

2014 Notice of Funding Opportunities

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*As of 1/14/2014**

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**FAQ additions are added to the end of the relevant section and are marked with a date when they were added.*

A. General

A1. What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps is made up of three main programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). Visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs> to find out more about the differences between these three programs.

A2. What is AmeriCorps State and National?

AmeriCorps State and National is a broad network of grant-funded AmeriCorps programs. It provides financial support to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including hundreds of faith- and community-based organizations, higher education institutions, Indian tribes, and public agencies. These groups recruit, train and place thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. For the remainder of this document, AmeriCorps State and National will be referred to as AmeriCorps.

A3. What is an AmeriCorps member?

An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in intensive service to address pressing community problems. AmeriCorps members serve through nonprofits, public agencies, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribes, and faith-based organizations to tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters, among other activities. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of their term of service. Some AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance to support them during their term of service.

A4. Is there a set aside for Encore programs?

AmeriCorps does not have a specific set-aside of funds for Encore programs. AmeriCorps has a goal that 10% of funding should support encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. We seek to meet that 10% goal and encourage encore programs to apply.

A5. Where might I find past project that were supported by your organization?

We make information available on our website regarding applicants we have funded in previous competitions. It is on our open government page. A direct link to previous grant competitions is here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>. Some information for the 2012 AmeriCorps grant competition is not yet available.

A6. How do I ensure that I'm aware of any changes or new information?

The best way to ensure you get emails to inform you of changes or new information if to sign up for updates by using the link at the far top right corner of our website "Get Email Updates" and check the box for "Funding Opportunities."

A7. How much funding is available? And how much are the average grant awards?

The amount of funding available for 2014 is not known at this time. Information about previous funding awarded is available at the CNCS Open Government page or at the CNCS Press Releases page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition> <http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/press-releases>.

A8. What if I have questions that are not answered by this document?

You are invited to participate in one of the technical assistance conference calls scheduled each month from October 2013 – December 2013. The schedule will be posted at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2014/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2014>. You may contact us with any questions at americorpsgrants@cns.gov or 202.606.7508 (email is strongly preferred).

A9. How and when can I reach the AmeriCorps Hotline for help with eGrants?

The National Service Hotline is open between the hours of 9:00 am to 7:00 pm EST Monday through Thursday up until the January 8, 2014 deadline. They may be open on Fridays during the last few weeks prior to the deadline. The phone number is 1-800-942-2677. Questions may be submitted via this weblink: <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/>

A10. If an organization has applied for 501(c)3 status and is waiting for it to be approved, can they find an organization to act as fiscal agent to apply for the grant? Would both organizations' names be on the grant application? [added 11/4/2013]

CNCS requires one legal applicant organization. An organization can find a fiscal agent to serve as the legal applicant and if/when the 501(c)3 status is complete, CNCS can change the legal applicant for the grant application, should it be selected for funding.

A11. How many letters of support should be submitted? [updated 12/18/2013]

There is no maximum limit for the number of letters of commitment submitted for a particular application. However, the applicant should only provide letters from the most significant community partners. (Note that the guidance in the NOFO is more specific regarding the required letters of commitment for the Governor and Mayor Initiative and Tier 1 Education applications.)

A12. Do you want Multi-State applicants to send in a separate Letter of Intent for each application or do you want one Letter of Intent with bulleted information about each of the applications an applicant plans on submitting? [updated 11/22/2013]

The NOFO and Application Instructions do not specify how this needs to be done, so Multi-State applicants may send a single Letter of Intent containing information about all the applications they intend to submit. Or, if they prefer, they may submit separate Letters of Intent for each application. Either way is acceptable. A multi-state applicant who is also submitting single-state applications should not send letters of intent for the single-state applications directly to CNCS. A letter of intent for a single-state application must be submitted by the State Commission.

A13. Are Letters Intent (LOIs) required for continuations? What about continuations requesting expansions? [updated 12/6/2013]

No, continuation applications, including those requesting expansions, are not required to submit a Letter of Intent. The purpose of requesting letters of intent is to identify how many new and recompeting applications we will receive. We already know how many continuations we are likely to be getting.

A14. Should commissions that have only continuation applications in the FY2014 competition submit a Letter of Intent? [added 12/6/2013]

If a commission has only continuation applications being submitted in the 2014 competition, they do not need to submit a Letter of Intent. They can notify their program officer that they will not be submitting new or recompete applications in the FY14 competition.

A15. Are organizations that have not previously received any CNCS or other federal funding ineligible to apply? [added 12/18/2013]

Such organizations are eligible to apply, but must make the case in the application for their capacity to successfully manage such funds.

A16. What do I do if I have a question or experience difficulty submitting an application between now and January 22? [added 1/4/2014]

As the application deadline of January 22, 2014 at 5:00 pm Eastern approaches, we want you to know that the eGrants Help Desk has extended hours.

Friday	1/17/2014	9 am-9pm
Saturday	1/18/2014	11am-7pm
Sunday	1/19/2014	11am-7pm
Monday (Fed Holiday)	1/20/2014	12pm-7pm
Tuesday	1/21/2014	9 am-9pm
Wednesday	1/22/2014	9 am-9pm

If you are experiencing technical difficulties related to submitting your application in eGrants, please contact the National Service Hotline for technical eGrants assistance (800-942-2677 or https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_eg) to document your issue and obtain assistance. Make sure you get a ticket number.

If you have a program/content inquiry related to the submission of an application, please send your specific question to AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov. Program Officers attend to that mailbox and are standing by to assist. In the meantime, please refer back to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for specific guidance on where to send your required Additional Documents, or if you believe that you might submit a Late Application.

(<http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/2014AmericorpsNofo.pdf>)

B. The Grant Application

B1. Who can apply for Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity, Fixed Amount Grants? [updated 12/18/2013]

Recompeting and previous grantee applicants can apply for Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity Fixed Amount grants. A current cost reimbursement grantee must submit a new application (not a continuation application) if it would like to apply for a Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity Fixed Amount grant. New applicants and Tier 1 Education applicants are NOT eligible to apply for fixed amount grants. Tier 1 Education applicants (except new applicant organizations) may apply for EAP grants.

B2. Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?

There is no pre-determined limit on the amount of grant funds that you may request for an implementation grant. However, your level of requested funding should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization. Additionally, you should keep in mind the total amount of funds available and the maximum Cost per MSY for your competition. The general practice is to not award more than 50 member positions to new grantees.

B3. What does Cost per MSY mean?

Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost to CNCS of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours). The cost per MSY is calculated by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if the application requests \$10,000 in CNCS funds and 10 MSYs, then the cost per MSY is \$1,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award a member may earn. Cost per MSY is not applicable for planning grants.

B4. Is there a maximum Cost per MSY?

Yes. The maximum cost per MSY varies by grant program and is detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

B5. Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?

No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project, rather than general organizational expenses. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with grant funds. However, to a limited degree, you may capture indirect administrative costs related to your AmeriCorps program. The application instructions provide guidance on charging administrative costs to the grant.

B6. Will I have to contribute matching funds?

Yes. The money awarded as part of an AmeriCorps grant does not cover the full cost of running an AmeriCorps program. Cost reimbursement grants have a required minimum match, and match documentation must be maintained. Fixed-amount grants do not have a specified minimum match requirement, but the amount provided by the Corporation does not cover the full cost of operating a program. The match requirements are described in the NOFO.

In light of Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000) on Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments, CNCS will consider requests for waivers of match requirements from Indian Tribes in an expedited manner. Please review the NOFO for information explaining how to submit a match waiver request.

B7. How many AmeriCorps members will my program receive?

In your application you must indicate the number and type of AmeriCorps member positions you are requesting based on your program design and desired outcomes. If your proposal is approved for funding, CNCS will determine how many AmeriCorps members will be included in your award.

B8. What are the AmeriCorps member health insurance requirements?

The member health insurance requirements are outlined annually in the grant provisions that are incorporated into the Notice of Grant Award. Grantees must provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time each begins his/her term of service. This requirement does not apply to EAPs, Professional Corps, or members covered under a collective bargaining agreement.

B9. How long is the grant period?

AmeriCorps program implementation grants typically have a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time. Continued funding during the course of the three years is contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. The budget submitted in the application is for a one-year period.

B10. What is an operating site?

An operating site is the organization that manages the AmeriCorps program on behalf of the multi-state recipient of the grant from CNCS. A multi-state grantee must have an operating site in each state in which it has AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members may be placed at the operating site, or an operating site may place AmeriCorps members at multiple member service locations.

B11. Is an applicant locked into the proposed operating sites or can they change them later in the process?

We anticipate that applicants have a well thought out plan for their project implementation and have identified operating sites based on the demonstrated community needs. We expect the sites proposed at the time of application to align with those involved in project implementation. However, if necessary, an applicant can modify their list of operating sites during the clarification process or through an amendment.

