Monitoring & Reporting

Monitoring Process

Risk Based Monitoring

ServeNebraska monitors programs to promote the highest standards of quality and efficiency in providing AmeriCorps service delivery to Nebraskans. As stewards of public funding, ServeNebraska needs to ensure that programs and sites they fund are aware of their contractual requirements and are in compliance with all the rules, regulations and provisions governing AmeriCorps funds. Our review maximizes compliance with applicable federal, state, and ServeNebraska policies, evaluates the quality of the community service provided, and gauges the member experience while serving in AmeriCorps. We value our partnerships with community-based service providers, and view the monitoring process as a means of fostering continual improvement.

ServeNebraska is committed to communicating clear expectations to programs; providing timely guidance focused on compliance, performance, and quality issues; and helping programs continuously improve their operations and impact. A "risk-based" monitoring approach helps ServeNebraska monitor programs in an efficient and strategic way.

ServeNebraska staff uses a variety of methods to monitor AmeriCorps programs. A risk-based approach determines the appropriate strategy for – and level of -- program monitoring that is needed for each program. In evaluating a program's risk level, the following factors are considered:

- Experience as a subgrantee
- Experience in managing federal or state awards
- Past and current monitoring/compliance issues
- Size and/or complexity of grant
- Program history in meeting performance measures / objectives
- A-133 Audit findings
- Financial management issues
- Staff tenure
- Agency infrastructure and support
- Prior site visits and findings
- Adequacy and timeliness of program and financial reports
- Responsiveness to ServeNebraska staff
- Member retention and enrollment rates
- Rate of participation in ServeNebraska training and other events

The **ServeNebraska Monitoring Guide** can be accessed via Grantee Central on the ServeNebraska website at, http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/grantee/grantee.htm

In order to offer program support and ensure compliance with regulations, ServeNebraska will utilize a four-step monitoring process:
- **Orientation** – the commission will provide an orientation/training for all program directors to ensure that they are aware of grant requirements and are familiar with the monitoring process.

This will be provided on an annual basis, generally during a Program Leader Launch in order to cover changes in CNCS and ServeNebraska policies.

- **Start Up Documents** – ServeNebraska will ask for AmeriCorps Program Start-Up Documents from a prescribed list that includes Member Documents, Staff Documents, Marketing Documents and Organizational/Program Documents. These items will be requested prior to the start date of the program year.

- **Risk Assessment** – A risk assessment is conducted jointly by Program and Fiscal/Operations Officers prior to determination of funding for the subsequent year as part of the pre-award process during the grant application process. Risk assessments will also be conducted on a quarterly basis, at the time progress reports are due of programmatic records. The numerical result of the assessment of the risk factors result in categorizing Americorps programs into one of three risk levels; High Risk, Medium Risk, or Low risk. All programs that are first time or in their initial year of operation are considered High Risk since there is no organizational history with AmeriCorps. High-Risk factors may include, but are not limited to:

  - A change in program director or other key staff
  - Legitimate member complaints to ServeNebraska
  - Poor past performance by the program (based on progress reports and/or previous site visits)
  - Concerns regarding prohibited activities
  - Compliance with reporting deadlines

- **Site Visits or Desk Audits** – are comprehensive monitoring efforts focused on compliance. They are a means of assessing program compliance status, gauging the quality of programing and addressing continual improvement issues. On-site visits or desk audits will be conducted by the ServeNebraska Program and/or Fiscal/Operations Officers, who may be accompanied or assisted by other ServeNebraska personnel.

  - In advance, ServeNebraska will send the sub-grantee Program Director and (if applicable) Financial Director communication informing him/her of the monitoring visit process. The pre-visit email or letter includes copies of the tools that will be used

  - The sub-grantee AmeriCorps Program Director is to ensure that appropriate program staff and/or members are available and that resources essential to successful implementation of the on-site visit or desk audit are available.

  - ServeNebraska will conduct a review of compliance/risk concerns in advance of the visit or desk audit. Communication to-date with the program will be factored into this assessment. Any findings resulting from this pre-visit Assessment will be incorporated into the review agenda.

  - Following a site visit or desk audit, ServeNebraska will issue a written report of findings to the Program Director of the respective program within 30 business days. Within the report, ServeNebraska may request a response plan from the program related to the compliance and continuous improvement issues within 30 days of the issuing of the report. ServeNebraska staff is available to provide technical assistance to the program in development and implementation of its response plan. If more serious issues exist, a shortened timeframe may be established by ServeNebraska and must be adhered to by the program.

- o Follow-up feedback from ServeNebraska will include identification of the program's strengths as well as reporting of continuous improvement and compliance issues. The report will reinforce effective program administration procedures and identify information that could be useful to communicate to program stakeholders. In addition, the report will document any training and technical assistance needs. As appropriate, the report will request copies of documentation from the program to support corrective action that has been taken (for example, copies of missing member documentation).

- o If a response plan is requested, the Program should include the actions the program will take to overcome the identified weaknesses and identify how the program will monitor progress of the response plan. Requested documentation should also be included.

Progress Reports

Programmatic Progress Reports

Programmatic progress reports are due quarterly, 15 days after the completion of the quarter. If a program is not able to complete their report by the due date, the Program Director will be required to request electronically an extension with an explanation as to why the report will be late. The Progress Report includes date and information on:

- Performance Measure Attainment: Central to each AmeriCorps grant are defined performance measures. Progress towards these shall be reported
- Demographic information: Quantitative tally of the number and type of individuals served and volunteering to extend program efforts
- Great Stories: Anecdotal narratives that convey the impact of the AmeriCorps program on beneficiaries, members, and the community.

Program Evaluation

All AmeriCorps programs must conduct a program evaluation. All evaluations must cover at least one year of Corporation-funded service activity. The type of evaluation required varies depending on the amount of funds awarded.

Programs that receive an average annual Corporation grant of $500,000 or more must conduct an independent external evaluation. An independent external evaluation uses an evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program to be evaluated.

All other Americorps State and National grantees must conduct an internal evaluation. An internal evaluation is designed and conducted by qualified program staff or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates.

The $500,000 threshold is calculated by averaging your corporation grant over the last three years you have received Corporation funding.

Reporting: My Service Log

In order to streamline and simplify the reporting of programmatic and financial information as well as the recording of member service hours, ServeNebraska utilizes My Service Log. My Service Log is a hosted web application providing hour logging, volunteer management and reporting functions for AmeriCorps and other structured service programs. For more information on My Service Log, please visit their Features page, http://www.myservicelog.com/features.html.