2015 Notice of Funding Opportunities Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

As of 10/15/2014[1]

Contents

A. General/Grant Application 1

B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria 5

C. AmeriCorps Members 7

D. Budget/ Match Requirements 8

E. Performance Measures/Logic Model 10

F. Sampling 21

A. General/Grant Application

A1. 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 is to sign up for updates by using the email link on the blue bar at the top of our website and check the box for "Funding Opportunities." Also, check these FAQs every week for additions, which will be dated.

A2. 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?

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.

A3. Who can apply for Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity, Fixed Amount Grants?

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. Also, existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

A4. 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

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

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.

A5. 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.

A6. 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.

Multi-focused intermediaries may also have operating sites.

A7. 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.

A8. 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.

A9. 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 in both the national and state(s) submitted applications.

A10. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?

You must read the Notice of Funding Opportunity, NOFO Glossary 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.

A11. Some of our 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 to be duplicative of what is happening through activities supported by state commissions or service provided by VISTA members.

A12. Can an applicant be one of the two nonprofits in the Governor and Mayor Initiative and still apply for their own grant in competitive?

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

A13. How can an applicant without previous AmeriCorps experience be competitive and what percentage of new applicants are funded annually?

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 or Education Award Program grants. While there is no set percentage, some new grants are awarded each year.

A14. How is "community" defined, in terms of identifying community need, particularly if it is a group of people and not a specific community?

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.

A15. Does CNCS have a minimum number of MSYs required for application submission?

The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not specify a minimum number of 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 or http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/state-commission-contacts-and-due-dates.

A16. What are the character limits in eGrants?

The overall character limit in eGrants is greater than the 15 page limit (18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries), 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.

A17. 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?

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. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments. Please refer to the *Notice* for guidance for submitting such documents.

A18. 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?

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

A19. 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).

A20. 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.

A21. Could you please clarify how you define "new" for the purpose of this application?

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) <u>What applicants can apply for Fixed Amount grants</u> - 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. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and

capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

2) Narrative content - 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 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 (e.g. 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).

B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

B1. What does the list of priorities mean for funding distribution?

CNCS does not use set asides for priority areas.

B2. 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.

B3. 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 2015 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.

B4. 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. 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.

B5. 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.

B6. 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.

B7. 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.

C. AmeriCorps Members

C1. 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.

C2. 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.

D. Budget/ Match Requirements

D1. 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 because those grants do not have members.

D2. 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.

D3. 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.

D4. 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.

D5. If explanations about specific budget line items are 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.

D6. 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?

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%

D7. 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?

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. The Knowledge Network website has resources on how to put together a budget: https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/links/preparing-grant-budget-americorps-programs

D8. Are the members on our payroll (with taxes and other deductions) or on your payroll?

When you apply for an AmeriCorps grant, your proposed grant budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that is between $12,530 (minimum) and $25,060 (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.

D9. What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?

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.

D10. Are Tribal applicants exempt from budgeting for healthcare for members if members already receive coverage through the Indian Health Service facilities?

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.

D11. What is the impact on the living allowance for residential programs, or programs that provide housing?

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.

E. Performance Measures/Logic Model

E1. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?

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

E2. 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.

E3. 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 performance measures that are included in CNCS's strategic plan. Complementary Program Measures are additional measures that are important to AmeriCorps but not included in the strategic plan.

E4. How did CNCS decide which grant activities would 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, and collectively tell a compelling story about the value of national service and other CNCS resources.

E5. 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 intervention. 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.

E6. 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.

E7. Are National Performance Measures required?

The use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged but is not required.

E8. 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.

E9. What should a continuation grantee who is measuring an output or outcome that has a changed definition do in the continuation application?

If the grantee is unable to measure the output or outcome as defined in the Performance Measures Instructions, the grantee should choose a different performance measure.

E10. Some performance measures are marked as "DELETED" in eGrants. May I still select these measures?

