

AmeriCorps Grants Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 12/10/12

General

1. Q. What is AmeriCorps?

A. 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.americorps.gov/about/programs/index.asp> to find out more about the differences between these three programs.

2. Q. What is AmeriCorps State and National?

A. 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.

3. Q. What is an AmeriCorps member?

A. 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.

4. Q. Do all grants, including the AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2013, 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?

A. There is a match requirement for AmeriCorps State and National grants, but it depends on the exact type of grant you are requesting. Education Award Program grants do not have a required match. Stipended Fixed Amount Grants also do not have a match requirement in that the grant recipient does not have to report on match to CNCS. Cost reimbursement grants with AmeriCorps State and National have a match requirement. For new grantees, the requirement is 24% of the overall program costs. Program match can be cash, in-kind or a combination of both.

AmeriCorps funding in general does not provide full support for the total program costs, so additional resources, whether cash or in-kind, are necessary to successfully operate the program. This is true whether AmeriCorps requires a program to report on their match or not.

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

A. 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.

AmeriCorps Members

6. Q. Is an AmeriCorps member the same as a volunteer?

A. 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.

7. Q. What are the living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members?

A. The living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members vary by grant type. Detailed information on the living allowance requirements can be found in the 2013 AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions.

8. Q. Does CNCS recruit and train the AmeriCorps members?

A. 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. In your application you must describe how you will recruit, orient and train the AmeriCorps members you are requesting.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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 own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

12. Q. What AmeriCorps funding opportunities are available?

A. AmeriCorps has annual competitions for program implementation grants and Tribal planning grants. Consult the AmeriCorps website for a list of upcoming competitions.

http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp

Funding Opportunities

13. Q. Do I have to apply for a planning grant before I can apply for an AmeriCorps program grant?

A. No. You may apply for an AmeriCorps program grant without having first received a planning grant. However, for organizations without AmeriCorps experience, a planning grant can be a beneficial first step. In 2013, Tribal planning grants will be available.

14. Q. What is a planning grant?

A. The purpose of a Tribal 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. Tribal 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.

15. Q. What is a program implementation grant?

A. 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.

16. Q. If I receive a planning grant this year, am I expected to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant the following year?

A. Yes. The purpose of the planning grant is to support Indian Tribes in their development of an AmeriCorps program. Towards the end of the planning period, planning grant recipients apply and compete for an AmeriCorps program grant. There is no guarantee that planning grant recipients will receive an AmeriCorps program grant.

17. Q. What are the eligibility requirements?

A. In general, nonprofit organizations, including faith- and other community-based organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories; Indian Tribes; labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and intermediaries are eligible AmeriCorps grant applicants. However, specific grant opportunities might have narrower requirements so you must review the relevant Notice of Funding Opportunity for details.

18. Q. Where can I find the grant application materials?

A. 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.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>. 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.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp Indian Tribes, whether proposing a single- or multi-state program, can apply directly to the CNCS for funding.

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

A. 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.

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

A. Except for the planning grant competition, the 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 2013 grant competitions, service commissions don't exist in American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

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

A. For assistance in determining which AmeriCorps grant is right for your organization, you can complete the AmeriCorps Fit Finder; <http://www.americorps.gov/fitfinder/index.html>. Additionally, you may review the Chart of AmeriCorps Grants on the NOFO webpage for a brief overview of each grant type.

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

A. 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.

23. Q. What are the conditions for having a Full-Time, Fixed-Amount Grant?

A. A full-time, fixed-amount grant can only have full-time AmeriCorps member positions. Additionally, full-time fixed-amount grants in the education focus area must select National Performance Measures. This funding opportunity is only available to new and re-competing applicants.

24. Q. What is an Education Award Program grant?

A. 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.

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

A. The two primary differences are that Professional Corps grants do not include AmeriCorps member living allowances and benefits, and 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.

Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

26. Q. What are the funding priorities for AmeriCorps?

A. In 2013, 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.

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

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

28. Q. Will my program receive more priority for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure?

A. No additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure.

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

A. CNCS' Focus Areas were delineated in the 2009 Serve America Act and are unlikely to change in the near future. The 2013 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.

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

A. Evidence-basis/evidence-informed refers to a program's demonstration of why it is proposing a particular intervention to address an identified community problem. 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.

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

A. 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.

32. Q. What is a theory of change?

A. A theory of change is a theory (or hypothesis) 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.

The Grant Application

33. Q. Who can apply for Stipended Fixed Amount Grants?

A. New and Recompeting applicants can apply for Stipended Fixed Amount grants. A current cost reimbursement grantee must submit a Recompeting application (not a continuation application) if it would like to apply for a Stipended Fixed Amount grant.

34. Q. How do I determine whether to select “Continuation/ Renewal” or “New” when starting an application?

A. If you are:

- Recompeting (in year three of a competitive three-year funding cycle and applying for a new three-year grant), select Continuation/Renewal.
- Not a current grantee, but have received a competitive AmeriCorps grant in the past five years, select Continuation/Renewal.
- Applying to AmeriCorps 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.
- A current planning grantee applying for a three-year implementation grant, select New.
- A current grantee but proposing a new program, contact your CNCS program officer to create a new program for your organizational record in eGrants.

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

A. There is no pre-determined limit on the amount of grant funds that you may request for a program 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.

36. Q. What does Cost per MSY mean?

A. 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.

37. Q. Is there a maximum Cost per MSY?

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

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

A. 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.

39. Q. Will I have to contribute matching funds?

A. 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, the Corporation 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.

40. Q. How many AmeriCorps members will my program receive?

A. 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.

41. Q. What are the AmeriCorps member health insurance requirements?

A. 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.

42. Q. How long is the grant period?

A. 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.

Planning grants have a one-year grant period.

43. Q. What is an operating site?

A. 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.

44. Q. What is a member service site?

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

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

A. 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.

46. Q. Will applicants be able to select more than one Focus Area and, within the Focus Areas, more than one service activity?

A. Yes, applicants are able to select more than one Focus Area and more than one service activity within a Focus Area.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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).

49. Q. The NOFO states that the federal government is transitioning to the SAM number, however, the application makes no mention of this transition and requests the CCR. Could you please provide some guidance as to which system our subgrantees should use? Would either work at this time?

A. The System for Award Management (SAM) consolidates the capabilities in CCR/FedReg, ORCA (Online Representations and Certifications Application a web-based system that collects vendors representations and certifications), and EPLS (Excluded Parties List System a list of individuals and firms excluded by federal agencies from receiving contracts). The Corporation requires all direct grant recipients to maintain a valid registration in SAM, which must be renewed annually. There is no cost to register in SAM. Sub -applicants must have a DUNS number in order to submit in eGrants and are encouraged to register with SAM.

50. Q. Can a national organization submit applicants for both a national program and programs in specific states?

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

52. Q. When must I contact the State Service Commission?

A. 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 2013 AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity describe the consultation requirements in more detail. You can find your State Commission's contact information here: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>

53. Q. Are Indian Tribes required to consult with state commissions?

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

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

A. 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.

55. Q. When are applications due?

A. Deadlines for applications to be submitted to CNCS are contained in the NOFO. The deadline for national direct and tribal applications has been changed to **February 6, 2013 at 5:00pm Eastern time**. If you are applying for a single-state AmeriCorps program, you must contact your local State or Territory Service Commission for the application materials, process and deadline: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>

Program Design

56. Q. 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?

A. AmeriCorps will not fund the same project through separate funding sources. Activities taking place through the National direct grant should not to 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.

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

A. 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

58. Q. Do all schools need to be SIG (school improvement grant) schools?

A. In order to be considered as a Tier 1 they must be present in 50% or more schools that are classified as SIG, the SIG chart is provided on our website.

59. Q. Can we use SIG status for the 2011-12 academic year in places where the 2012-13 list has not yet been published for the applications?

