

## NOTICE OF FEDERAL FUNDING AVAILABILITY

**Federal Agency Name:** Corporation for National and Community Service  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** 2015 National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition  
**Announcement Type:** Amended Announcement  
**CFDA Number:** 94.026

### Important Dates

- A Notice of Intent to Apply is due by June 19, 2015 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time.
- Applications are due July 16, 2015 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time.
- Successful applicants will be notified by early September.
- **Disclosure:** Publication of this Notice of Federal Funding Availability (Notice) does not obligate the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to award any specific number of cooperative agreements or to obligate any particular amount of funding.

## FULL TEXT OF THE NOTICE

### A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

#### 1. Purpose of 2015 National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition Funding

The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund, CNCS has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

To further achieve its mission, CNCS has a strong belief in the importance of research in order to identify effective strategies for national service and increase the evidence-base for its programs. This means engaging the broader community of academic researchers involved in studying and evaluating national service, volunteerism, and civic infrastructure. The goal of this competition is to increase the nation's understanding and knowledge about the importance and potential of volunteering, national and community service, and/or civic engagement in America. We are seeking applications that build on existing research in the field, address gaps in knowledge, and provide new ideas and methodological approaches to the study of national service and civic engagement.

For the purposes of this competition, national service is defined as a structured opportunity for individuals to serve their communities for an extended period of time through volunteering with or without a stipend. CNCS is the largest supporter of national service, though other avenues for national service exist and this competition is not exclusive to opportunities funded by CNCS. "Civic infrastructure" has been defined as the "invisible structures and processes through which the social contract is written and rewritten in communities," "the formal and informal processes

and networks through which communities make decisions and solve problems”<sup>1</sup>, or “the network that exists among local groups such as community development corporations (CDCs), foundations, other nonprofits, local governments, public housing authorities, businesses, and voluntary associations”<sup>2</sup>. “Civic engagement” is defined as a cluster of individual efforts and activities oriented toward making “a difference in the civic life of . . . communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”<sup>3</sup>

Activities to be funded through this competition, and conducted in cooperation with CNCS, include:

- Research design, planning, and implementation including data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Dissemination of results, including reports, publications, and presentations, as well as designing and teaching university-level courses.
- Collaboration with practitioners and policymakers to apply and use results from research findings to support their work with communities, volunteers and/or national service participants.

Applicants should propose a three-year plan that is consistent with CNCS’ research interests outlined above. We also encourage applicants to describe how their proposed study may be related to one or more of CNCS’ strategic focus areas and the goal of organizational capacity building, including:

*Disaster Services:* Helping individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of disasters and increase community resiliency.

*Economic Opportunity:* Supporting and/or facilitating access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged individuals.

*Education:* Supporting and/or providing access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children. CNCS is particularly interested in program designs that support youth engagement and service learning as strategies to achieve high educational outcomes.

*Environmental Stewardship:* Providing services – including efforts to change citizen behavior – that increase energy and water efficiency and renewable energy use or that improve at-risk ecosystems, especially in economically disadvantaged households and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Parr, J. (1993). Civic infrastructure: A new approach to improving community life. *National Civic Review*, 82(2), 93–100.

<sup>2</sup> Lang, R. E., & Hornburg, S. P. (1998). What is social capital and why is it important to public policy? *Housing Policy Debate*, 9(1), 1–16.

<sup>3</sup> Ehrlich, T. (2000). Preface. Pp. vi-x in T. Ehrlich (Ed.), *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*. Westport, CT: The American Council on Education and The Orynx Press.

*Healthy Futures:* Providing support for health needs within communities, including access to care, aging in place, and addressing childhood obesity.

*Veterans and Military Families:* Improving the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength.

*Capacity Building:* Providing support for capacity building activities that enable organizations to provide more, better and sustained direct services to individuals or communities.

More information can be found at the following URL: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/focus-areas>. Applicants may consider focusing on one of CNCS's programs or recipients of these programs, including: AmeriCorps State & National, AmeriCorps National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC), AmeriCorps VISTA, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, Pay for Success, and the Volunteer Generation Fund. However, applicants are not required to do so and it will not confer any advantage.

## **Funding Categories**

CNCS anticipates funding projects in two categories: Dissertation and Scholars. Applicants may submit applications in one or both of the award categories. Applicants can submit more than one application to either category, though to the extent possible CNCS seeks to fund a diverse pool of applicants and it is likely only one application per applicant may be funded. Applicants to either award category must comply with all of the rules and restrictions described in this Notice, and will be subject to the same selection criteria described below in section. Generally, applications within one category will not be compared against those in the other category.

