

## The California Partnership for Accelerating Local Climate Response & Resiliency

### What is the Value of a CivicSpark Member to Your City?

Why would a local government with limited resources choose to work with *CivicSpark* to address climate change response needs? *CivicSpark* was designed to provide high-quality technical support services through a “circuit-rider” consultancy model that is team-based and coordinated statewide by the Local Government Commission, in partnership with the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. This allows the program to offer an all-inclusive set of services to local governments for a fixed hourly rate that is far below normal costs. As it offers cost-effective support services, *CivicSpark* also is strengthening local government staff, building community engagement, and training the next generation of public service professionals. This document provides 1) a comparison between working with *CivicSpark* and hiring an intern, 2) A set of frequently asked questions about the *CivicSpark* fiscal contribution, and 3) an overview of expected outcomes from the program.

### CivicSpark to Intern Comparison

The table below provides a comparison of *CivicSpark* with hiring an intern directly as a way to illustrate the many ways participation in *CivicSpark* can add value to your City.

	<b>CivicSpark</b>	<b>Intern</b>
<b>Scope of hours</b>	<i>CivicSpark</i> operates as a consulting team that includes a Regional Supervisor and AmeriCorps members. Participating local governments are only responsible for paying for project support Local Governments do not pay for the team’s training or administrative time.	All hours spent by individual intern on any activities.
<b>Candidate Pool</b>	National pool, highly competitive. Regional Supervisors are retired senior-level project managers. AmeriCorps members will have at least a college degree in a relevant field with prior relevant workplace and community service experience.	Usually local only, qualifications determined by staff
<b>Recruiting</b>	Managed by <i>CivicSpark</i> entirely who recruits nationally and locally; will likely screen upwards of 300 candidates to identify the best match for the program and region. <i>CivicSpark</i> then conducts interviews, makes selections, and processes hiring. All <i>CivicSpark</i> team members will have passed state and federal and NSOPR background checks	Staff manages all hiring alone, often interviewing 10 or more candidates. Background checks if required are the local government’s responsibility
<b>Training</b>	<i>CivicSpark</i> will provide Supervisors with training, and the entire team will participate in 2 weeks of pre-service training on program operations, project implementation and professional performance. Throughout the service year, the team will participate in general ongoing training, and significant time for additional project specific training built into the year is not billed to the local government.	Staff must provide any needed on-the-job training. All training has to occur post-hire. The local government must pay for any training time.
<b>Supervision</b>	Each regional team is managed by a ½ time Regional Supervisor who is working on the project directly, this is an experienced project manager committed to seeing the projects executed successfully. They are available to coordinate project details with the local government staff. Additionally, The LGC – a 35 year old nonprofit – is providing statewide coordination and oversight of <i>CivicSpark</i> to ensure it is implemented effectively and consistently.	Local Government staff must handle all supervision directly.
<b>Hosting</b>	Unless desired, <i>CivicSpark</i> members are not hosted by the local government and therefore all costs and management time related to workplace setup (desks, computers, email) are not required.	All workplace setup costs are the responsibility of the local government.
<b>Additional Resources</b>	<i>CivicSpark</i> is coordinating with the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research to connect members with training and technical resources for successful project implementation and long-term capacity building for the local government. <i>CivicSpark</i> will also host trainings and educational events throughout the year, that local governments are invited to participate in.	N/A
<b>Personnel Benefits</b>	AmeriCorps and LGC will provide a living stipend, Health Care (~200/month), AmeriCorps Education award (~\$5,600), on the job travel support (\$1000/month/regional team), food stamps and child-care if needed, and significant training and professional development support.	Typically no additional benefits are provided for interns
<b>Total Costs</b>	<i>CivicSpark</i> provides team-based services for a single all-inclusive rate of \$18 / project hour. This rate includes workers compensation, liability insurance, on the job travel and off-site hosting.	\$10-15/hr + Organizational overhead (usually 100% of hourly rate), workers compensation and liability insurance, and any job related expenses.

## FAQ about *CivicSpark* Fiscal Contribution

### **What is the value of *CivicSpark* services not covered by the local fiscal contribution?**

Approximately \$18/hr is provided through a combination of direct funding, education award, available food stamp benefits, and an in-kind value for the Encore Regional Supervisors' time. This estimate does not include state contributions of in-kind support and services, nor does it include the value of other benefits such as loan interest forgiveness or free childcare for qualifying members.