B12. What is a member service location?

A member service location is the site at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

B13. Can I operate a single-state program in the first year, while I develop a multi-state partnership?

If an organization is funded for a multi-state grant they must be operating in more than one state. An organization that seeks to operate a program in a single state, must request AmeriCorps funding through the State Service Commission in your state.

B14. Will applicants be able to select more than one focus area and, within the focus areas, more than one service activity? [updated 12/18/2013]

Yes, applicants are able to select more than one focus area and more than one service activity within a focus area. Note that the assignment of applications to Tiers considers the MSY allocation to the Focus Area and related performance measures. For Tier 1 Education, the program must allocate 100% of the MSY to this service activity.

B15. Will applicants who select more than one service activity be required to identify a primary activity and secondary activity as in prior years?

Applicants must select at least one primary service activity for each focus area selected. Additional or secondary service activities in a focus area are not required.

B16. Is the list of populations on the Performance Measures screen beneficiary populations or populations to be recruited as AmeriCorps Members?

Most of the items in the list refer to traditionally underrepresented populations that a program intends to intentionally recruit as AmeriCorps members (as outlined in the Strategic Plan). If any of these grant characteristics are selected, the application narrative should reflect the intention to recruit the selected population(s).

B17. Can a national organization submit applications for both a national program and programs in specific states?

CNCS will not provide more than one grant for the same project in one fiscal year. This does not prohibit a national applicant from submitting national and state applications for the same geographic area. If an application is being submitted in multiple competitions, applications should be clear about the duplicative requests.

B18. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?

You must read the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Application Instructions for the competition you are interested in. The AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550 is also an important reference to understand the requirements of AmeriCorps programs. If you are considering National Performance Measures, you must read the appropriate National Performance Measures instructions.

B19. When must I contact the State Service Commission?

If your organization is not an Indian Tribe and the program you wish to operate is located in one state, you must contact your State Service Commission to find out how to apply for an AmeriCorps grant. If your organization plans to operate an AmeriCorps program in two or more states, you must consult and coordinate activities with the State Service Commission in each state where activities will take place. The consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination among grantees. You must describe the consultation in your application. The AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity describes the consultation requirements in more detail. You can find your State Commission's contact information here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>.

B20. Are Indian Tribes required to consult with State Service Commissions?

Indian Tribes are not required to consult with State Service Commissions. However, to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and to enhance coordination among grantees, Indian Tribes are encouraged to do so.

B21. Are we required to submit our application via the on-line eGrants system?

CNCS requires that all applicants utilize CNCS' web-based application system, eGrants, to submit applications electronically. The Notices of Funding Opportunity and the Application Instructions contain detailed submission instructions in the event that you are unable to submit via eGrants.

B22. If a current grantee becomes a host site for another program that is a new applicant organization, is that application still considered new?

A current grantee can serve as a partner for a new program without affecting the status of the new applicant as a first time grantee.

B23. Some of our U.S offices have AmeriCorps state and VISTA members that will be completing their service next year. Would applying for the national grant on a multi-state level affect local offices from applying for future state and VISTA AmeriCorps members?

AmeriCorps will not fund the same project through separate funding sources. Activities taking place through the Multi-State grant should not be duplicative of what is happening through activities supported by state commissions or service provided by VISTA members. Additionally, AmeriCorps members cannot supervise other AmeriCorps members, so the interaction between AmeriCorps members and VISTA members can be complementary but not supervisory.

B24. Can a current grantee submit both a continuation application as well as be part of a joint "coalition" proposal, acknowledging the duplication in both and knowing that only one can be funded? [added 11/4/2013]

Yes, they can submit both if they acknowledge the duplication and understand that only one of the applications will be funded.

B25. Will the definitions of episodic and ongoing volunteers provided on page 5 of the Application Instructions be the same as the definitions we are currently using in the capacity building performance measures? [added 11/4/2013]

No. While the application instructions request that you provide data on the different types of volunteers your program will engage, the capacity building performance measure instructions do not differentiate between episodic and ongoing volunteers for the purpose of performance measurement.

B26. Does the evaluation plan in the narrative count in the page limit? While the NOFO states that, "This limit does not include the budget, performance measures, evaluation plan or required supplementary materials (e.g., letters of commitment, organizational chart, logic model worksheet)," the evaluation plan section is part of the narratives. [added 11/4/2013]

The evaluation section is at the end of the narrative document so it will not interfere with our determination of page limits. Programs are not eliminated from consideration if the narrative exceeds the limit; we do not review content for those sections if it extends beyond the page limit.

B27. Can an applicant be one of the two nonprofits in the Governor and Mayor Initiative and still apply for their own grant in competitive? [added 11/4/2013]

Yes, as long as the two applications are for different projects.

B28. The AmeriCorps Regulations require that programs include a component of volunteer recruitment. We understand that how a program chooses to fulfill this requirement is dependent on the program design and organizational capacity and need for volunteers. According to the Regulations (§ 2520.35), if recruiting or supporting volunteers is a "fundamental alteration to your program structure" then you would submit the waiver as part of your application which CNCS would review. If a program does not request a waiver, they will be required to report on the number of volunteers and volunteer hours as part of the GPR. Does CNCS have an expectation that information on Volunteer Recruitment be included in the narrative of the application? [added 11/4/2013]

The Executive Summary includes information about volunteers leveraged. "The AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] that will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing]." The NOFO outlines what reviewers will assess in the application narrative. Program models and designs vary, so the emphasis on volunteer recruitment and management might also vary depending on the role of AmeriCorps members and the interventions an applicant is proposing to address the identified need. Because it is expected that all programs leverage volunteers, unless requesting a waiver, the application instructions describe where programs should enter information regarding projections for volunteers leveraged.

B29. How can an applicant without previous AmeriCorps experience be competitive and what percentage of new applicants are funded annually? [added 11/4/2013]

Applicant responses to selection criteria are what CNCS uses to assess application quality. Applicants who successfully demonstrate that they can fully address the selection criteria will be scored accordingly. Past program performance is a factor in the review process, but previous experience with AmeriCorps is not a requirement. CNCS encourages new applicants to apply for AmeriCorps grants. New applicants are only eligible for cost reimbursement grants. While there is no set percentage, some new grants are historically awarded each year.

B30. What are the eligibility factors that will determine if my application will be reviewed? [added 11/4/2013]

As stated in the NOFO, CNCS staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to External Review, an applicant must satisfy all the following requirements:

- Submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the deadline: Wednesday, December 11, 2013.
- Submit an application by the application submission deadline: Wednesday, January 22, 2014 at 5:00 p.m.
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and additional documents via e-mail and follows the instructions provided in the NOFO.

B31. If we miss the Intent to Apply deadline, but the application deadline is approaching, can we still apply? [updated 12/18/2013]

CNCS will not consider notifications of Intent to Apply that are received after the Intent to Apply deadline (December 11, 2013 at 5:00p.m. Eastern Time), other than for the Tier I VetSuccess AmeriCorps applicants for whom the deadline to submit the Letter of Intent is January 21, 2014. Failure to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply will render an applicant ineligible to apply. All Notices of Intent to Apply will receive an email response acknowledging receipt.

B32. What is required to submit my Intent to Apply? [added 11/4/2013]

Please send an email to IntentToApply@cns.gov with the SUBJECT: AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent to Apply should include: the name of the applicant organization, address, contact person, e-mail address, and phone number. Applicants should also state the type of grant for which they intend to apply. State Commissions should include an estimate of the number of applications planned for submission (number of applications submitted cannot exceed this amount). State Commissions must provide the number of potential subapplicants by focus area. Single state programs applying through a State Commission should not provide this information directly to CNCS.

B33. How is "community" defined, in terms of identifying community need, particularly if it is a group of people and not a specific community? [added 11/4/2013]

Community can be a geographic region, a specific population of people, or a combination of both. The applicant organization must document the need it plans to address with its proposed program, whether it is a defined geographic community or a subset of individuals living in a particular area.

B34. I know that CNCS generally does not award grants of more than 50 MSY's to new programs, but is there a minimum of MSYs (i.e. - 10 MSY's)? [updated 12/18/2013]

The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not specify a minimum number of MSYs (with the exception of Tier I Education programs which are encouraged to apply for a minimum of 20 MSYs). However, if you are applying for a single-state program through a state service commission, the commission may set a minimum number of MSYs for their particular state competition. Please check with the commission before applying. You can find contact information for state service commissions at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions/all>.

B35. Our continuation application will add four MSYs to our current eight, to total 12. Can one or more of those additional four be positions not previously funded by CNCS? [added 11/8/2013]

Yes. We refer to this as a continuation request for expansion. Continuation requests for expansion will be assessed using the same criteria as the new and recompete applications and whether the applicant has lowered its cost per MSY.

