

# Catholic Volunteer Network gets back 75 percent of AmeriCorps funding

WASHINGTON - After several months on a “real roller coaster,” federal funding for the AmeriCorps Education Awards Program run by the Catholic Volunteer Network is back to 75 percent of its funding level a year earlier.

Notified in June that it would receive no funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service for the year beginning Aug. 1, Catholic Volunteer Network announced Oct. 31 that nearly 500 volunteers would receive AmeriCorps Education Awards to serve 47 organizations in 19 states through a second round of corporation funding.

“It’s been a real roller coaster,” said Jim Lindsay, executive director of Catholic Volunteer Network, which currently has more than 14,000 volunteers serving in member programs throughout the United States and in more than 100 other countries.

The problems began when Congress cut funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service, reducing appropriations to AmeriCorps State and National Grants program by \$22.5 million over FY 2010.

Catholic Volunteer Network, the largest faith-based grantee of the Corporation for National and Community Service, had asked to nearly double its funding because of increased interest in the AmeriCorps program. Instead it was told it would receive nothing for FY 2011, Lindsay said in a Nov. 3 interview with Catholic News Service.

“We had hoped to get an increase in the new cycle,” he added. “To not be funded was a real shock to us.”

In August, however, the network received notice that it and 16 other organizations would benefit from a second round of funding. Lindsay said he believes those funds had been already allocated to other programs but not used.

In all, Catholic Volunteer Network was funded for 760 “member service years” – which it disburses to a combination of full-time (1,700 service hours), half-time (at least 900 hours) and “minimum-time” (300-449 hours) volunteers – compared to 1,019 in each of the previous three years.

Full-time AmeriCorps Education Awards recipients can get up to \$5,350 to repay student loans or fund future education, while half-time or minimum-time volunteers get \$2,675 or \$1,132, respectively.

But because the program year did not begin until Nov. 1, rather than the usual Aug. 1, only 47 of the 74 organizations that took volunteers last year did so this year and many of the volunteers had to be placed in half-time positions instead of the usual full-time, Lindsay said.

He said the network is reaching out to some of the organizations that dropped out and will also consider placing volunteers with secular organizations in order to use all of the “member service years” allocated to it.

“I have no doubt that by the end of the program year on Aug. 1, 2012, we will be able to use all 760,” Lindsay added.

Meanwhile, Catholic Volunteer Network also is facing a Jan. 18 deadline for the next round of grant requests to the Corporation for National and Community Service for the next funding cycle beginning Aug. 1.

The grants support AmeriCorps members across the country who engage in activities that include tutoring, mentoring, shelter and food pantry assistance, construction, health care, education and senior services.