A. The SIG status will be determined by the list posted on the CNCS website at http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=98. When we have the updated SIG list we will add it to the website. Because of timing of the NOFO release and the SIG announcements, we will accept SIG designation from either list.

60. Q. 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?

A. 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.

61. Q. 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?

A. National direct 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 has an operating site in each state in which it has AmeriCorps members.

62. Q. 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 National Direct grant, or do we need to coordinate the submission of multiple requests to individual state offices?

A. You are eligible to apply for a national direct 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, oversight and grant administration (even if you choose to subgrant funds to any of the nonprofit organizations).

Evaluation Requirements

63. Q. Is the \$500,000 referred to in determining an internal or external evaluation in regard to the CNCS Share or TOTAL program cost (CNCS + Grantee Share)?

A. The threshold for evaluation refers only to the CNCS share of the budget.

64. Q. Are fixed-amount grantees required to submit an internal or external evaluation report to CNCS?

A. If you are a State competitive or direct Corporation AmeriCorps grantee (other than an Education Award Program grantee), and your average annual Corporation program grant is \$500,000 or more, you must arrange for an independent evaluation of your program, and you must submit the evaluation with any application to the Corporation for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart. If you are a State competitive or direct Corporation AmeriCorps grantee whose average annual Corporation program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program grantee, you must conduct an internal evaluation of your program, and you must submit the evaluation with any application to the Corporation for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart.

65. Q. Are programs re-competing for the fourth time or more required to submit a new program evaluation with each re-compete?

A. Yes, programs re-competing for the fourth time or more are required to submit a new program evaluation with each re-compete.

Performance Measures

66. Q. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?

A. 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.

67. Q. What are National Performance Measures?

A. 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. Applicants choosing to report on the National Performance Measures also will receive priority funding consideration. See the NOFO document for specifics on our funding priorities.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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, measurable, 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.

70. Q. What is a “self-nominated” or “applicant-determined” performance measure?

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

72. Q. Are National Performance Measures required?

A. Priority Measures, a sub-set of the National Performance Measures, are required for new and re-competing 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.

73. Q. Should Formula funded programs use the National Performance Measures?

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

76. Q. Are National Performance Measures required for planning grants?

A. National Performance Measures are not required for planning grants. However, the funding priority of planning grants is based on whether the applicant is proposing to address outcomes identified in the National Performance Measures.

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

A. 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.

78. Q. What are the requirements regarding performance measurement for Fixed-Amount Grants in the Education Focus Area?

A. Applicants for a Fixed-Amount Grant in the Education Focus Area are required to select Education National Performance Measures.

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

A. 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.

80. Q. What is an aligned performance measure?

A. 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.

81. Q. Does the aligned set of measures I select need to include an output, an intermediate outcome and an end outcome?

A. No. You are required to select an aligned output and outcome. Whether the outcome is an intermediate or end outcome will depend on your program model. Outcomes must be measurable during the grant period.

82. Q. How many performance measures should I propose?

A. 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.

83. Q. Are member development and volunteer generation performance measures required?

A. 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 Pilot 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.

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

A. Applicants were asked to remove from their applications performance measures that didn't reflect primary service activities of the program, and that didn't need to be reported to CNCS. However, this wasn't 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 aren't reflected in the approved AmeriCorps application.

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

A. 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.

86. Q. Where do I report on Capacity Building activities?

A. In eGrants, select Goal 3 Capacity Building Measures and read the Performance Measures Instructions carefully about paired outputs and outcomes.

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

A. 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.

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

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

89. Q. Can summer programs select the ED27 performance measure?

A. 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.

90. Q. Can summer programs select the H5 performance measure?

A. 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.

91. Q. Can summer programs select the H12 performance measure?

A. 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.

92. Q. Is H12 limited only to education activities?

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

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. No. If the program chooses to select National Performance Measures, it will need to report to CNCS on the Measure as it is defined.