B36. We have had a few applicants submit bibliographies as part of their application narrative text and I'm wondering with CNCS's increased emphasis on evidence if you all would like to see the bibliography/reference pages. If so, would they count towards the page limit? [updated 12/18/2013]

Unless documents are required supplementary materials as listed on p. 21 of the NOFO, they would go within the application and be subject to the application page limits. So, any citations/references have to be addressed within the 15-page application narrative.

B37. What are the character limits in eGrants? [added 11/22/2013]

The overall character limit in eGrants is greater than the 15 page limit listed in the NOFO, so be sure to print out the application to check its length. Within the application format, some sections have character limits. So, if you are having trouble saving a section of content, try reducing its size to resolve the issue. If continuations have problems with reaching character limits for their applications, they should contact their Program Officer for guidance.

B38. To whom should the Letters of Commitment, referenced in the NOFO, be addressed? [added 11/22/2013]

The Letters of Commitment should be addressed to the director of the applicant organization.

B39. If an organization was an operating site/service location or a subgrantee of another AmeriCorps program previously and are now applying on their own, would they be considered a new applicant? [added 11/22/2013]

Yes, only applicants who have had an AmeriCorps State or National implementation grant previously and ran their own AmeriCorps program (not a portion of it) are considered as **Previous** grantees. All others (including current planning grantees) should apply as **New**.

B40. Are continuation applications required to submit the following documents: Logic Model Worksheet (See section 2.b.); Organizational Chart (See section 3.a.); or Letters of Commitment from most significant community partners? [added 12/6/2013]

No, continuation applications are not required to submit these documents.

B41. What specific information do you want to see reflected in the organizational chart that is required as part of the application? [added 12/6/2013]

We do not have specific instructions for what to include in an organizational chart. It should be a standard organizational chart sufficient to assess the organization's management structure and should be consistent with the Organizational Background and Staffing narrative.

B42. Should programs use links to research in the narrative? Is it realistic to think that peer/staff reviewers will use a link to read additional information? [added 12/6/2013]

We do not specify whether to use links. However, reviewers are advised not to view links in an application so you may assume if a link is provided it will not be viewed. The applicant has to provide sufficient information in the application narrative to describe the evidence that is being used to describe the community need or to support the program intervention.

B43. Will we receive an acknowledgement when we submit supplemental materials? [added 12/18/2013]

No. Based on anticipated high volume in a short time frame, we will not be able to acknowledge the receipt of supplemental materials.

B44. We see that CNCS has put a priority on serving rural schools. Is there a certain percentage that would have to be rural in order to be considered? [added 1/11/2014]

We do not have a requirement for the percentage of rural schools. It is the program's discretion, based on the identified community need(s) and program model.

B45. The Tier I Education programs need to submit letters of commitment from their local education agencies and eligible schools. Would having a contract or MOU in place with these agencies meet that requirement, or would it actually need to be a letter of commitment? [added 1/11/2014]

An MOU cannot be used in place of a letter of commitment, since such letters have specific requirements as outlined on p. 23 of the NOFO and need to demonstrate the schools' commitment to partnership as part of the proposed AmeriCorps program going forward.

B46. Could you please clarify how you define "new" for the purpose of this application? [added 1/14/14]

Whether a program is considered "new" or not is a factor in several different contexts within the AmeriCorps State and National application. Whether or not a project is "new" can be different depending on which context. Below is a detailed description of when an applicant or application project is considered "new."

- 1) What applicants qualify for fixed award grants - CNCS encourages organizations that have never received funding from CNCS or AmeriCorps to apply for the grants. Organizations that have not previously received AmeriCorps funding or other CNCS funding with a cost-reimbursement budget are considered "new" and therefore are not eligible to receive fixed amount grants.
- 2) Narrative content and scoring - For the purposes of development and review of the application narrative, applicants that have previously received AmeriCorps funding for the same program model – either through a state formula grant, a state competitive grant, or a national direct grant – are not considered new applicants and should respond to, and be scored on, the Past Performance criteria as stated in the NOFO.
- 3) Applicant Information – In completing the SF424 worksheet and listing applicant information:
 - If you are applying for the first time, have only received formula funding in the past, or are a former grantee (non-formula) whose last AmeriCorps grant was received more than five years ago, select **New**
 - If you are applying for a different program model (a new project), select New (Current and previous grantees need to get approval from their program officer to be considered a new project; an application is "new" if the organization is proposing a project that addresses a different issue area, different priorities, and/or different objectives.)

- If you were a previous state competitive grantee but your most recent funding was formula funding, select **New** (otherwise eGrants will assume you are applying to continue your formula grant)
 - If your previous funding was from a different grant type within CNCS – eg. a former national direct applying for state funding; a former state grantee applying for national direct funding; a former cost-reimbursement grant applying for fixed funding, select **New**
 - If you are a current planning grantee applying for an implementation grant, select **New**
- 4) Evaluation requirement -
- If the applicant is competing for the first time, they are new so they enter N/A in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field.
 - If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (previously received funding for one 3-year cycle of AmeriCorps funding for this project, the program must submit an evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary, or Plan field in eGrants. A formula program will be considered a recompeting application, if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” and has been funded in formula for at least one three-year cycle.
 - If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time (has received two or more 3-year cycles of funding), the program must submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period.

The intent is to draw a distinction between a new organization (an organization with no prior history of being funded by CNCS), a new program (a set of activities distinct from other sets of activities being or intended to be carried out by an organization), and a new application (a request for funding by a program).

B47. I am a continuation applicant and am getting an error message that the continuation field is full when I enter the requested narrative information. What should I do? [added 1/14/2014]

The applicant should delete the previous year's information in the Continuation Changes section.

C. Types of Funding

C1. What is a planning grant? Do I have to apply for a planning grant before I can apply for an AmeriCorps program grant?

The purpose of a planning grant is to support the development or improvement of a program so that it may be better prepared to successfully compete for an AmeriCorps program implementation grant in the following grant cycle. Planning grants do not include AmeriCorps member positions. During the planning period, you will define the roles and activities members will perform in the program. It is not necessary to have a planning grant prior to applying for an implementation grant. The Corporation for National and Community Service is not offering planning grants at this time. A separate Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for Indian Tribes for either fully operational or planning grants will be released at a later date with an application deadline of spring 2014. It is possible that individual state commissions may be offering planning grants.

C2. What is a program implementation grant?

A program implementation grant provides funding to support the operation of an AmeriCorps program. Grants are typically for a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time, contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. Grants include an allocation of AmeriCorps member positions and funds for allowable program expenses such as AmeriCorps member support costs (living allowance and benefits), staffing, training, travel for program oversight, and overhead. A grant applicant identifies a community problem, designs a program to address the problem through the service of AmeriCorps members and volunteers, and must demonstrate the capacity to administer and monitor a federal grant.

C3. Where can I find the grant application materials?

If your proposed program will operate within one state or territory, you must contact your local Service Commission to receive the appropriate application materials and you must apply through the Commission. Do not use the application materials from the AmeriCorps website. You can find your State or Territory Service Commission's contact information here:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. Each commission sets its own application due date, so it's important to contact your local commission as soon as possible.

If your proposed program will operate in more than one state or territory or you represent an Indian Tribe, the application materials can be found on the AmeriCorps website at the following link: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>. Indian Tribes, whether proposing a single- or multi-state program, can apply directly to the CNCS for funding.

C4. What is a State (or Territory) Service Commission?

A Service Commission is a governor-appointment entity responsible for administering national and community service programs in its State (or Territory). Funding for AmeriCorps programs operating within one state or territory is administered through the local service commission.

C5. What if my State (or Territory) doesn't have a service commission?

CNCS accepts applications directly from organizations proposing to operate an AmeriCorps program within a state or territory that doesn't have a service commission. For the 2014 grant competitions, service commissions don't exist in American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

C6. What is the difference between a Fixed-Amount Grant and a Cost-Reimbursement grant?

With a cost-reimbursement grant, recipients have a minimum match requirement and must maintain documentation of all grant expenses. Recipients of fixed-amount grants do not have minimum match requirement, are not required to maintain documentation of the match that is raised in support of the AmeriCorps program, and have fewer fiscal reporting requirements.

While fixed-amount grants do not have a specified minimum match requirement, the amount provided by the Corporation does not cover the full cost of operating a program. The maximum cost

per MSY for a fixed-amount grant is typically lower than for a cost-reimbursement grant. Under a cost-reimbursement grant the grantee can access and retain all funds for legitimate and allowable costs. Under a fixed-amount grant, grantees may receive funds based on the enrollment of members for Education Award Program (EAP) grants or for the enrollment and hours served for Stipended Full-Time and Professional Corps fixed amount grants.

C7. What is an Education Award Program grant?

