



AmeriCorps State and National 2013 Competition

Overview: Evaluation

Agenda

- I. Introduction to Role of Evaluation in AmeriCorps State and National
- II. Evaluation Overview
 - Evaluation Requirements
 - Application Assessment Criteria
- III. Question and Answer Period

Introduction: Role of Evaluation in AmeriCorps State and National

Purpose of Grantee Evaluations: Evaluations are designed to strengthen AmeriCorps programs and foster continuous improvement, and help identify best practices and models that merit replication, as well as programmatic weaknesses that need attention. (AmeriCorps Regulations § 2522.500)

Evaluations Can Provide Evidence of Impact. “In order to maximize the impact of the public investment in national service, CNCS will fund programs that can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems using an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach.” (2013 ACSN NOFO, page 1)

An **evidence-based approach** is one where the intervention is based on research or backed by statistically significant evaluation findings. (2012 ACSN NOFO, page 19)

The Definition of Evaluation

An evaluation is an in-depth, rigorous effort to measure the impact of programs, using scientifically-based research methods to assess the effectiveness of *programs by comparing the observed program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program.*

Evaluations estimate the impacts of programs by comparing the outcomes for individuals receiving a service or participating in a program to the outcomes for similar individuals not receiving a service or not participating in a program.

(AmeriCorps Regulations § 2522.700-710)

ACSN Evaluation Requirements

National Direct and State Competitive grants that average \$500K or more over the previous 3-year period

- Independent (unbiased) evaluation within five years of initial grant award
- Impact evaluation that is designed to provide statistical evidence of the impact of the program compared to what would have happened in the absence of the program
 - Uses an experimental or quasi-experimental design
 - Includes a comparison or control group to isolate impact of program
- Outcomes for beneficiaries and/or members

ACSN Evaluation Requirements

National Direct and State Competitive grants that average less than \$500K over previous 3-year period, as well as all Education Award grants

- Internal evaluation within 5 years of initial grant award; may use external evaluator, if preferred
- Evaluation may assess implementation of program model
- Grantees are encouraged to build on outcome data collected through performance measurement efforts and assess outcomes for beneficiaries and/or members
- Evaluation design may include a comparison group

State Formula grants

- Evaluation requirements are set by state commissions

Timeframe for Grantee Evaluations

If you are competing for...	You are...
Your first AmeriCorps grant	<i>Not</i> required to submit an evaluation plan with the application or complete an evaluation during the initial grant period. You are encouraged to begin the evaluation planning process.
Your second AmeriCorps grant	Required to submit an evaluation plan with the application and complete the evaluation during the next three-year grant period.
Your third AmeriCorps grant	Required to submit a report on the evaluation conducted during the previous grant period with the application, and submit an evaluation plan for the next grant period with the application.
An AmeriCorps grant beyond your third grant award	Required to submit an evaluation plan for the next grant period, along with a report that details findings from evaluations conducted in previous grant periods with the application. Evaluation plans should build on previous evaluation efforts.

Additional Information on Evaluation Reports

- ***Grantees that have not completed the evaluation requirements in the proper timeframe*** are strongly encouraged to provide any evaluation findings available and provide an evaluation plan for the next grant period that would fulfill the requirements
- ***Evaluations that show null or negative findings*** will not automatically lead to unacceptable ratings. Applicants should show how such findings have led to program improvements and provide an evaluation plan that will reassess the program and allow for continuous improvement to the program design.

Evaluation in Application Assessment Criteria

Program Design: Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact

- Describe how the interventions the AmeriCorps members and volunteers are engaged in are both evidence-based or evidence-informed and will have a measurable community impact. The intervention is evidence-based if programs can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems through an evidence-based approach (e.g. based on research or backed by statistically significant evaluation findings) (2013 NOFO, p 19).
- Reviewers will consider the extent to which re-competing grantees describe their efforts and impact to date, and provide persuasive evidence they should continue to be funded (2013 NOFO, p 19).

Evaluation in Application Assessment Criteria

Organizational Capacity: Organizational Background and Staffing

- Describe the organization's capacity to complete an evaluation or provide support to an external evaluator (2013 NOFO, p 21).

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

- Programs will be evaluated based upon their ability to maximize their return on investment; applicants with a program design that achieves equal results at a lower cost will be advantaged over programs that achieve similar results at a higher cost (2013 NOFO, pp 24, 26).
- In applying the cost-effectiveness criteria, CNCS may take into account...[whether the program is] achieving greater program impact as evidenced through performance measures and program evaluation (2013 NOFO, p 25).

Review and Selection Process

The review and selection process will consider the strength of the evidence base for the program (2013 NOFO, p 26).

Submitted program evaluation reports will be considered during the Internal Review stage (2013 NOFO, p. 28).

- Grantees, including Professional Corps grantees, are required to provide an internal or external evaluation report as required by the AmeriCorps regulations.

Evaluation: Additional Considerations

- **Evaluation Budgets:** Grantees are expected to allocate appropriate resources to cover the activities related to evaluation
- **CNCS Role:** CNCS will provide tools and other supports to assist in the design, implementation, and analysis of evaluations.
 - Given the complexity of conducting independent impact evaluations, CNCS will provide individualized support to grantees that are required to complete such evaluations post-grant award.
 - All grantees will have the opportunity to refine their evaluations plans post-grant award.

Additional 2013 Competition Details

- The competition launched on October 19, 2012. Applications are due on February 6, 2013 by 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Announcements will be made by June 14, 2013.
- To apply, visit the [ACSN 2013 Notice of Funding Opportunity Page](#) for details on the application requirements, answers to frequently asked questions, and technical assistance information.
- For further information, call 202-606-7508 or send an email to americorpsgrants@cns.gov

Questions and Answers

We welcome questions at this time.

Thank you.