### **Who provides funding for *CivicSpark*?**

*CivicSpark* is an AmeriCorps program administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) through the California Commission – California Volunteers. Established in 1993, CNCS is a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its core programs -- Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund. AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 Americans annually in intensive service at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. Since the program's founding in 1994, more than 800,000 AmeriCorps members have contributed more than 1 billion hours in service across America. California Volunteers is the state office that manages programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of Californians engaged in service and volunteering.

### **Does a participating local government have to pay the fiscal contribution?**

No, it can come from a third party who is supporting the service project.

### **Can I use federal grant funds to pay for the fiscal contribution?**

AmeriCorps has a policy of deferring to other federal agencies with regard to comingling of federal funds. If the funding agency approves the use of funds for AmeriCorps it is allowable.

### **If we don't have funding in hand, do you have suggestions about how to fund the fiscal contribution?**

*CivicSpark* is a great resource to leverage for outside funding. Because of its flexible design, there is an opportunity to focus the service on a suite of projects that align with available resources. For example, a regional foundation interested in supporting public health might support a vulnerability assessment. Local utilities might support a business energy audit project. If there is an open RFP for climate related work, *CivicSpark* could be built into responses as a supporting mechanism for completing the project. Specific funding sources that could work based on prior experience include; the Strategic Growth Council planning grants; Proposition 39 school energy assessment / planning; and IOU local government partnerships.

### **How is the fiscal contribution paid?**

The contribution is paid in installments, 10% as a deposit, than the balance is due quarterly depending on the schedule of project implementation.

### **Does the fiscal contribution directly go to the AmeriCorps Member?**

No, it is a contribution to the whole program that is also bringing in resources from the federal government to support the whole program operations.

### **Does a participating local government have to provide workers compensation or liability insurance?**

No, *CivicSpark* members are covered by the Local Government Commission's insurance

### **How do I know I will get good value for this service?**

With a strongly defined program structure that includes; oversight by the Local Government Commission; direct supervision by Regional Supervisors; and clearly documented performance expectations, this program is designed to deliver results. In addition, in a previous case study, the PG&E funded Small Cities Climate Action Partnership) utilized a [similar AmeriCorps based team](#) to implement technical services for local governments. The "value" of this service was estimated to be upwards of \$100/hr.

# CivicSpark

## Expected Outcomes

*CivicSpark* is designed to increase the capacity of local governments to respond to climate change in an effective, strategic way. As an AmeriCorps program, *CivicSpark* is built around a series of performance measures that align with that capacity building goal. Below are some outcomes related to 1) the delivery of services, 2) local government capacity building outcomes, and 3) *CivicSpark* team professional development outcomes for AmeriCorps Members and their Supervisors.

### 1) Service delivery outcomes

- *CivicSpark* teams (4-7 people) will work with at least 6-12 local governments each year increasing their ability to respond to climate change and engage volunteers.
- Each Regional Supervisor will provide 1000 hours of service to the program over a 13-month period.
- Each AmeriCorps member will contribute 1700 hours of service over an 11-month period.

### 2) Local Government Capacity outcomes

- Targeted Service: At least 50% of participating local governments will be “high needs” as defined by meeting 3 of 4 criteria of community unemployment above the state average, a CalEnviroScreen score in the top 2/3 (>23), community wide energy use increased over the previous year, and government staff employment below 2007 (pre-recession) levels.
- Project Delivery: Participating local governments will receive support from the *CivicSpark* team to start or expand specific projects that that advances defined climate change goals during the service year.
- Volunteer Engagement: In parallel with their project delivery, *CivicSpark* teams will support increased volunteer engagement by setting up a climate fellows program that seeks to match 15-30 college students, recent graduates, retirees or other skilled volunteers who want to make a contribution to climate change efforts in their communities.
- Transitioning Expertise: *CivicSpark* will conclude project service by providing transitional training to staff and/or sharing results with key stakeholders in order to transfer knowledge and build action throughout the community, so as to sustain capacity gains over the long-term

### 3) *CivicSpark* Team Professional Development Outcomes

- Team members will receive significant training and on-the-job experience with technical services and leadership that build knowledge and skills, helping them become more competitive in the job market.
- Team members will receive support and coaching to transition from *CivicSpark* into their next job.
- Team members will engage with a range of regional stakeholders, other *CivicSpark* teams, and state level stakeholders, providing them with a rich professional network in the region and across California.