An Education Award Program (EAP) grant is a type of fixed-amount grant that receives minimal financial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service, but allows the grantee to enroll AmeriCorps members who can earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards. Because of the minimal financial support, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. For instance, the association with AmeriCorps might allow a program to recruit more service participants, to recruit a higher caliber of service participants, or serve more beneficiaries. New AmeriCorps applicants may not apply for EAP grants.

C8. What is the difference between a Professional Corps grant and other AmeriCorps grants?

The three primary differences are that for Professional Corps 1) applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the corps seeks to place members, 2) grants do not include AmeriCorps member living allowances and benefits, and 3) that there is no limit to the amount Professional Corps AmeriCorps members can be compensated for their service. Covering the expense of the AmeriCorps member's living allowance and benefits are the grantee's responsibility.

C9. How do I determine which funding opportunity is appropriate for me?

For assistance in determining which AmeriCorps grant is right for your organization, you may review the PowerPoint presentations, especially the one on Categories of AmeriCorps Grants or Section II D. of the NOFO for a brief overview of each grant type.

C10. We are a national organization that does not have free-standing offices in other states. The individual sites we seek to work with through an AmeriCorps grant program are all individual nonprofits that operate within individual states. Are we eligible to apply for a Multi-State grant, or do we need to coordinate the submission of multiple requests to individual state offices?

You are eligible to apply for a Multi-State grant. Many national organizations are intermediary organizations or work with a consortium of other organizations. As the grantee, you would have specific responsibilities for overall program reporting, management, and oversight and grant administration (even if you choose to subgrant funds to any of the nonprofit organizations).

C11. Are organizations that apply for funding through the AmeriCorps State Grant program generally awarded less funding than those that apply through the Multi-State program? In addition, is the application pool generally smaller if you apply for State Grant funding rather than Multi-State funding?

There are many single state programs larger than multi-state programs. Single-state and multi-state applicants are reviewed in a combined competition. Information about previous grants awarded may be found on our website in the press release area or

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>. You may review this information to learn about grant sizes and distributions between state and national programs.

C12. How do you determine if a project should be a single-state or a multi-state application if the members travel to do service outside of the state in which they are based?

Multi-State grants are for programs that use service and volunteering to address compelling community needs in at least two states. A multi-state program is one in which the members provide consistent service over an extended amount of time in two or more states. If members will be based in at least two states (in other words, not just a crew that at times crosses state lines to provide service), it may be considered a multi-state program. Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to administer and monitor a federal, multi-site, multi-state grant and have relationships with organizations in different states that will operate the local programs. An operating site is the organization that manages the AmeriCorps program on behalf of the multi-state recipient of the grant from CNCS. A multi-state grantee must have an operating site in each state in which it has AmeriCorps members.

C13. The NOFO states that "Fixed amount grants are only available to recompeting programs." Does this include "previous" grantees? Can a current EAP grantee apply for a non-EAP fixed amount grant? [updated 12/18/2013]

Both recompeting and previous grantees may apply for fixed amount grants. Only new applicants and Tier 1 Education applicants are not eligible to apply for fixed amount grants (although second and third-year continuation applicants with cost reimbursement grants must submit a new application if they are interested in applying for a fixed amount grant.). A current EAP grantee may apply for a full-cost fixed amount grant if it is for a different program design. Tier 1 Education applicants (except new applicant organizations) may apply for EAP grants.

C14. Can you have a competitive grant as well as a professional corps grant in formula? [updated 12/18/2013]

An organization may have different grants for AmeriCorps as long as they are not considered the same project.

C15. Can you apply for a competitive grant and, if it is not awarded, switch your application to apply as a professional corps in formula? [added 11/8/2013]

This is up to the Commission to decide. CNCS policy does not prohibit changing the application submitted to formula as long as the applicant adheres to the published rules and deadlines for the Commission's formula competition.

C16. If an organization decides to submit two applications, one as a National program and the other as a State program, can the state program design and approach also be a part of the National Program application? [added 11/8/2013]

Yes, the state program design and approach can be included as part of the National Program application, but the organization cannot receive funding for duplicate programs (the NOFO provides a definition of "same project" that would indicate a duplicate program). Thus, if the state program and the national program were both selected for funding, the applicant would not be

eligible to receive funds for the portion of the national program that duplicated the state program. Please keep in mind that the geographic/programmatic scope of the two proposed programs would be different, as applications submitted to state commissions are for projects that operate in only one state, while applications submitted directly to CNCS are for AmeriCorps programs that operate in more than one state and territory.

C17. What % of available funds do you anticipate will be available for new grants versus continuing grants? [added 11/8/2013]

Unfortunately, at this time we are not able to provide these types of projections.

C18. We have an applicant that had been funded through a National Direct grant from CNCS (currently in their 3rd year of funding) that is applying to the competitive process through our state commission. Can they apply for a fixed amount grant? [added 12/18/2013]

If the applicant to you is the actual national direct organization that received and operated the previous grant, then they are eligible to apply for a fixed amount grant from the commission. If the applicant to you is a subgrantee of a national direct and the subgrantee does not have experience as a direct AmeriCorps grant recipient from CNCS or the commission, then they are not eligible to apply for a fixed amount grant.

D. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

D1. What are the funding priorities for AmeriCorps?

In 2014, CNCS seeks to target its AmeriCorps grantmaking in the Economic Opportunity, Education, Disaster, and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas, and the Governor and Mayor Initiative. To maximize the impact of the investment in national service, CNCS is seeking to fund programs that can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems through an evidence-based approach (e.g. performance data, research, theory of change). Details on the priorities for a particular grant competition can be found in the relevant NOFO.

D2. Are there targeted percentages of funding for each priority area?

No. CNCS has not pre-determined how much funding will be allocated by priority area.

D3. 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.

D4. Will CNCS eventually stop funding programs that aren't represented in the Focus Areas or the National Performance Measures?

CNCS' Focus Areas were delineated in the 2009 Serve America Act and are unlikely to change in the near future. The 2014 National Performance Measures reflect the Agency-wide priorities and telling the story of where national service can make the greatest impact. These Agency-wide Priority Measures provide a focused set of outcomes for programs and initiatives across CNCS; they drive

accountability and take achievability into consideration. Our performance measurement framework is iterative and we plan to refine and update the Measures as we learn from the data we receive. We will regularly assess our priorities in light of local and national needs.

D5. What does evidence-basis/evidence-informed mean and what documentation is required?

Evidence-basis/evidence-informed refers to a program's demonstration of support that a particular intervention will lead to the intended outcomes and address the identified community problem(s). Evidence for the intervention could include results from research, performance data, or results from a similar, successful program and would provide the basis for decisions about the design, frequency and intensity of the proposed intervention.

For example: An applicant proposes to engage AmeriCorps members to recruit and manage volunteers. The volunteers will tutor third-grade students in a low-performing school for an hour a day, three days per week. The proposal indicates that as a result, the students' academic performance will improve. The applicant must describe in its proposal the evidence that the design of the intervention (a certain set of tutoring activities delivered for one hour three times per week) will result in improved academic performance. There are more detailed definitions of evidence-informed and evidence-based in the appendix of the NOFO.

D6. What other type of evidence is required in a proposal?

An application must provide evidence of the need, which refers to data that demonstrates the extent or severity of the need in the target community.

D7. Are Economic Opportunity Measures in Tier 1 or Tier 2? How should MSY be allocated across the PMs?

Complementary Program Measures in Economic Opportunity are in Tier 1. Priority measures in Economic opportunity are in Tier 2. Member-oriented measures (012, 014, 015, 017) must also be accompanied by priority or complementary measure to reflect the community impact of the program. Members should be allocated to the community impact measures.

D8. Is there a focus on "summer slide" and if so, is it in Tier 1?

While addressing summer slide is a strong interest of CNCS and one reason we have set the announcement date early enough for summer programming, it is not in and of itself a focus area and therefore not in any particular tier. It could be a component/focus of any topic or tier.

D9. CNCS placed a great deal of emphasis on cost/MSY in last year's competition yet the application lists a higher cost/MSY limit than the reality of the current year. Is the cost/MSY what is listed?

Cost/MSY is a competitive factor. The pool of cost/MSY depends on what the cost/MSY of submitted applications. While CNCS understands that the across the board cut of cost/MSY was not optimal, the savings that resulted allowed us to place 1,000 more AmeriCorps members on the ground.

D10. Does a continuation fall within the tier system?

No, continuations are not put into tiers unless the applicant is proposing an expansion.

D11. How will member experience be assessed if it is no longer a required section in the application?
[added 11/4/2013]

It is correct that member experience is no longer a discrete category within the NOFO. However reviewers will assess member experience by reviewing what the members' service activities will be and potentially efficacy of the interventions (AmeriCorps members as highly effective means to solve community problems and evidence based and measurable community impact), the training that will be provided to members (member training), and the supervision of the members (member supervision). All three of those sections will provide adequate information for a reviewer to assess the potential quality of the member experience.

