Design (*Executive Summary, Community Needs and Service Activities, Strengthening Communities, Participant Development, Three Year Plan*)
 - 2. Organizational Capacity
 - 3. Budget/Cost Effectiveness
- C. Budget
- D. Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications
- E. Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity (*Optional*)

Please note that character limits include spaces. When drafting narrative responses, we recommend using word processing software that will check spelling and count characters. Use only uppercase letters for all section headings and other information you would like to highlight in your narrative. Bold face, bullets, underlines, or other types of formatting, charts, diagrams, and tables will **not** copy into eGrants.

What are the funding restrictions?

Grants under this program are subject to the Cost Principles under 2 CFR part 220, 2 CFR part 230, or 2 CFR part 225 and the Uniform Administrative Requirements for grants under 45 CFR part 2541 or 45 CFR 2543.

Construction is not an allowable activity for this funding. In addition, funds may not be used for:

1. Political Activities

Any effort to influence legislation; organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts or strikes; assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing; impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements; engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office; and participating in, or endorsing, events or activities which are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.

2. Religious Activities

Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.

3. Non-Domestic Service Activities/Beneficiaries

Generally, grant funds may not be used for international travel or projects where the primary beneficiaries of an activity are outside the United States.

Are there any other submission requirements?

Corporation program officers may call applicants to seek clarification, resolve questions and issues, negotiate performance measures, and request revised budgets as part of the pre-award review process. Failure to respond to requests for information in a timely fashion will result in the removal of applications from consideration. Applicants should be prepared to provide documentation of partnerships and other support described in the narrative such as Memoranda of Understanding, samples of selected curriculum, organization annual reports, and evaluations.

V. Application Review Information**What is the selection process and criteria for these grants?**

In evaluating applications for funding, reviewers will assess program design, organizational capacity, and cost-effectiveness and budget adequacy. The weights assigned to each category are listed in the chart below. Reviewers will assess application narratives against these criteria and the extent to which the applicant responds to the priorities in this *Notice* the questions in the Application Instructions. Please read both documents carefully to ensure that you are fully and appropriately responding to the information requested in the application.

Basic Selection Criteria: Categories and Respective Weights

Category	Percentage
Program Design (Executive Summary, Community Needs and Service Activities, Strengthening Communities, Participant Development Three Year Plan)	70%
Organizational Capability	20%
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	10%

The Corporation gives priority to applications proposing to:

- Involve students and community stakeholders in the design and implementation of the service-learning program;
- Implement service-learning program in low-income or rural communities; and
- Utilize adult volunteers, including tapping the resources of retired and retiring adults, in the planning and implementation of the service-learning program.

The Corporation will also seek to balance the grant portfolio with a geographically and programmatically diverse group of grantees.

VI. Award Administration Information**When will applicants be notified of awards?**

We anticipate making awards by the end of September 2010. Applicants may be asked for clarification as part of the review process. Applicants must satisfactorily resolve any questions or issues identified during review.

What documents govern the grant?

Grant provisions are incorporated in the Notice of Grant Award (NGA). The NGA also includes the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant.

When are background checks required?

A criminal history check is required for all individuals receiving a living allowance, stipend, national service educational award, or salary through a program receiving assistance under the national service laws—regardless of the type of service the individual is performing or the individual's access to vulnerable populations. (42 U.S.C. 12645g)

What are the reporting requirements for these grants?

Grantees are required to supply annual performance and bi-annual financial reports. All grantees provide expense reports to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services via the Payment Management System.

The Grantee must cooperate fully with all Corporation evaluation activities, such as the collection of participant data, implementation information or performance forms and other information required by the Corporation.

VII. Agency Contact

This *Notice* is available at http://www.learnandserve.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp.

The TTY number is 202-606-3472. For further information or for a printed copy of this *Notice*, send an email to YEZ@cns.gov or call (202) 606-7510.

For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, contact the eGrants Help Desk at 888-677-7849 (talk to an associate or leave a detailed message) or email egrantshelp@cns.gov.