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

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

102. Q. How should we report outcomes across grant years? If a service is delivered toward the end of the grant year, the outcome might not be counted until the following year. How do we report these outcomes in eGrants?

A. In situations like the one described above, grantees may report outcomes in a subsequent grant year and should adjust their targets in consultation with their Program Officer.

103. Q. Why does CNCS require applicants to provide information on the proportion of Member Service Years (MSYs) devoted to each Focus Area?

A. 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.

104. Q. How should I determine the MSY percentages for each Focus area?

A. 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.

105. Q. 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?

A. 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.

106. Q. How do planning grant applicants complete the MSY chart?

A. Because eGrants will not allow an applicant to submit with this section blank, Planning Grant applicants should enter 1 MT at 3% to get a .01% MSY

107. Q. 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?

A. 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:
 - Result Statement: Students will demonstrate improved academic performance...
 - Indicator: Number of students with improved academic performance
 - Target Statement: 100 students will demonstrate improved academic performance...
 - 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

Sampling

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

A. 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.

109. Q. When would CNCS not allow sampling?

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

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

A. 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.

Governor and Mayor Initiative

112. Q. Is the District of Columbia eligible to submit an application for the Governor's and Mayor's Initiative since they don't have a Governor?

A. Commissions without a Governor (i.e. District of Columbia) may submit a proposal for the Governor and Mayor Initiative, following all other instructions for the initiative, with the exception of a Governor's involvement.

113. Q. The NOFA states two non-profits on page 6 and four non-profits on page 7 third bullet, is it 2 or 4?

A. The requirement for the Governors/Mayors initiative is that applicants enlist a minimum of two nonprofits. What is listed on page 7 is a generic example, it is not outlining what is required for each Governor's and Mayor's initiative.

114. Q. Who can submit Governor/Mayor Initiative?

A. 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.

115. Q. Does an application submitted for the Governor Initiative still need to go through the commission’s regular application and review process?

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

116. Q. 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?

A. 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.

117. Q. Are applications under the new Governor and Mayor Initiative submitted directly to CNCS via eGrants or are they reviewed and forwarded by the State Service Commission along with their traditional competitive portfolio?

A. Applications are submitted to CNCS in eGrants by the State Commission as a Competitive Application. The application should designate the appropriate NOFO – Fixed Price or Cost Reimbursement or EAP.

118. Q. 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?

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

119. Q. Does the Governor/Mayor’s Initiative need to be a new initiative or could an application be considered for a recompeting program?

A. It is not required that it be a new initiative.

120. Q. 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%?

A. 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 1%.

Budget/ Match Requirements

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

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

122. Q. Does the match increase start with one year planning grant, or does it only start with the implementation phase?

A. The match years begin accumulating with the first year of the implementation grant.

123. Q. We have a State program which has operated as an education award only program. They are re-competing 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?

A. 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.

Priority Tiers Education

124. Q. Which tier would alternative schools with priority Education measures qualify for in GARP 2013?

A. Being an alternative school doesn't affect either the Education performance measures that are chosen (the difference between Tier 1, 2 and Tier 3) or whether it is a Priority or SIG school (the difference between Tier 1 and Tier 2).

125. Q. When will the list of Priority Schools be posted on the NOFO page of the AmeriCorps website?

A. The website incorrectly lists that a list of priority schools will be posted. Priority schools are identified by a state educational agency that has received approval from the Department of Education of its request for Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility. Contact your state educational agency to acquire a list of priority schools.

Other Questions

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

A. 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.

127. Q. Is there a set aside for Encore programs?

A. 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.

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

A. 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/grants.asp> Information for the 2012 AmeriCorps grant competition is not yet available.

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

A. You are invited to participate in one of the technical assistance conference calls scheduled each month from September 2012 – January 2013. The schedule can be found at: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=98. You may contact us with any questions at americorpsgrants@cns.gov or 202.606.7508.

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

A. If you are considering applying as a direct applicant to CNCS, send an email to AmeriCorpsgrants@cns.gov with your organization name, a point of contact, your email address, and the competition you are interested in.