D12. Does CNCS allocate grant funds by tier and is there a point value associated with the tiers?
[added 11/22/2013]

We do not have a specific amount of grant funds allocated per tier – there is one amount for the entire competition. CNCS does not assign points to applications because they fall within a tier. The tier and the application score are factors, along with others, that CNCS will take into consideration when making funding decisions.

D13. In the final revised NOFO on page 7, it states that CNCS will "prioritize the investment of national service resources in rural schools." However, in our state, there are only 8 priority/SIG schools in rural areas, though a majority of the geographic area of the state is considered rural and these areas are in desperate need of assistance. Will programs focusing on serving rural schools be considered Tier 1? If so, how should programs proposing to serve our rural areas respond to the specific Tier 1 requirements, especially that applications will be disqualified for failing to propose eligible schools?
[added 12/18/2013]

Programs focused on serving rural schools that are not SIG/Priority schools would not qualify for Tier 1 Education. However, CNCS seeks to fund a diversified overall portfolio of programs that includes a meaningful representation of rural and urban communities. A program that serves rural schools is welcome to apply under the AmeriCorps NOFO even if it does not qualify for Tier 1 Education.

D14. How will my program's evaluation of member outcomes be considered when assessing level of evidence?
[added 12/18/2013]

Evaluations of member outcomes will be considered part of a program's evidence base if the program's theory of change (problem, intervention, outcomes) includes a member development focus.

D15. If we are considered Tier II because we are not serving SIG schools, does that place a lower priority on our grant?
[added 1/11/2014]

CNCS will give priority consideration to applicants in Tier 1. However, all eligible applications will be reviewed for quality and considered for funding.

E. AmeriCorps Members

E1. Is an AmeriCorps member the same as a volunteer?

No. An AmeriCorps member is an individual serving in an approved national service position for a pre-determined term of service. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award and might receive a living allowance and other benefits such as health insurance and childcare. Additionally, there are limitations on the types of activities in which an AmeriCorps member can engage. Volunteers are not eligible for a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, and typically do not receive compensation or have a pre-defined term of service. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members might serve side-by-side and AmeriCorps members often recruit and manage volunteers.

E2. Does CNCS recruit and train the AmeriCorps members?

No. While CNCS has an online recruitment system that AmeriCorps programs can utilize, each program is responsible for recruiting its own AmeriCorps members. Additionally, AmeriCorps programs are entirely responsible for training their AmeriCorps members

E3. Must an AmeriCorps member serve for a certain amount of time?

Yes. An AmeriCorps member may serve either a full-time term of service, which requires a minimum of 1700 hours of service within a one-year period of time; or a part-time term, which can range from 300 hours to 900 hours. The AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, provides additional detail. In your application, you must specify the terms of service you are proposing for your AmeriCorps members.

E4. Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?

No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

E5. Are there certain activities in which AmeriCorps members and staff cannot engage?

Yes. While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating

facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;

- Providing a direct benefit to: (1) a business organized for profit; (2) a labor union; (3) a partisan political organization; (4) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (participating in partisan political activities or spending funds on lobbying and grassroots efforts in excess of allowable limits); and (5) an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, (unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities);
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Nonduplication.

Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless there is nondisplacement, Corporation assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.

Nondisplacement.

(1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

(2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.

(3) A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.

(4) A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.

(5) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—

(i) Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or

(ii) Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.

(6) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—

(i) Presently employed worker;

(ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;

(iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;

(iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or

(v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

E6. What AmeriCorps funding opportunities are available?

AmeriCorps has annual competitions for program implementation grants, Tribal grants and possibly planning grants. Consult the AmeriCorps website for a list of upcoming competitions. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>.

E7. Is it acceptable to have AmeriCorps members whose primary responsibilities are office-based computer work?

Allowable member service activities can be direct service or capacity building. Direct service activities must be designed to impact a documented compelling community need, should be evidence-based and lead to measurable impact. Capacity building activities must also be designed to impact a documented compelling community need and cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Capacity Building activities include:

- Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers
- Implementing effective volunteer management practices
- Completing community assessments that identify goals and recommendations
- Developing new systems and business processes or enhancing existing systems/processes.

E8. Can a program have members serving in more than one focus area as long as a primary focus area is identified and the majority of members are serving in that area?

Yes, a program can have members serving in more than one focus area as long as a primary focus area is identified and the majority of members are serving in that area.

E9. How does a program assess members as economically disadvantaged if they are current members, especially since some receive Food Stamps. [added 11/22/2013]

If a member qualified as economically disadvantaged when they entered AmeriCorps, they can continue to be so classified in subsequent terms. However, members who are voluntarily low-income simply due to the fact that they are an AmeriCorps member do not qualify as economically disadvantaged in the second term.

F. Governor and Mayor Initiative

F1. Who can submit a Governor and Mayor Initiative application?

The application must be submitted by a government agency. It is up to the governor who submits it – either the governor's office or a state agency he or she designates or the mayor's office or a city agency he or she designates. [The State Commission cannot be the applicant. Statute prohibits State Commissions from administering AmeriCorps programs.] The submission is limited to one Mayor. (A group of mayors may not submit.) However, the project design could place members in multiple cities or regions of a state. Commissions without a Governor (i.e. District of Columbia) may submit a proposal for the Governor and Mayor Initiative and follow all other instructions for the initiative, with the exception of a Governor's involvement.

F2. Does an application submitted for the Governor and Mayor Initiative still need to go through the State Commission's regular application and review process?

An application submitted by the State Commission should follow established standard procedures for submitting a competitive application.

F3. Would a partnership between a Governor and a Board of Supervisors be considered an eligible applicant? Would a Public School District that is a subdivision of a State be an eligible applicant?

If the Board of Supervisors is considered the designated state agency by the Governor then they may be the applicant. If a school district is a subdivision of the state, the Governor could identify that the school district be the legal applicant.

F4. If the Governor and Mayor Initiative are required to go through the State Commission, are they included in the program ranking or is there a separate review process?

The Governor and Mayor Initiative application is the same as any other competitive application. Thus, it would be included in the program ranking.

F5. Does the Governor and Mayor Initiative need to be a new initiative or could an application be considered for a recompeting program?

It is not required that it be a new initiative.

F6. Can the Mayor's office (designated applicant) sub grant funds and can the Commission incorporate the 1% fixed administrative cost option for this sub? Can it be more than 1%?

The requirement in the NOFO is that the legal applicant must be the Governor, Mayor or their designated government office. There is no listed restriction on sub granting funds. The same rules would apply as for other grants; so yes, the Commission can incorporate the 1% fixed cost but it may not exceed 2%, per the new State Commission Fixed Administrative Cost Option.

F7. The Governor and Mayor initiative is limited to one per state. If the state currently has a Governor and Mayor initiative in continuation, does that count as that one?

No, states are restricted to one Governor and Mayor Initiative per competition. A state that has received a Governor and Mayor Initiative for 2013 can submit another proposal for 2014.

F8. Is the Governor and Mayor Initiative limited to two Mayors? What if the Governor is working with a coalition of Mayors?

CNCS wants either the Governor or a designated Mayor to take the lead on the project, but other Mayors could participate. It depends on the program design.

F9. Is choosing a performance measure necessary if you are applying for the Governor and Mayor Initiative? [added 11/8/13]

Yes, all applicants must submit performance measures with their application, including Governor and Mayor Initiative applicants. Applicants must create at least one aligned performance measure

that includes their primary intervention. They may also create additional aligned performance measures.

F10. If a Governor is interested in applying for the Governor and Mayor Initiative to address issues in a large rural part of the state where there is a military base, can the Governor partner with the County Executive to ensure that the vast region would be sufficiently covered? [added 11/22/13]

A Governor can certainly engage a County Executive to be a significant partner of a Governor and Mayor Initiative. To meet the requirements for applying for this Initiative, a Mayor from the county should be recruited to be a sponsor. The NOFO says “Only the Governor, Mayor, their designated government office (but not the state commission), or a public university may apply for grants under the Governor and Mayor initiative. Applications from other entities will be deemed non-compliant and will not be considered under this initiative.” So, it is possible for the Governor and Mayor to designate the County Executive (as a government office) to be the legal applicant if they so choose.

G. Performance Measures/Logic Model

G1. What is a theory of change?

A theory of change is a theory (or logic model) for how an intervention can address or solve a stated problem. A theory of change articulates a problem, a proposed intervention, and the change (outcomes) that is expected to result from delivering the intervention. Underlying the theory is a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, about why the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes. A Logic Model means a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally.

G2. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?

AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary service activity and aligns with the program's theory of change.

G3. What are National Performance Measures?

CNCS has established six Focus Areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, as well as for Capacity Building, CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives. See the NOFO document for specifics on our funding priorities.

G4. What is the difference between Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures?

The National Performance Measures are split into two groups: Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures. Priority Measures are a subset of the original National Performance Measures Pilot. Complementary Program Measures are the remaining measures from the National Performance Measures Pilot not included in the Priority Measures.