Performance measures that are marked as "DELETED" in eGrants are available for continuation applicants only. New or recompete grantees should not select these performance measures. Continuation grantees may continue to use these performance measures until they recompete.

E11. 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.

E12. 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 intervention, then your program will also have to provide an aligned set of applicant-determined performance measures for your primary intervention because AmeriCorps regulations stipulate that a program must have an aligned set of performance measures that represent its primary intervention. 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.

E13. 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.

E14. 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 intervention. 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.

E15. 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 or a significant component of your theory of change. 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.

E16. When I last applied for funding, why did CNCS ask me to remove some of my performance measures from my grant application?

Applicants were asked to remove from their applications performance measures that didn't reflect the program's theory of change 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.

E17. 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.

E18. 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.

E19. Can Teacher Corps programs opt into non-Teacher Corps outcomes, such as ED5, ED27A or ED27B?

Yes, Teacher Corps programs are required to select a National Performance Measure that reflects the community impact of the program.

E20. Can summer programs select the ED27A or ED27B performance measures?

Summer programs may opt into the ED27A or ED27B measure and consider the definition of over the school year to be interpreted as over the course of the summer program.

E21. 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 ED27A and ED27B above.

***E22.* 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.

E23. Is H12 limited only to education activities?

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

E24. Must members counted in O14 and O17 be economically disadvantaged?

Yes, members counted in all member development National Performance Measures must be economically disadvantaged.

E25. Does ED14 measure individuals teaching during the term of service, or after the term of service?

ED14 measures the number of individuals teaching during the term of service.

E26. 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.

E27. 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.

E28. 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 (interventions) 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.

E29. Can two or more National Performance Measure outputs have the same outcome?

It depends on the program model. If the program model represents a continuum of care/services where participating leads from one level of service to another, then it makes sense to create an aligned measure of multiple outputs that lead to a single outcome. If there are two completely different interventions that lead to the same outcome, those should be reported with each output/outcome as their own aligned measure.

E30. Can one National Performance Measure have more than one outcome?

Yes. There may be more than one desired outcome for a single output. Aligned measures should only be configured this way if it is expected that all of the individuals counted in the output will potentially

achieve the outcome indicated. If the outcomes are resulting from different populations being served, there should be multiple outputs.

E31. 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.

E32. 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?

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.

E33. 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 application narrative and/or logic model as outlined in the NOFO and Application Instructions.

E34. 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.

E35. 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 Measure as it is defined.

E36. What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?

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

E37. 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.

E38. How should I determine the MSYs allocated to each Focus area and strategic plan objective?

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 strategic plan objective and assign the MSYs accordingly.

E39. 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 and strategic plan objectives?

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 and strategic plan objective. 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.

E40. 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?

For consideration of an exception regarding the use of the state standardized test for ED5, please provide a justification in the data collection tab of the performance measures section of the application. The justification must explain how the test is sufficiently tailored to the material taught, the timeline for obtaining test data in order to meet AmeriCorps reporting requirements, and why gains in the test are likely to be attributable, in part, to the efforts of AmeriCorps members and not the classroom teacher. The justification should also confirm that the test will be administered at the end of the prior year and again at the end of the current year. It should also describe what the test measures and why it is a better option than another standardized pre/post test.

E41. Where do I find a copy of the webinar that helps applicants walk through the new performance measures module?

This tutorial, http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/online-courses/egrants-performance-measure-module-for-americorps, 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.

E42. eGrants won't let me enter MSYs and slots for member development National Performance Measures. Is this a glitch?

No, this is not a glitch. We do not collect data on MSYs and slots for the member development National Performance Measures.

E43. What is a theory of change?

A theory of change is a theory 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.

E44. 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 as directed.

E45. 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. All of these outcomes may be included in the logic model, and grantees are not required to measure or report on all outcomes that appear in the logic model. For performance measurement purposes, outcomes must measure changes that can be measured within the program year. Not all programs will include all three types 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.

E46. Does CNCS expect Continuation applications to submit a Logic Model?

No.