*Dissertation Category:* This category targets research that may support doctoral dissertations. Applicants must select one or more institutional candidates for doctorates who will be doing the research, although the institution of higher learning will be responsible for meeting the performance objectives and other agreed upon criteria set forth in the Cooperative Agreement. Award amounts are expected to be lower than in the Scholars Category.

*Scholar Category:* This category targets established researchers, scholars, and postdoctoral researchers, with a proven track record and standing in their respective fields. Again, applicants must select one or more established researchers, scholars, and postdoctoral researchers who will be actually doing the research on behalf of the applicant, although the institution of higher learning will be responsible for meeting the performance objectives and other agreed upon criteria set forth in the Cooperative Agreement. Projects are expected to be of larger scope than those submitted to the Dissertation Category, including a team of researchers and substantial primary or secondary data collection. Results for the Scholars Category are also expected to have wider dissemination than those from the Dissertation Category. Award amounts are expected to be higher than in the Dissertation Category.

## **Dissemination of Results**

Recipients must include a plan in their application for disseminating the results from their studies to inform practitioners and other researchers. This plan may include the following components:

- Publications and presentations in academic, professional, practitioner, or other settings.
- Designing and teaching of university-level courses.
- Convening practitioners, researchers, policymakers, or other stakeholders.
- Tools for practitioners.

Applications should show sensitivity to alternative dissemination strategies that may be appropriate for different audiences, from the public or national service participants to policymakers, practitioners, advocates, and academics. The research and dissemination will be nonpartisan.

CNCS reserves the right to publish a version of the final research report, and in such a case the report must be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. See <http://access-board.gov/508.htm> for more details. In addition, any version of the final research report that CNCS publishes will adhere to the agency's branding policies. Should CNCS decide to publish the final research report, this will not preclude publication in other venues. CNCS expects that authors publishing in other venues will provide the agency with advance notice.

### **Access to CNCS Data and Program Information**

If necessary, CNCS will make its best efforts to provide data to recipients within reason and in accordance with security protocols. Recipients should not expect to have access to personally-identifiable information or business proprietary information. CNCS will also make its best efforts to connect award recipients with CNCS program staff or CNCS recipients. In its review of the feasibility of projects described in the applications, CNCS will pay close attention to the likelihood that data and sources applicants propose can be obtained, and the effects of not obtaining such data or sources on the research outcomes.

Applicants may plan to conduct research in coordination with existing CNCS grant recipients and those who receive benefits from national service volunteers through CNCS programs such as VISTA and NCCC. A directory of such recipients can be found here:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/state-profiles>

## **2. Funding Priorities**

CNCS seeks to support research in three broad areas of equal priority. Each funding priority has the potential to inform the agency's policy and program decisions as well as provide evidence that CNCS is achieving its mission. Specifically, we seek to fund research in the following areas:

### **1) Economic benefits of national service, volunteering, and civic engagement**

CNCS is interested in studies that address the economic benefits of national service, volunteering and civic engagement to individuals and communities. Though exploratory studies will receive consideration, CNCS prefers projects in this priority area that are confirmatory and testing hypotheses that can provide causal evidence of economic benefits. CNCS has sponsored several studies in this area, and encourages applicants to

consider building on this existing work or exploring new areas. Past and ongoing studies include:

- *Volunteering as a pathway to employment: Does volunteering increase the odds of finding a job for the out of work?* Using nationally-representative data from the US Current Population Survey, this study found that individuals who volunteer after being out of work have a higher odds of finding work than those who do not volunteer. See: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/research-and-reports/volunteering-pathway-employment-report>
- *Competitive Advantage of National Service Participation in the Job Market.* This ongoing study uses a discrete choice experiment to survey a nationally representative sample of employers. The primary objective is to quantify the preferences of employers for job candidates with AmeriCorps experience.
- *AmeriCorps Alumni Survey.* This ongoing study is surveying a representative sample of AmeriCorps alumni to understand how national service in AmeriCorps may have influenced their educational and career pathways and their future civic engagement.
- *AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study.* This eight-year study compared AmeriCorps members with a matched comparison group who did not serve in order to assess the impact of service on public service careers, civic engagement, and other outcomes.

For example, applicants may propose to answer the following questions:

- To what extent does national service in a community contribute to the creation of job opportunities?
- To what extent does serving in a national service position help individuals of different ages, education levels, and racial and ethnic backgrounds, find job opportunities?
- To what extent does higher levels of civic engagement in a community lead to greater economic opportunity?

## 2) **Innovative research methodologies applied to national service models**

CNCS is interested in research methodologies that are innovative and have not yet been applied to national service models, and which have strong potential to yield useful results for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Applicants are encouraged to consider innovations in data collection, data analysis, and research design.