G5. How did CNCS decide which grant activities wouldn't be represented in the National Measures?

CNCS leadership from across the agency reviewed the goals and priorities in our 2011-2015 Strategic Plan and focused our work on a limited set of Priority Measures. To identify these priorities, CNCS considered whether the measures:

- Were specific, measureable, achievable and result-oriented.
- Provided useful information to guide decision making.
- Aligned with previous investments that have demonstrated effectiveness.
- Collectively tell a compelling story about the value of national service and other CNCS resources.

G6. What is a "self-nominated" or "applicant-determined" performance measure?

A self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and/or outcomes that will be measured, based on its primary service activity. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where CNCS pre-determines common outputs and, in some instances, outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

G7. If I select National Performance Measures this year, will I maintain the same measures next year?

Yes. Performance measures should be consistent over the life of a three-year grant so that progress can be measured over time. However, it is possible that some measures, definitions and guidance may change.

G8. Are National Performance Measures required?

Priority Measures, a sub-set of the National Performance Measures, are required for new and recompeting programs whose proposed program fits those measures. Additionally, Education National Performance Measures are required for Full-Time Fixed-Amount applicants in the Education Focus Area. The use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged and is a funding priority, but is not required.

G9. Should Formula funded programs use the National Performance Measures?

CNCS would like all AmeriCorps programs to use National Performance Measures when they fit their program activities. While the National Performance Measures are not required for formula programs, State Service Commissions are strongly encouraged to use the national performance measures for their formula programs.

G10. If we are in a Continuation year of our grant should we select National Performance Measures?

In general, 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 select National Performance Measures, the grantee may choose to revise their measures at the time of Continuation.

G11. What should a continuation grantee who is measuring an output or outcome that has a changed definition do in the continuation application?

The grantee should continue to measure the output or outcome as defined in the original NOFO that was submitted. If a grantee is able to measure using the revised output or outcome definition then they may revise their performance measure for 2013, but this is not required.

G12. How do I decide if my program should select National Performance Measures?

If the National Performance Measures align with your program's activities, then CNCS strongly encourages your participation. The National Performance Measures Instructions provide definitions; requirements and guidelines that will help you determine which are right for you. These instructions can be found on the NOFO webpage. In addition, the NOFO describes requirements for performance measurement selection based on the application tier.

G13. If I select National Performance Measures, will I also have to create "applicant-determined" performance measures?

There are two circumstances in which your program will need to create self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the National Performance Measures. First, if your program selects National Performance Measures 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 outcome, you will need to create an applicant-determined outcome to complete the alignment. The need to create an aligned applicant-determined outcome measure is clearly stated in the National Performance Measures Instructions.

G14. What is an aligned performance measure?

An aligned performance measure is an output paired with an outcome. Most of our National Performance Measures include aligned measures, but in some cases you may need to create your own aligned applicant-determined outcome measure.

G15. How many performance measures should I propose?

Each program should have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) reflecting its primary service activity. It is appropriate to have additional aligned performance measures for other significant components of your program. Performance measures reflecting non-primary activities should not be included in your application and will not be reported to CNCS, although you might still collect the data for your own purposes.

G16. Are member development and volunteer generation performance measures required?

Member development and volunteer generation are required components of all AmeriCorps programs, but performance measures for these activities should only be included in your application if this is the primary focus of your program. Programs that focus on member development should review the member-focused Economic Opportunity National Performance Measures to see if they are applicable. Programs that focus on volunteer generation can select the

Capacity Building Volunteer Generation Priority Measures. It is also important to note that all programs need to report on volunteers generated in their progress report.

G17. When I last applied for funding, why did AmeriCorps ask me to remove some of my performance measures from my grant application?

Applicants were asked to remove from their applications performance measures that did not reflect primary service activities of the program and that did not need to be reported to CNCS. However, this was not an indication that these activities were not worthwhile. In many instances, the program would want to measure these activities and track the results to ensure program quality even though they are not reflected in the approved AmeriCorps application.

G18. If I select National Performance Measures, are there specific outputs and outcomes I am required to use?

Yes, in most cases there are specific requirements for outputs and outcomes as well as data definitions and collection expectations. Please read the National Performance Measures Instructions carefully for the selection requirements.

G19. What programs can select the Teacher Corps Measures in the Education Focus Area?

The Teacher Corps measures are intended to be used by AmeriCorps programs where the AmeriCorps members serve as the primary teacher in a classroom setting during their terms of service. 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.

G20. Can Teacher Corps programs opt into non-Teacher Corps outcomes, such as ED5 or ED27?

Yes, provided that their theory of change is consistent with the selected non-Teacher Corps measure.

G21. Can summer programs select the ED27 performance measure?

Summer programs may opt into the ED27 measure and consider the definition of over the school year to be interpreted as over the course of the summer program.

G22. Can summer programs select the H5 performance measure?

The H5 output could apply to summer programming, provided the programming meets the criterion of being in addition to regular activities that would have been provided by the school or camp during the summer term. This interpretation is the same as ED27 above.

G23. Can summer programs select the H12 performance measure?

The H12 outcome measure is specifically about long-term food security, so it would not apply to summer programs that are filling a summer gap. Filling a summer gap would not translate to increased food security a few months out.

G24. Is H12 limited only to education activities?

H12 is not limited to activities that are educational in nature.

G25. Can I count AmeriCorps Members as beneficiaries of service if my program selects National Performance Measures?

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, and certain Measures in the Economic Opportunity and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas 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 receive the services as a member of the general public (or target population) rather than as part of their AmeriCorps service or training.

G26. Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in the National Performance Measures?

The National 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's results possible. One exception is when the AmeriCorps members are providing organizations with capacity building services.

G27. Can I count the same people in more than one National Performance Measure output?

Read the Performance Measures Instructions carefully. Unless otherwise specified, the same individuals may be counted more than once across different Measures for different services they may be receiving. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once within any one specific National Performance Measure. For example, if you helped the same individual both prepare for a disaster and then respond to a disaster, you may count that individual in both DS1 and DS2.

G28. Why is "economically disadvantaged" defined differently for the Economic Opportunity, Education and Healthy Futures performance measures?

The definition in each Focus Area is aligned with the relevant predominant government programs. For instance, AmeriCorps members working in the healthy futures focus area are likely serving populations that are eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP.

G29. If I select a National Performance Measure that includes a specific definition for the beneficiary population, will I be required to prove that my program is serving that population?

Your application narrative should include a depiction of the need your program will address, including the beneficiary population, and documentation that the need exists for this population. The National Performance Measures you select should align with your application narrative. For instance, if you select an Education performance measure that defines the target population as students eligible for free or reduced lunch, then your application narrative might provide data to show that your AmeriCorps members will be serving at a school for which the majority of the population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. In this example, you would not be expected to

collect and maintain eligibility data for each individual student served. Through your application narrative and the implementation of your program, you are expected to provide reasonable assurance that you are serving the intended population.

G30. How do I indicate that I am selecting National Performance Measures?

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.

G31. Am I allowed to allocate funds for collecting and analyzing data? If so, how much?

Costs related to measuring the performance of a program are allowable grant expenses. There is no standard recommended amount. As with all cost reimbursement grants, these costs must be reasonable, allowable for the proposed program, and properly allocated across grant activities.

G32. We have similar reporting requirements and measures for another funder. Can I just report on that measure instead?

No. If the program chooses to select National Performance Measures, it will need to report to CNCS on the measures as they are defined.

G33. What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?

They are the same as programs not using National Performance Measures. The reporting requirements are contained in the grant provisions.

G34. Why does CNCS require 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.

G35. How should I determine the MSY percentages 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.

G36. 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.

G37. I find the terminology in the Performance Measures section of eGrants to be confusing. How do I translate eGrants language to the terms used elsewhere?

The following is a guide to some of the common terms you will see in eGrants followed by language that is consistent with the NOFO and training materials:

- Strategy = Intervention (The strategy/intervention will be the same for all components of the measure—output, intermediate outcome, end outcome—because all of these should result from the same intervention.)
- Result = Output, Intermediate Outcome, or End Outcome
- Indicator = For outputs, a description of the number of beneficiaries to be counted. For outcomes, a description of the measurable change that will occur.
- Target Statement = The indicator plus the expected number (100 beneficiaries will...)
- Target = The number in the target statement (100)
- Instrument = The specific tool that will be used to collect data (AIMSweb Letter Sounds and Letter Names pre/post-test)
- Data Collection Methodology = How data will be collected (survey, pre/post-test, etc.)
- Tip: Within each output or outcome, the result statement, indicator, target statement and target number will seem repetitive:
 - i. Result Statement: Students will demonstrate improved academic performance...
 - ii. Indicator: Number of students with improved academic performance
 - iii. Target Statement: 100 students will demonstrate improved academic performance...
 - iv. Target: 100
- eGrants Tip: Applicants will get an error message and will not be able to submit if:
- The total across all MSY charts does not equal MSYs in budget (+/- 1 to account for rounding)
- A primary service category has not been selected for each focus area selected.

