

## **A Guide to Using AmeriCorps NCCC Teams to Execute Your Mission**

**April 13, 2011**

*Charlie Goff:*

ERG, a contractor supporting the U.S. Department of Energy's Better Buildings Program. Thank you for participating in today's webinar to learn how AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps can help with implementation of your program. The presenters for today's webinar are Charles Davenport and Corrine Keel from AmeriCorps. We also have Lilah Glick from the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance on the line who is going through the process right now of answering any questions you might have. Before we get started, I'd like to go over a few logistical items. First, all participant phone lines have been put on universal mute to prevent background noise. If you haven't done so already, please enter your two-digit audio pin. You can find your audio pin in the questions control panel box on the right-hand side of your screen. To enter it, you just need to hit pound, the two-digit number, and pound again. And we ask you to do that so we can un-mute your line during the Q&A portion if you have a question. Questions will be taken at the end of today's presentation. During the Q&A session if you have a question that you'd like to ask over the phone, you can raise your hand virtually, and there's a button to do that in the control panel box, and we can un-mute your line. You can also ask a question by typing it in the questions box on the right hand side of your screen at any point during the webinar, and we'll get to it during the Q&A portion. Finally, the presentations from today's webinar, along with the recording and transcript, will be posted to the Google site soon. So with that I will hand it over to Corinne.

*Corrine Keel:*

Okay, thanks a lot. I'm not sure if any of you are familiar with our program AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, although we shorten it to AmeriCorps NCCC to make things a little bit easier for you. We want to describe our program to you and look for possible ways that we may be able to partner with you to help execute your organization's mission. We are a national service program and we provide not financial grants like some of our counterparts within AmeriCorps, but are actually focused on giving direct participant service to the organizations we serve. So to get started, I want to first demonstrate to you how our organization fits in within the greater national service family, and advance to this next slide here.

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For those of you who may or may not be familiar with the Corporation for National and Community Service—we are a small federal agency, very small. There are only about 500 CNCS employees across the country. And we're headquartered here in Washington, D.C., but we do have people who work in the Commissions for Service and State Offices across the country, as well as some other field offices for the various programs. As you can see, you may be familiar with Senior Corps AmeriCorps, Learn & Serve AmeriCorps, as branches of the national service family. As I said, we are part of the AmeriCorps family and along with our counterparts in AmeriCorps State & National, AmeriCorps VISTA and then we are over on the left, National Civilian Community Corps. And again, we differ a little bit from some of the other AmeriCorps programs in that for one we are not a grant program and then we don't provide funds to organizations, we provide people grants, as we like to call them. And also you may be familiar with the State & National or VISTA program where members are placed for a full year with an organization to help serve that organization and build their capacity. On the other hand, NCCC is actually a team-based program and we actually put our members in service to organizations for

short term, intensive service projects. So it's not a yearlong commitment to support these members, but rather a short-term opportunity for us to help you fulfill the needs of your organization.

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I'll go into some more detail about how our program works to get you familiar with our mission statement. Our mission is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through team-based, national, and community service. We have a residential program. It's very intensive and an opportunity that provides our members with a variety of different kinds of service. That includes training in those various areas, so we are very much focused on meeting community needs. But we're also focused on our member development as well. Just to give you more of an idea, the premise behind AmeriCorps and NCCC is the belief that helping communities get things done provides a valuable opportunity for our young people to learn practical skills and also civic engagement. And they're also contributing to try and make America a better place. And I'll go into a little more detail on the kinds of projects we do and the kinds of members we have, but we have a young group of ages 18- 24—very motivated and enthusiastic members who are very much engaged in the service that they do.

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Again, something that makes NCCC a little bit unique from some of the other programs I mentioned is that our members are not placed at one site throughout the year—they actually travel and work with different organizations. And our structure is a five-region structure around our five regional campuses. You can see there's a gold star to represent our headquarters in Washington, D.C. But we are divided into five regions across the country with five campuses that are the center of each of those regions. So moving from the West to East, we have headquarters or campuses in Sacramento, CA, Denver, CO, Vinton, IA, Vicksburg, MS, and Perry Point, MD. If you were to apply to have a team come and serve your organization, you would be able to look at this map and see where your state was and which campus would serve that state.