E47. What does CNCS consider to be economically disadvantaged? How is that tracked? Is this where the county level economic data comes in?

"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.

E48. 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." Must a certain percentage of MSYs be allocated to the activity in order for it to be considered "significant?"

"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.

E49. Is a logic model necessary for each performance measure?

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.

E50. What age group is considered disadvantaged youth, according to AmeriCorps?

"Disadvantaged youth" is defined in the National Performance Measure instructions for performance measure ED4A (http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measures-instructions) 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.
>
> "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.

E51. Can our members be considered economically disadvantaged members who will receive financial literacy services?

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/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measures-instructions) 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.

E52. 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?

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.

E53. Is there a guide that we can print out that defines interventions listed under each performance measurement objective?

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.

E54. How do I enter MSYs in the performance measures section of the application?

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 0 MSYs for this objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

Teacher Corps programs, enter 0 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. Enter 0 MSYs in the performance measure.

E55. Does the ED5 measure apply to adult education?

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

E56. What is the definition of "National Service Participant" for O13 and O16?

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).

E57. What changes have been made to the Environmental Stewardship performance measures?

The primary change in the environmental stewardship performance measures was the creation of at least one outcome associated with each of the outputs. In most cases, this meant a slight adjustment to the definition of the output as well. For example, the former EN6 output was the number of tons of materials collected and recycled and the outcome was applicant determined. The 2015 EN6 output is the number of tons collected and the associated outcome – EN6.1 – is the number of tons recycled. EN4 and EN5 2015 outputs will now count the number of acres or miles respectively that were treated and the associated outcomes count the number of acres or miles respectively that were improved.

Another significant change is that EN2, which used to count the number of energy audits conducted has been changed to a green jobs measure. The 2015 EN2 output is now the "number of AmeriCorps members trained and/or certified for green jobs including the conducting of energy audits." This reflects the manner in which most grantees were using this measure – training members to be certified energy auditors. The change allows the expansion of the scope to a wider range of potential jobs and provides a measure under the CNCS "green jobs" objective. The associated outcome – EN2.1 – is the "number of trained AmeriCorps members placed in green jobs."

Lastly, the 2015 output EN3, which is the number of individuals receiving education or training in environmental stewardship and/or environmentally-conscious practices, now has two potential outcomes. One outcome option is an increase in knowledge as a result of the training. The other is a reported change in behavior or the intent to change behavior as a result of the training.

E58. Will applicants be able to select more than one focus area and, within the focus areas, more than one service activity?

Yes, applicants are able to select more than one focus area and more than one service activity within a focus area.

E59. 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.

E60. Are there changes to the Education performance measures in the 2015 competition?

The following changes were incorporated into the Education performance measures for 2015:

1) Clarified guidance to enhance quality of data collection and reporting:
   - Split academic engagement measure ED27 into two separate measures, one focusing on attitude and the other on behavior.
   - Created new output measures ED31 and ED32 for post-secondary students to pair with existing post-secondary outcome ED11 (earning a post-secondary degree)
   - Required programs to measure both the number of students who start the program and the number of students who complete the program. (e.g., K-12 tutoring programs will need to report on both ED1 and ED2, not just one of those measures)
   - Clarified directions in academic achievement measure ED5 around the use of standardized tests
   - Required a pre-post assessment for school readiness outcome measures ED23-25
   - Edited definition of economically disadvantaged to give programs more ways to assess students' status

2) Condensed or eliminated duplicative measures:
   - Rolled existing outcomes related to student behavior, such as ED6, 7, and 8, into ED27B (the behavior-focused academic engagement measure).
   - Deleted academic achievement measure ED15 under the Teacher Corps objective, which was duplicative of measure ED5 in the K-12 Success objective

3) Expanded subject-area scope of academic performance measures
   - Added a new academic achievement measure ED30 to measure gains in subjects other than literacy and math. Subject areas include foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and also include subjects that are considered STEM disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, and computer science.

F. Sampling

F1. 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.

F2. 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.

F3. 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.

F4. 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.

F5. 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.