G38. Should sample data collection tables be included in the application? Where should they be placed?

eGrants will not allow you to submit tables. In the eGrants Performance Measures section you will describe your data collection strategy. Follow the instructions for entering the performance measures and enter this information in the Description of the Intervention field.

G39. In order to measure ED5, which is the number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math? May we propose to use state assessments because they are consistently available and are aligned with our goals of building student proficiency in ELA and math and helping schools to improve on the outcomes that are most meaningful to them?

In the submission of the application Performance Measures section you should state the assessment strategy and indicate any variance from the requirement. This will be reviewed in the application and during Clarification, if appropriate; the variation from the requirement would be noted. In some cases a waiver of requirements is noted in a grant Special Condition. If what you propose to do is approved in the application, then it is approved.

G40. Where do I find a copy of the webinar that helps applicants walk through the new performance measures module? [updated 11/18/2013]

This tutorial, <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/online-courses/egrants-performance-measure-module-for-americorps>, designed for 2014 new, continuation and re-compete AmeriCorps applications, guides users through the new eGrants performance measures screens. It demonstrates how to complete the pages in the new performance measure section of the application. The tutorial also includes some program specific content information as well as shows users how to create an aligned performance measure for their chosen primary focus area and intervention. Instructions for the new performance measures module specific for continuations can be found on pages 21-23 of the application instructions.

G41. On the logic model chart there are three levels of output (short, medium and long) being requested. The focus has been on understanding that outputs and outcomes in performance measures should be linked by a sound theory of change and evidence. Do you have any new guidance on linking outputs and outcomes and how they mesh given the new output structure?

The logic model is a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally. A program may have a theory of change that is based on accomplishing a long-term change in conditions that is not measurable in the program year. However, there may be shorter-term changes that can be linked to this ultimate goal that are strong indicators that the long-term change is likely to happen. Since we define outcomes as changes that can be measured within the program year, there may be a need to list short, medium and long-term outcomes to understand the conceptual framework of the program. Not all programs need to use all three levels of outcomes – just those that are relevant to a solid understanding of their theory of change and the evidence of change that they will measure in the performance measures.

G42. Does CNCS expect Continuation applications to submit a Logic Model Worksheet, organizational chart, and/or letters of commitment from most significant community partners?

No.

G43. What does CNCS consider to be economically disadvantaged? How is that tracked? Is this where the county level economic data comes in? [added 11/4/2013]

“Economically disadvantaged” is defined/tracked slightly differently depending on what performance measures are being used by the applicant. You can refer to the performance measure instructions for more information about how economically disadvantaged participants/recipients are defined in different contexts. But county level economic data could be a useful reference to assess and describe the community/ies being served by a proposed project.

G44. Are the National Performance Measure instructions going to change from FY 2013 or not? How do we get a copy of the 2014 PM instructions? [updated 11/18/2013]

The 2014 National Performance Measure Instructions are available on the NOFO page:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2014/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2014>

G45. Under the Theory of Change and Logic Model instructions, there are a set of bullet points. The text above the narrative indicates those bullets should be answered in the logic model matrix. The items asked in the bullets are not what is asked in the matrix - the bullets are much more information. Can you please clarify? [added 11/8/2013]

The bullet points are intended to provide guidance to applicants on what information should be entered in the logic model. The headings at the top of each column in the logic model matrix provide additional guidance, although, as you noted, the text in the column headings is not as detailed as the text in the bullet points. Please use the guidance provided in the bullet points plus the guidance provided in the column headings to fill out the logic model matrix.

G46. An FAQ answer states "you should only select performance measures for a particular activity if it can be considered a significant program activity/aspect of your program design." If my program will have about 40% effort in a Tier II National PM, does the program need to have a second PM to account for the other 60% effort? [added 11/8/2013]

"Significant" in this context refers not necessarily to the number of MSY devoted to a particular activity but to how important the activity is to a program's theory of change or project design. This may or may not be directly correlated with the number of MSY assigned to that activity. In the example you provided, you may certainly choose a second PM to account for members' effort beyond the 40% captured in the Tier II National PM. While some programs use only one aligned performance measure (only one is required), other programs may use two or more. However, it isn't necessary to include the full 100% of your MSYs under performance measures.

G47. Can we reformat the logic model chart and how long can it be? [updated 11/15/2013]

We want all charts to be in the same format (like the chart in the NOFO) although the size of the columns can change. The final chart should be landscape orientation, with a font size not smaller than 10 points, and not exceed 2 single-sided pages when printed. These two pages do not count toward the overall proposal page limit.

G48. Which grant applicants need to use the new Performance Measures module when developing their application? [added 11/8/2013]

All applicants need to use the new Performance Measures module in their application submission.

G49. Is a logic model necessary for each performance measure? [added 11/8/2013]

No, only one logic model should be submitted for each application. The logic model should reflect the Theory of Change for the application as a whole.

G50. What age group is considered disadvantaged youth, according to AmeriCorps? [updated 11/22/2013]

"Disadvantaged youth" is defined in the National Performance Measure instructions for performance measure ED4A (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/ACSN_2014_PM_Instructions.pdf) as follows:

Disadvantaged youth: “includes those youth who are economically disadvantaged and 1 or more of the following: (A) Who are out-of-school youth, including out-of-school youth who are unemployed. (B) Who are in or aging out of foster care. (C) Who have limited English proficiency. (D) Who are homeless or who have run away from home. (E) Who are at-risk to leave secondary school without a diploma. (F) Who are former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency. (G) Who are individuals with disabilities.” (from SAA) It is the grantee’s responsibility to ensure the beneficiaries of service meet the eligibility requirements provided in the definition.

Economically disadvantaged: eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch; may or may not actually be accessing free/reduced lunch. See: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/ChildNutrition/lunch.htm>

“Opportunity Youth” is defined in the NOFO as “economically disadvantaged individuals age 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months prior to service.” Opportunity youth are a sub-set of individuals who might be a good fit for the member outcomes performance measures. The definition for Tier I qualification related to opportunity youth is narrower than the definition for economically disadvantaged National Service Participants in the O12 performance measure instructions. If your program engages opportunity youth and you would like your application to be considered in Tier I, the “at least 30% of the total MSY” allocated to the eligible performance measures must meet the narrower definition provided on p. 34 of the NOFO.

G51. Can our members be considered economically disadvantaged members who will receive financial literacy services? [added 11/18/2013]

Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants (i.e. AmeriCorps members) are defined in the National Performance Measure Instructions for performance measure O12 (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/nofa/13_1031_2013_NOFO_PM_Instructions_ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.pdf) as follows:

Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants: Current National Service Participants who are receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance.

However, the economically disadvantaged individuals counted under performance measure O1 and O9 as receiving financial literacy services should be service recipients/beneficiaries, not National Service Participants. AmeriCorps members may be counted under measures O12-O17.

*G52. Do all members have to work on the **exact** same activities or can the activities differ slightly, if they are all working toward the same performance measure targets? [added 11/18/2013]*

As long as the activities in which the AmeriCorps members engage are consistent with your program’s Theory of Change and align with the performance measure instructions for the National Performance Measures you wish to use, the activities do not have to be exactly the same for all members.

G53. As stated in the NOFO, in order to be considered for Tier I status, CNCS expects at least 30% of the MSYs be in the complementary program measures or priority measures. Does this mean total MSYs for the overall application or the total MSYs in the complementary/priority measure(s)? [added 11/18/2013]

Tiers apply to the application as a whole; therefore, the concentration of at least 30% MSY in the Tier 1 measure would apply to the application as a whole. Please note that Tier 1 Education and VetSuccess AmeriCorps program models have different MSY allocation requirements.

G54. Please clarify the following sentence describing qualifications for Tier II (on p. 11): "Have less than 30% or more of their MSYs in those performance measures." Is it less than 30% or more than 30%? [added 11/22/2013]

If you are using the following measures, the threshold for MSY allocation for Tier II is less than 30%:

- Priority Measures in Veterans and Military Families, or
- Priority Measures in Disaster Services, or
- Complementary Program Measures in Economic Opportunity (01, 02, 03, 09, 010, 012, 014, 015, 017)

Applicants in these categories with 30% or more MSY would be considered in Tier I.

G55. Is there a guide that we can print out that defines interventions listed under each performance measurement objective? [added 12/6/2013]

We do not have a list of interventions or a guide that describes them, as they are fairly generic under each objective, such as “training,” “tutoring,” etc. If the applicant does not see an intervention that describes their activity, they can always select “other.” You can also go to the web page for the eGrants Performance Measures tutorial located here:

<https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/online-courses/egrants-performance-measure-module-for-americorps> and select the “National Performance Measures Chart” link. This shows which objectives and performance measures are linked in eGrants.