Our campuses are on slightly varied schedules each year because our members are on campus about 10 months out of the year and then we have period of time when one group goes home and another group comes back, and they're transitioned into another round of training. So when teams are available varies a little bit amongst the region. Occasionally we do have members that cross over different regions. We'll talk a little more about how to get in contact with your regional campus here in a little bit, but just to give you an idea of how we are organized across the country, this is it. And when members come and report to a campus they actually will travel throughout the region that's shown in the color, and we try and give our members as much of a variety of geography as well as types of service when they are in the Corps, so it's very much based on travel and having an adventure for our members, as well as being able to serve the corners of the USA, including US territories, and Alaska and Hawaii, which you don't see pictures of here, but are both part of our Pacific Region which is housed in Sacramento, CA.

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One of the reasons that we are here talking to you today is you may be familiar with the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009. This legislation is focused on expanding the current scope of AmeriCorps across the country, and it also serves to refocus and energize the national service movement of which we are a very central, key piece, as is the Corporation for National

and Community Service. NCCC has had some various changes in focus as set forth by the legislation, but one of those is that while we have always done a good bit of work in environmental conservation and stewardship, we have a new focus with an emphasis on energy conservation, not just as part of environmental stewardship and conservation, but actually as its own entity. And so we are looking to organizations like yours and through partnerships with programs like Better Buildings through the Department of Energy to try and build our resume and get more experience and serve more organizations that have energy conservation as their focus.

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To give you a little bit of an idea of how an NCCC service project works. Projects typically last up to 6 to 8 weeks. They can be shorter, oftentimes a project round is split between two different organizations or more. And we especially try and look at some of the shorter-term projects as options for new sponsors. We have some organizations that we have partnered with for years and years, so even though we are a short-term program, we do offer rotational support at times as needed. Another thing to note is that our service projects fall into one of these five focus areas. Natural and Other Disasters is where we do probably the largest percent of our service, and we've found our niche in disaster because we are such a mobile organization. We have our teams based on these regional campuses, and because they are residential, we are able to quickly gather and move teams in case of disasters. We've also done extensive work in disaster recovery, long-term recovery, as well as preparedness and mitigation. The Serve America Act also asks us to focus on infrastructure improvement, which is another new area for us. And I mentioned before we've done a lot of work in the past, environmental work, as well as developmental work, including housing is probably a major focus. As far as energy conservation goes, we have done some work in the past in this area, including upgrades to residences and businesses, including more energy-efficient appliances, light bulbs, those sorts of things. Our members have done outreach, going door-to-door and doing energy assessments to people's homes and talking to them about energy conservation. Definitely education in any and all of these areas is another specialty of ours because our members are able to get trained and then go out and educate more people in a more widespread way.

Those are all some of the ways that NCCC could be used. I do want to point out that there are some things that, just because of the length of our projects and the experience level of our members, are outside the realm of what we can do. But our members, pretty much any kind of task that they can be trained in to operate equipment and do things safely is within the bounds of something we would consider as an appropriate project. So really there is a wide variety of activities, including some of those like insulation that require some technical training that we are able to have our members participate in. So that's a little bit about our service projects.

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I also want to share with you a little bit about our members. NCCC Corps members are ages 18 to 24 and work together in teams of about 10 members. And they are also led by a team leader. Each team has a team leader and there is no upper age limit for a team leader, although they tend to be just a little bit older than our corps members. So typically, they are out of school and maybe 25 to 26 years old. Our members are recruited nationally and are selected from a pool of qualified applicants. Included in that, we do we ask that our members provide us with a medical history, also to go through a background check and all of them were checked against sex offender registries and that's an automatic disqualification from being involved in our program.

We are also looking at their interests in the program, their motivations for wanting to serve, and some of their prior service experience. Our members are also representative of different cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. I'd say every year we can pretty much guarantee we have each state in the Union represented, as well as educational backgrounds ranging from members who are working on getting a GED to occasionally a young member who has actually completed a masters degree. And then, despite those differences, they really are all just very much committed to service and their own personal development, as well as being enthusiastic and hardworking. And as you look forward, if you decide that you are interested in possibly hosting and sponsoring an NCCC team for a project, you'll find one of the greatest challenges that we have when working with our sponsors and planning projects is making sure that we have enough work to keep our members busy because they tend to work really quickly and exceed our sponsors' expectations most of the time.

