National Performance Measures Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Updated November 22, 2010

1. What is the National Performance Measures Pilot?
AmeriCorps has established five Focus Areas: Education, Healthy Futures, Opportunity, Environmental Stewardship, and Veterans based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, CNCS has created national performance measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact of AmeriCorps. A sixth focus area, Disaster Services, does not yet have national performance measures. Grant applicants proposing programs that address issues in one or more of the Focus Areas will receive priority consideration. Grant applicants proposing programs in one or more of the Focus Areas also may choose to report on the National Performance Measures. Applicants choosing to report on the National Performance Measures also will receive priority consideration.

2. How did CNCS decide on the National Performance Pilot measures? What was the process for creating them?
The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) undertook a multi-step process to create the first round of performance measures. We started with the activities and indicators identified in the Serve America Act, reviewed measures currently in use by grantees, and scanned the work of other federal agencies and think tanks to develop the first draft. Feedback from a grantee working group, academics and issue area experts, participants in the September 2009 Grantee Meeting, and others contributed to the final FY2010 version. Since the National Performance Measures were first released in December 2009, CNCS has continued to work on refining definitions and creating additional measures through consultation with other federal agencies, national experts, and grantees.

3. Why is CNCS requiring applicants to provide information on the proportion of Member Service Years (MSYs) devoted to each Focus Area?
The Focus areas created in the Serve America Act create the expectation that CNCS will be able to report resources allocated by Focus area. Because many applicants direct their activities to more than one Focus Area, it is important for CNCS to collect expected MSYs devoted to each Focus Area.

4. How should I determine the MSY percents for each Focus area?
A program requests a certain number of MSYs in order to meet particular needs in their community. Programs determine what needs are addressed by members serving in that Focus Area and assign the MSYs accordingly.

5. Is my program expected to monitor member time to ensure that it corresponds to what is entered into the MSY charts for the Focus Areas?
Grant applicants will enter MSYs into the MSY charts according to the distribution of time that members are expected to engage in each Focus Area. At the end of the grant year, grantees will report on how the members actually spent their time. CNCS expects the MSY amounts entered at the time of application and in the grantee progress report to be very close unless the program received permission to change the activities causing change in the proportion of time devoted to each Focus Area.

6. If I opt into the National Performance Measures Pilot this year, will I maintain the same measures next year?
Yes. It is best to keep measures consistent over the life of a three-year grant so that progress can be measured over time. However, because this is a pilot, it is possible that some measures, definitions and guidance may change.

7. We are in a continuation year of our grant. Should we opt into the National Performance Measures Pilot?
In general, no. Performance measures should be consistent over the life of a three-year grant cycle so that progress can be measured over time. If a grantee's current measures are not serving the program well and the grantee would prefer to participate in the National Performance Measures Pilot, the grantee may consult with their Program Officer. Participation in the National Performance Measures Pilot by continuation grantees should be based only on Focus Areas that best represent the grantees' primary activities.

8. How do I decide if my program should opt into the National Performance Measures Pilot?
If the National Performance Measures align with the program's activities, then the Corporation strongly encourages participation so that the impact of AmeriCorps members may be demonstrated. The resource packets created for each measure can help you determine if your program is sufficiently aligned with the measures (see http://nationalserviceresources.org/national-performance-measures/home). If your program needs additional assistance, consult the AmeriCorps Program Officer, State Commission, or Project STAR at 1-800-548-3656 or email STAR@jbsinternational.com.

9. If I propose a program in one of the Focus Areas, do I have to participate in the National Performance Measures Pilot?
Programs may select a Focus Area without opting in to the National Performance Measures Pilot except for applicants for fixed-amount grants in the Education Focus Area. These applicants are required to opt–in to the National Performance Measures Pilot. For other applicants, opting-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot is optional, but we encourage programs to participate if there are measures that match their program model. It is possible that a program fits within one of the Focus Areas, but the current list of National Performance Measures does not capture the program's activities. In that case the program will select a Focus Area, but not opt-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot, instead creating applicant-determined measures.