G56. How do I enter MSYs in the performance measures section of the application? [added 1/11/2014]

The performance measures module collects information about MSYs in two locations: the MSY tab and within each performance measure.

MSY Tab

The MSY tab is intended to show how program resources are allocated to activities that serve program beneficiaries. The total number of MSYs entered on this tab must equal the number of MSYs requested in the budget. For each strategic plan objective selected, except the “Find Opportunity” objective and the “Teacher Corps” objective, enter the number of MSYs that will be allocated toward activities that address the objective.

The Find Opportunity objective addresses member development activities and is connected to national performance measures for member development. If you have selected Find Opportunity, enter .01 MSYs for this objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

For Teacher Corps programs using ED15 to measure beneficiary outcomes under the Teacher Corps objective, enter the number of MSYs that will be allocated to meeting the outcomes of ED15 for the Teacher Corps objective and allocate any remaining MSYs to other objectives you may have selected.

For Teacher Corps programs measuring beneficiary outcomes in other focus areas, such as K-12 success, enter .01 MSYs for the Teacher Corps objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

Performance Measures

MSYs entered at the performance measure level show the proportion of program resources allocated to achieving the outcomes of the performance measure.

MSYs may not be allocated to member development performance measures. Information about MSYs allocated to member development activities is collected in the demographics section of the application.

MSYs should not be allocated to Teacher Corps performance measures unless the measure contains a beneficiary outcome. If the measure does not contain a beneficiary outcome, enter .01 in the performance measure. If the measure contains a beneficiary outcome, enter the number of MSYs that will be allocated toward achieving this outcome.

G57. Does the ED5 measure apply to adult education? [added 1/11/2014]

Education measures are for K-12, not adult education. Adult education is addressed by Opportunity measures.

G58. What is the definition of "National Service Participant" for O13 and O16? [added 1/11/2014]

National Service Participant refers to the AmeriCorps members themselves. Because these measures apply to the members, programs that select them must also select additional performance measures that measure community impact. If a performance measure does not state that it is for national service participants, it refers to the beneficiary population being served by the AmeriCorps members (community impact).

H. Budget/ Match Requirements

H1. Are there any sample budgets available from successful programs that we could review?

CNCS does not provide sample budgets, but the Knowledge Network website has resources on how to put together a budget: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>

H2. We have a State program which has operated as an education award only program. They are recompeting and applying as a cost reimbursement AmeriCorps program. Are they considered a 'new' program under the competitive application process and start at the 24% match level?

Since Match Requirements do not apply to EAP's, the match schedule for a program that was EAP would start anew, at the 24% rate.

H3. Do we enter a three-year budget?

Submit the budget only for the first year of the project. Unless otherwise specified, the grant generally covers a three-year project period. In approving a multi-year project period, CNCS generally makes an initial award for the first year of operation.

H4. If an organization is awarded funding through AmeriCorps, is it possible to increase the funding request when you re-apply in years 2 and 3? If so, is it common practice for organizations to do so, or would this be out of the ordinary?

Currently funded grantees may request additional funds or positions in Continuation applications for years 2 and/or 3. This is not out of the ordinary. The additional funding is subject to many factors including grantee performance, AmeriCorps funding, funding priorities, and funding decisions on New and Recompete applicants.

H5. If budget explanations are now to be part of the budget narrative rather than the proposal, will there be ample space to provide complicated explanations?

The character limits in the budget narrative will not change. If you cannot provide enough information to explain a line item, you may include additional explanation in the proposal narrative as part of the 15 page limit. If you received clarification on an item in a previous funding round, it will likely be clarified again unless you can provide the additional information in the budget narrative.

H6. Can the grant funds be used for any programming or must the program designed include the use of AmeriCorps members?

As an applicant, you would propose a program that addresses a local community need. You would document that need, propose the intervention (service activities) that AmeriCorps members would engage in to address that need and describe the outcomes you expect the program to make that would demonstrate a measurable impact on the need. The only way AmeriCorps State and National would award a grant that does not include the use of AmeriCorps members, would be if we awarded you a planning grant.

H7. Do all grants have to have a cash and in-kind match? If so, does the entire cash amount given through the grant have to be matched in full? [added 11/4/2013]

Match requirements, required for cost reimbursement grants, can be met by cash or in-kind sources. The acceptable sources of matching funds are federal, state, local, private sector, and/or other funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements. If you are applying for the first time, you must match with cash or in-kind contributions at least 24% of the project's total Operating Costs (Section I) plus Member Costs (Section II) plus Administrative Costs (Section III). If you are recompeting, please see the match schedule below.

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1, 2, 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

H8. How do we determine our budget? How much/ what percentage of the grantee match must be cash? What is the match requirement for living allowance? [added 11/18/2013]

The budget should be determined by you based on your organization's needs/resources and the structure of your proposed program. There is no required percentage for the portion of grantee match that must be cash. There is also no specific match requirement for living allowance; it may be covered by CNCS funds, non-federal cash match, or a combination of both.

H9. Are the members on our payroll (with taxes and other deductions) or on your payroll? [added 11/18/2013]

When you apply for an AmeriCorps grant, your proposed grant budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that is between \$12,100 (minimum) and \$24,200 (maximum) per member. The living allowance may be supported by the federal share of the budget, by matching funds, or by a combination of both. The grantee must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance and must withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from the member's living allowance. The grantee must also withhold Federal personal income taxes from member living allowances, requiring each member to complete a W-4 form at the beginning of the term of service and providing a W-2 form at the close of the tax year. The grantee must comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements.

H10. We noted that sponsors should provide health benefits to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time each begins his/her term of service. Is this requirement in any way negotiable? [added 11/18/2013]

Except for Education Award Program (EAP) grants, AmeriCorps programs must provide health care coverage to all full-time members who do not have adequate health care coverage at the time of enrollment or who lose coverage due to participation in the project. In addition, projects must provide coverage if a full-time member loses coverage during the term of service through no deliberate act of his/her own. The requirement to offer or make available health care benefits to full-time AmeriCorps members is not negotiable.

H11. What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments? [added 11/18/2013]

The living allowance is paid by the grantee using federal grant funds, matching funds, or a combination of both. Unlike a wage, an AmeriCorps living allowance is paid in regular increments throughout the service term regardless of the number of hours served during a pay period. You also may find the opinion letter from the Department of Labor informative in relation to this question. It can be found on the CNCS Office of General Counsel resource page:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/guidance-from-office-general-counsel>.

H12. Are Tribal applicants exempt from budgeting for healthcare for members if members already receive coverage through the Indian Health Service facilities? [added 12/6/2013]

Tribal applicants are not exempt from providing healthcare to full-time members or those serving in full-time capacity who do not have health care coverage. If your members already receive coverage through the Indian Health Service facilities, you can note that in the application. However,

your program must also have a plan and a budget for providing coverage for individuals who may not have coverage through this or other sources.

H13. What is the impact on the living allowance for residential programs, or programs that provide housing? [added 12/18/2013]

Residential programs, or programs that otherwise provide housing, should ensure that the living allowance that they are providing, in addition to the value of the housing, does not equal more than the maximum living allowance.

I. Evaluation Requirements

I1. What are evaluation requirements for 2014 application?

See evaluation FAQs

http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/ACSN_Evaluation_FAQs_FINAL_7_17_13.pdf

I2. How should evaluation reports be submitted to CNCS? [added 11/22/2013]

Evaluation reports should be sent to americorpsgrants@cns.gov with an email subject that includes your organization's name and Application ID number.

J. Sampling

J1. Under what circumstances is it ok for grantees to use sampling?

In performance measurement, sampling presents a tradeoff because it does not allow us to count all of the individuals who demonstrated the desired change (outcome) we are trying to measure. Methodologically speaking, sampling is appropriate as long as the grantee has a solid plan for ensuring that its sample will be representative. Practically speaking, we would want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population.

J2. When would CNCS not allow sampling?

CNCS will not allow sampling when it is reasonable to expect a grantee to collect data from the whole population. CNCS will also not allow sampling if the grantee's sampling frame is not sufficient or if the grantee's methodology will not result in a representative sample.

J3. How does a grantee set targets and outputs when it is planning to sample?

In most cases the grantee should be able to set targets based on the population as a whole. If a grantee's sampling methodology is sound and results in a representative sample, then the program can extrapolate their results to report on an outcome for the population as a whole. For example, a program reports an output of 1000 children served. The program selects a representative sample of

200 children. Of these, 180 students (90%) demonstrate the desired change. In this case, the program could report an extrapolated outcome of 900 students.

J4. If an existing program has not been sampling, can it switch to sampling now?

We want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population. If a program is currently collecting data from the whole population, they would need to make a compelling case for why they can no longer do so.