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So just to give you an idea of what a sponsor receives or what the benefit to a sponsoring organization is, when you are awarded an NCCC team, NCCC provides a team of about 10 members. They arrive with their own transportation. They actually come in a 15-passenger van. We have van driver certification, and usually we'll have several people on the team who have been given the go-ahead to drive some of these larger vehicles if that's something that comes up in the course of the project.

Our members are peer led by a team leader, so they're coordinated and supervised by that team leader. Through the entire course of their project, the team leader stays with that team. They adhere to a structured daily and weekly schedule. While we do ask for site supervision, we have very self-motivated teams and they're able to take work plans that you help to structure and move forward with those and implement them. And then they execute during the course of the project, whatever length that may be, a work plan that you design, along with NCCC staff. And I definitely want to stress that if you are interested in working with us to try and develop a project and apply for a team, our field staff are very hands-on with project development, so it's not something where you're not just asked to go it alone. We definitely want to hear from you: what sort of work is appropriate, what's doable, and cooperate in that way.

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So next, on the other slide, just look at what NCCC provides. While we don't have any cash costs or cost-sharing directly for sponsoring an NCCC team, there are some things that we do ask our sponsors to provide. And probably the biggest one of those is housing for the team during the course of the project and this is especially true for any project beyond a reasonable commuting distance from an NCCC campus. So again, if you're close to Sacramento, Denver, Vinton, IA, Vicksburg, MS, or Perry Point, MD, chances are this won't be an issue and it's great for us to be able to sometimes pilot or get started with organizations that are close to the campus. However, if you are outside of that sort of reasonable commuting distance for the team to actually be housed at the campus, then we do ask for housing. And that can vary. Sometimes we've had organizations that have access to cabins or apartments that are really set up for group living. Sometimes there are situations that are a little less conducive, but we can make it work. For example, in a community center or a church where there might be an opportunity for the team to provide food for themselves and cook in a kitchen, to set up cots in some kind of clean, dry living space, and especially shower is a necessary plus when we are looking for housing. But that said, we do have, on occasion, depending on the nature of the project, something as far on the

other end of the spectrum as wilderness camping. Some of our teams get the opportunity to do leave-no-trace camping when they are on wilderness projects, and so I point that out just to say that while this is oftentimes one of the sticking points or one of the things that makes it a little bit harder for a sponsor to host a team, it's definitely something we are willing to work with you on and help try and provide ideas.

And also, just working with other organizations is often the best way to accommodate this if you have community centers, camps, or anything like that in the area that is set up to house a group of our size. While we do send a team leader with the team to deal with disciplinary issues, administrative things, and sort of overall support of the team, when it comes to the actual project work, we do ask for onsite support, and that would include appropriate training for whatever the activities are, technical supervision, and supplies for those projects. So while we bring the members and the bodies that are going to get the work done, we really need that infrastructural support from your organization to help make sure that our teams are supported in the capacity to be able to safely and respectfully do the jobs that you've set forth for them to do. And I'll just also point out that site supervision is important, and although we like to have someone on site as much of the time as possible, that's also something where, if you have one or two site supervisors and multiple sites or you're sending teams out to work in different homes, it's more about having that support available than having someone constantly right next to the team. So if you have concerns about the size of your staff and being able to provide that support, again that's something you can talk to our field staff about and they can sort of provide more guidance for what the appropriate level of supervision is.

And then lastly, this is something we also take very seriously when it comes to working with our sponsors, and that's that you provide some kind of support for service learning to help the team understand the community's needs and the work of the organization. And a lot of times this takes the form of an orientation to your community and to your organization within the first day or two that the team arrives. You're technical training and site supervision is definitely a part of this, but also any other sort of additional support that you can provide to help the team understand the importance of the work they're doing, whether it's a community town hall meeting around the issues that your organization deals with, talking to individuals in the community, or doing any other kind of sort of educational activity that helps them to understand the importance of the work they are doing. We always welcome that, and it's definitely a priority. Again, that goes back to our emphasis on our members' development.