10. What are the requirements regarding performance measurement for Fixed-Amount Grants in the Education Focus Area?
Applicants for a Fixed-Amount Grant in the Education Focus Area are required to participate in the National Performance Measures Pilot and utilize the Education National Performance Measures.

11. What is the difference between an "applicant-determined" performance measure and a "National Performance Measure"?
An "applicant-determined" performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and outcomes that will be measured, based on its primary service activity. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where the Corporation pre-determines common outputs and, in some cases, outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

12. If I opt-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot, will I also have to create "applicant-determined" performance measures?
There are two circumstances in which your program will need to create applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the National Performance Measures. First, if your program opts-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot for activities that do not represent your primary service category, then your program will also have to provide an aligned set of applicant-determined performance measures for your primary service activity because AmeriCorps regulations stipulate that a program must have an aligned set of performance measures that represent its primary service activity. Second, if you select a National Performance Measure that does not have its own aligned measure, you will need to create an applicant-determine measure to complete the alignment.

13. If I participate in the National Performance Measures Pilot, can I create applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the national measures?
The answer depends on which Focus Area the program has selected. If the program has opted-in to the National Performance Measures in Education, it cannot create additional applicant-determined performance measures. This is because the Education National Performance Measures include aligned outputs and intermediate outcomes. If the program opted-in to National Performance Measures in other Focus Areas, it may create additional applicant-determined performance measures.

14. I want to participate in the Pilot. I see outputs that apply to my program, but there aren't any appropriate outcome measures.
In the non-Education Focus Areas, a program may align with one of the outputs but none of the outcomes. In that case, the program will enter applicant-determined outcome measures.

15. How many performance measures do I need to propose?
While AmeriCorps regulation requires that programs provide at least one set of aligned performance measures for the primary service activity, programs participating in the National Performance Measures Pilot need to create at least one set of aligned performance measures for each Focus Area in which the program has opted-in to the National Performance Measures pilot.

16. Does my application receive priority consideration for selecting a Focus Area?
Yes. The order of preference for priority consideration is outlined in the NOFO. An applicant that selects one of the Focus Areas will receive priority consideration in the selection process as long as the applicant's primary service category is represented by that Focus Area.

17. Does my application receive priority consideration for participating in the National Performance Measures Pilot?
Yes. The order of preference for priority consideration is outlined in the NOFO. An applicant that opts into the National Performance Measures Pilot will receive priority consideration in the selection process.

18. Will my program receive more priority for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure?
No additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure. Programs will receive priority consideration for selecting a Focus Area and priority consideration for opting-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot. Choosing more Focus Areas or more national measures does not give programs *more* priority. Please review the NOFO to determine the order of priority.

19. If I opt into the National Performance Measures Pilot, are there specific outputs and outcomes I am required to use?
Yes. If a program decides to opt–in to the National Performance Measures Pilot, please read the directions carefully. Certain programs must choose specific outputs and outcomes.

20. What programs can select the Member related measures in the Opportunity Focus Area?
Applicants should only select the Member measures if part of their approved program design is a focus on helping economically disadvantaged members complete their high school education, attend college, and/or obtain employment.

21. What programs can select the Teacher Corps measures in the Education Focus Area?
These measures are intended to be used by AmeriCorps programs where the AmeriCorps members serve as the primary teacher in a classroom setting during their placements. The AmeriCorps members may serve in public, charter, or private schools to address a critical shortage of teaching professionals in a high needs area or school.

22. Can I count AmeriCorps Members as beneficiaries of service if my program participates in the National Performance Measures Pilot?
Most of the National Performance Measures are NOT designed to capture the impact the program may have on the AmeriCorps members. There are specific Teacher Corps measures in the Education Focus Area, member measures in the Economic Opportunity Focus Area, and certain measures in the Veteran's Focus Area where AmeriCorps members are either the sole focus or may be included in the count of people served. Programs may count AmeriCorps members as beneficiaries of the services if the members happen to access them as a member of the public rather than as part of their AmeriCorps service or training.

23. Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in the National Performance Measures? The performance measures selected by an AmeriCorps program should reflect the expected result of the AmeriCorps program activities. The AmeriCorps members do not have to interact directly with the beneficiaries of the service, but they must provide direct support that makes the program possible.

24. Can I count the same people in more than one national performance measure output?
The same individuals can be counted for each of the National Performance Measures selected. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once in any one specific National Performance Measure output or outcome. Individuals may be counted more than once across different measures for different services they may be receiving. **For example, if your program is conducting information activities to help individuals in the community learn more about how to meet their health needs AND your program is conducting enrollment outreach services, you are likely to have participants who receive health information (H2) and enroll in health services (H3). You may count the same individual as a participant in both H2 and H3. If, however, you enroll the same individual in both smoking cessation service and an obesity reduction service, you may count that individual only once in H3.**

25. Why are "economic disadvantage" and "low income" defined differently in each Focus Area?
The meaning of "economic disadvantage" and "low income" are defined differently in each Focus Area because CNCS recognized that AmeriCorps programs operating in different service areas would need to align with varying existing government programs. The definitions are designed to align with the predominant government programs in those Focus Areas. At the same time, the definitions do not require that individuals be receiving the services listed, only that they be income-eligible to do so. For example, in the Health Focus Area economically disadvantaged means income-eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP. Periodically there are waiting lists for SCHIP so a child may be income-eligible but not actually receiving SCHIP services. This child would still be eligible for the AmeriCorps program activities.

26. How do I indicate that I am opting into the National Performance Measures Pilot?
Programs will select Focus Areas and National Performance Measures in the eGrants performance measure screens at the time of application. In addition, the Focus Areas, National Performance Measures, and proposed targets should be referenced in the narrative discussion of outputs and outcomes.

27. Am I allowed to allocate funds for collecting and analyzing data? If so, how much?
Expenses related to measuring the performance of a program are an allowable grant expense. There is no standard recommended amount. For all budget expenses, amounts allocated must be reasonable and allowable for the proposed program.

28. What kind of support will be available to me over the course of the National Performance Measures Pilot?
After grants are awarded, CNCS will provide training and technical assistance to help programs determine which data collection methods, tests or surveys would be most appropriate for specific measures. Go to the Resource Center at http://nationalserviceresources.org/national-performance-measures/home for data management tips.

29. One of our program's primary funders requires us to report on a performance measure that is similar to one of your standardized measures, but slightly different. Can I just report on that measure instead?

No. If the program chooses to opt-in to the National Performance Measures Pilot, they will need to report to CNCS on the measure as it is defined.

30. What are the reporting requirements for participating in the National Performance Measures Pilot? National Grantees and State Commissions with sub-grantees that are participating in the first year (FY 2010) of the National Performance Measures Pilot will submit two progress reports as follows:

> **Mid-Year Progress through March 31, 2011 – Due May 2, 2011**
> The first report will include outputs and outcomes achieved from the beginning of the program year through March 31, 2011.

> **Final Progress Report, December 5, 2011**
> The second and final report will include outputs and outcomes achieved from the beginning of the program year through September 30, 2011. This is the same Grantee Progress Report that is required annually for all State Commissions and National Grantees.

In subsequent years of the pilot, National Grantees and State Commissions will only submit the annual progress report as described in the Grant Provisions.

31. What document do I reference for "official" information about National Performance Measure Pilot (NPM) requirements?
All official information about the National Performance Measures Pilot is located at: http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/national-performance-measures/home. This site contains the National Performance Measures definitions (in the detailed background document); resource packets which will help you determine if the measures match your activities, how to gather data appropriate for the measures, and how to ensure correct counting for your reports; and, instructions for eGrants completion. Be sure to review the materials for the correct year. 2010 materials are for FY 2010, the first year of the pilot. 2011 materials are for the second year, FY 2011. If National Grantees and State Commissions need additional help understanding this information, they may contact their Program Officer.

32. I have suggested edits to the National Performance Measures Pilot. Is it too late for me to give input?
No. We continue to accept input. National Direct grantees and State Commissions may send questions and feedback about the National Performance Measure Pilot to: pmpilot@cns.gov. They should copy your Program Officer when writing to this address. Sub-grantees and operating sites should contact their National Direct or State Commission grantor who will forward questions as appropriate to the Corporation.

33. What happened to Measures ED3 and ED4?
Measures ED3 and ED4 were available in the first year of the pilot only and are no longer available for selection. They were replaced with Measures ED3A and ED4A, which have higher levels of frequency and intensity for mentoring activities. Grantees who selected ED3 and ED4 in the first year of the Pilot may continue to report on these measures for the duration of their

three-year grant cycle. However programs that meet the higher standard are encouraged to amend their performance measures in order to opt into ED3A and ED4A early in Year 1 of the pilot.

34. ED5 and ED15 were mandatory in Year 1 of the Pilot. Now that they are optional, may we opt out of these measures?
Grantees who selected ED5 and ED15 in Year 1 of the Pilot may choose to opt out of these measures by amending their performance measures. However, programs that are able to collect the data to report on student outcomes are encouraged to continue with these measures.

35. May 2010 grantees opt into the new 2011 measures?
Yes, 2010 grantees may opt into the new 2011 measures if it is appropriate for their program design and measurement plan. Grantees wishing to opt in for Year 1 of the Pilot should talk with their Program Officers.

36. How should we report outcomes across grant years? For example, if a service is delivered toward the end of the grant year, the outcome might not be counted until the following year. How do we show these outcomes in egrants?
In situations like the one described above, grantees may report outcomes in a subsequent grant year and should adjust their targets in consultation with their Program Officer.

37. What is the rationale for including on-time course completion as an indicator of improved academic performance in ED5?
The education field has not reached agreement on how to measure improved academic performance. On-time course completion is one of many ways that programs can demonstrate success on ED5. The Corporation felt that it was appropriate to give programs this option based on current thinking in the education field.

eGrants Questions

1. What happens if I don't select the required National Performance Measure output <u>and</u> outcome combinations in eGrants? Will the eGrants system keep me from exiting?
At this time eGrants will not double-check to determine if applicants have used the right sets of measures in combination. eGrants does, however, provide instructions to remind applicants of what measures should be used in combination. eGrants will allow applicants to exit the system even if the measures have not been entered correctly.

2. Can I enter all of my outputs together into eGrants, then all of my outcomes together into eGrants?
Mechanically eGrants will not prevent applicants from entering outputs and outcomes in varying order, but applicants should be entering measures in aligned sets. The alignment helps CNCS staff understand how the program works and what is being proposed to accomplish with the resources available.

3. Can two or more National Performance Measure outputs that I choose have the same outcome? If yes, does the outcome data need to be reported separately for each output or can it be reported one time? Mechanically eGrants will allow applicants to enter the measures either way, but the alignment depends on the program model. If the program model represents a continuum of care/services where participating leads from one level of service to another, then it makes sense to create an aligned measure of multiple outputs that lead to a single outcome. If there are two completely different activities that lead to the same outcome, those should be reported with each output/outcome as their own aligned measure.

4. Can one National Performance Measure output have more than one outcome? Yes. There may be more than one desired outcome for a single output, such as the same number of people receiving a service. In this case, the aligned measure could have a single output with multiple outcomes. Aligned measures should only be configured in this way if it is expected that all of the individuals counted in the output will potentially achieve the outcome indicated. If the outcomes are resulting from different populations being served, there should be multiple outputs created.

5. The language in eGrants is confusing because Performance Measure, Indicator, and Result seem to mean different things in different places. The instructions available on the Resource Center will help programs navigate the new Performance Measures screens in eGrants. See: http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/national-performance-measures/home and go to "Instructions for Entering Performance Measures in eGrants."