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So next I want to take you briefly through the steps for applying for an NCCC team. First of all, we don't ask that you initially fill out a large grant-like application. We have a very simple step-by-step project concept form in which we ask about basic things: your sponsoring organization mission, structure, and what kinds of work you're interested in having NCCC perform. Those are the ways for us to have initial contact with you, feel out whether or not your project is something that would be appropriate for NCCC to serve with, and doesn't put the burden on you of filling out this large application only to find that there are things that we'd have to change in the project design to be able to successfully move forward. After that, our staff review the concept form and then give an invitation to apply for those sponsors that are qualified, and so that really means that those sponsors that are able to provide the kinds of work that is appropriate to NCCC and that fit within our focus areas and scope of the work that we do. And then the next step is for you to submit a full project application. Again, that's a little bit more

like a grant application, although we like to think it's a little bit simpler than some grant applications that can be very complex. And also just the project development that goes along with that application is definitely done with some assistance and input from staff. If you have any questions about the strength of your application or something that you're not sure how to respond to, our field staff are there to help support that process.

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Moving on, we've put together a set of next steps that's specifically for Better Buildings grantees. The reason we've taken this approach is because we know that you are all out there doing work in communities that's in line with an area where we want to expand the service that we do. So we want to take a little bit of an extra opportunity to nurture these relationships if you are interested in moving forward and applying for an NCCC team so that we can just keep track of you a little bit better than if you were to simply cold call our campuses or vice versa. So I'll actually be your primary point of contact from headquarters here. My name, Corrine Keel, it's listed for you. And my contact information is on the next slide, so I will definitely share that and leave it up for a little bit while we go through our Q&A portion of the call. But I'm here to discuss with you either on the phone or via email some of your project ideas, any of your logistical concerns that come up right off the bat, and once we take those first steps and get to know each other, I will be able to make an introduction between you and the NCCC field staff at the campus that serves the state that you are in. And I looked ahead at the group that was registered and it looks like we have each of our regions represented by one organization and definitely we are interested in serving your organizations all over the country. And then next, as you navigate our normal application process, it will be the same as the last slide with the concept form, staff review, and then full project application. We'll also try and remain in contact with the program managers to nurture these relationships as we move forward because, again, energy conservation is a priority for us and we'd love to be able to serve your organization, provided that it's a good fit for all.

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So this last slide that I'm going to share with you has my contact information and also some pictures of our teams doing service and I hope you know that this is used throughout. You can see our teams serve together in uniform, and it's a very hardworking group. But feel free to contact me by phone and email afterward, my... I see that there is a slight typo here. That's 2-0-2 not 2-0-2-0. So again I will leave that slide up so you can write that down. But I do want to at this time give first allow a chance for Charles Davenport, who's the director of the Projects and Partnerships unit at NCCC to introduce himself, as well as Lilah who will also be able to share a little bit about where she is in the NCCC application process from the organizational standpoint, and then open it up for all three of us to field any questions that you may have.

*Charles Davenport:*

Great. Thank you. Can you hear me, Corrine?

*Corinne Keel:*

I can.

*Charles Davenport:*

Okay. Fantastic. Once again I'd just like to thank everyone for being a part of this webinar. As you can tell by the information that was shared by Corrine, hopefully you have a good idea of

how the program operates and what our desire is as far as working with each of you possibly as future partners. The only thing I will stress in addition to what Corrine has already shared is that we are very much a flexible organization in the sense that our young people (18 to 24-year-olds) are very creative and willing to learn. So sometimes in dealing with sponsors they have thought of more traditional ways of doing things, and I just want to share with everyone that we are always looking to think outside the box and do things that have never been done before and to try new experiences. So when you are looking at the type of project that we may do, as she mentioned before, we are definitely open to having the conversation with you, to work it through so you don't have to have everything in place and then send it to us. So if you want to talk it through at first, I'll definitely be available to do that and definitely look forward to a good partnership with you. And Corinne, that's all I have at this time.

*Corinne Keel:*

Okay. Great. And then Lilah Glick is in the process, and Lilah if you could just say a little bit more. I know you're not quite at the point where you've actually hosted a team, but if you can just talk a little bit about where you are in the process and possibly folks will have some questions for you as well.

*Lilah Glick:*

Great. So we, last week, submitted our concept paper and were invited back for a full proposal for us to meet our deadline for getting an NCCC team in July and August. Our proposal is due on Friday. Just a little background of how the concept came together and what we would like to do. My last organization, I worked with the Cambridge Energy Alliance in Massachusetts, and I ran a number of large-scale community campus groups. One of them was a 3-week project with a university-organized group where the students are basically housed and provided food costs, and then we created the sort of political campaign: the maps, and the training, and the spreadsheets for taking down the information, and providing the proper material. So when I found out that NCCC was offering a team, I wanted to do something similar for our organization, Upper Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance here in Cincinnati. And the idea would be we would go door to door over a period of 8 weeks to provide information on our organization to try to get homeowners signed up for an energy assessment. Also, I'm writing a concurrent grant for potential efficiency kits, so that may be involved in the project as well. In addition, I have two other partners and we've identified neighborhoods that we would like to select maybe 3 to 5 homes during the summer where they would go in under the leadership of another organization called People Working Cooperatively and do basic weatherization services for low-income houses. So sort of have a combined project, but that is the basic project outline in what we are trying to do. And I'm happy take any questions folks may have.

*Corinne Keel:*

Thanks a lot. So I think at this time we're ready to field any questions that come up on the phone.

*Charlie Goff:*

To ask a question you just need to virtually raise your hand and that option is available to you in your control panel box on the right hand side of your screen. You can also feel free to type in your question in the questions box and we can take questions through that as well.

*Corinne Keel:*

Just to add a little clarifying information about where you can find the raising hands feature. Occasionally when you are listening to the webinar your computer will automatically close your control panel, and just to reopen it all you need to do is locate the small arrow, the white arrow in the red button, and if you click on that it will reopen your control panel and you will see the option to raise your hand.

*Charlie Goff:*

So Corinne, are there any other last comments you'd like to make? It doesn't look like we are getting any questions coming in.

*Corinne Keel:*

Oh. Okay. Actually I just saw a question pop up on my screen.

*Charlie Goff:*

Yes. We just saw it.

*Corinne Keel:*

Okay. Great. This is from Sandra. How long is the application process, how many weeks or months? So typically our application process, and it varies a little bit by campuses because they publish their due dates for concept forms and applications, but it's a process that does take several months. So for traditional full-length projects, it may end up being about 4 months if you apply close to our project concept form deadline, or it could be a little bit longer than that if you are actually off the cycle a little bit. That is, we do take applications, especially concept forms, on a rolling basis so if you were to submit a concept form a little bit before the due date, we'd have to wait for that due date to come and go so that all of the concept forms can be considered for a project round. That said, when we are working on special initiatives and trying to cooperate and develop projects in new areas for us like this one, we do try and be as flexible as possible. As a resource, and Charles is going to say this, we're interested in looking at and working with you possibly if we have teams that are serving in your area or if you are located near one of our campuses. It's also a possibility to get something shorter piloted even sooner than that. So you know, again, working with organizations like yours that are doing energy conservation work is a high priority for us, so if we were able to pilot something like a day of service or some kind of short-term project, we would definitely look at those possibilities. So yes, typically it's a process that takes several months from the initial concept form to the actual awarding of the team. And Lilah, you might be able to share more about the time frame that you've been working within.

*Lilah Glick:*

Well let's see, our project is for July and August. Our concept paper was due a week-and-a-half ago, and then we were given two weeks for the proposal to be turned in. So if you do that, that's May, June. It's three and a half months.

*Corinne Keel:*

Okay. Great.

*Lilah Glick:*

That's a few months from the point of when the concept paper was due.

*Corinne Keel:*

All right. Great. So thanks for that question, Sandra. And if you have any clarifications or want to ask anything else please feel free.

*Charlie Goff:*

If there are any other questions, you can type them in now, but otherwise I would like to thank Corinne, Charles, and Lilah for the presentation today. And as a reminder, the presentation, as well as the recording and transcript, will be posted to the Google site soon so you will be able to access that through that resource.

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And before we leave today I would just like to make an announcement of the upcoming Better Buildings webinars that you may be interested in. First, later this week we have a webinar on the EECBG Quarter 1 reporting requirements. On Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> we have a similar webinar, but it is focused on SEP reporting requirements, and on Thursday of the next week we have one on using the informational systems web portal to report or to fulfill your reporting requirements. And finally, on April 27 we have the webinar about how to work with the media, which will contain a lot of valuable information related to that topic. Unless there are any last-minute questions, I think we can wrap things up. So thanks again everybody.

*Corinne Keel:*

All right. Thanks a lot Charlie.

*[Muffled "Thank you"]*