Many CNCS programs require recipients to conduct program evaluations in order to develop their evidence base. However, CNCS programs, and national service programs broadly, have a wide range of intervention strategies that may not be amenable to traditional program evaluation methods, such as randomized control trials or comparison group designs. For example, AmeriCorps recipients may be engaged in stream rehabilitation, an AmeriCorps NCCC team may respond to natural disasters, and AmeriCorps VISTA members may train organizations to recruit board members. Such activities cannot necessarily be measured through conventional methods. Applicants are encouraged to consider research in one of the CNCS focus areas where less evidence of

program effectiveness exists, namely: Disaster Services, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Organizational Capacity Building.

For example, applicants may propose to:

- Apply an innovative method to an existing national service model
- Compare results of an innovative method to a traditional method in the national service context
- Apply a method from another discipline that is not commonly used in national service
- Introduce and implement novel and rigorous methods and approaches to assess hard to measure areas such as isolating and capturing the value-add of national service members towards community impact, contribution of national service volunteers towards strengthening of capacity of organizations where they are deployed, or return on investment in national service;
- Introduce and apply promising and rigorous methods and approaches that address issues of internal and external validity in evaluation of programs that do not lend themselves to traditional impact evaluation designs such as quasi-experimental studies or randomized controlled trials.

### **3) Measuring and exploring relationships among civic engagement, national service, and volunteering**

For more than 20 years, CNCS has sponsored nationally representative data collection on volunteering and civic engagement through supplements to the Current Population Survey. In re-evaluating its data collection efforts, CNCS sponsored a 2014 study from the National Research Council, entitled “Civic Engagement and Social Cohesion: Measuring Dimensions of Social Capital to Inform Policy,” which made several recommendations regarding how civic engagement and social capital can be measured.<sup>4</sup> One of these recommendations was to supplement and complement existing survey data collection conducted by the federal statistical system, with “new, innovative, experimental alternatives”, such as specific-purpose surveys, administrative records, or data coming from digital communications and networking data. Another recommendation was to sponsor studies at the subnational-level and in-depth and longitudinal pilot data collections.

In this priority area, CNCS is interested in research studies that can explore measuring civic engagement and related concepts, including social cohesion and social capital. Additionally, CNCS is interested in studies that explore the relationships among national service, volunteering, and civic engagement. While applicants should be deeply familiar with theoretical or conceptual work, CNCS is seeking studies that apply theoretical concepts in the analysis of empirical data, either quantitative or qualitative. For example, applicants may propose to address:

- The psychometric validity and reliability of new measurement models for concepts related to civic infrastructure or civic engagement, including their cost effectiveness and feasibility for widespread data collection.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/18831/civic-engagement-and-social-cohesion-measuring-dimensions-of-social-capital>

- New non-survey methods for measuring civic engagement, such as social media or administrative records.
- How national or community service projects influence the level of civic engagement in a community or among individuals.
- How certain approaches to national service (such as members working in teams vs individually) may produce different results in different contexts (e.g. urban, rural) and with different populations (e.g. ethnicity, education, age).

Applicants must propose a research study in at least one area described above. We will consider applications that address more than one of the areas described, but there will be no preference given to an application because it addresses more than one of the research areas.

#### **4. Program Authority**

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, (42 U.S.C. § 12501 et seq.).  
The Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 4950 et seq.).

### **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

#### **1. Estimated Available Funds**

According to the FY 2015 Appropriations, \$800,000 is available for cooperative agreements under the 2015 National Service Research Competition.

#### **2. Estimated Award Amount**

Annual award amounts will vary as determined by the scope of the projects. CNCS will make the initial awards in the range of \$30,000 to \$300,000.

#### **3. Project Period**

The cooperative agreement award covers up to a 3-year project period. CNCS will make an initial award for the first year of operation. Continuation funding for subsequent years is not guaranteed and will be dependent upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance. CNCS reserves the right to adjust the amount of an award or elect not to continue funding.

#### **4. Type of Award**

The funding mechanism for the 2015 National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition is a cooperative agreement, which provides for substantial involvement by CNCS with the recipient organizations as the approved cooperative agreement activities are implemented. The assigned CNCS program officer will confer with the award recipient on a regular and frequent basis to develop and/or review service delivery and project status, including work plans, budgets, periodic reports, evaluations, etc. CNCS anticipates having substantial involvement in:

- Reviewing research plans and progress
- Convening recipients to discuss projects and share feedback with one another, CNCS staff, and external experts.
- Facilitating access to data and program staff

- Disseminating results of projects

## **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

This competition is only open to institutions of higher education. All applicants must demonstrate an institutional capacity to manage large research projects and Federal or other grants. We will select one or more institutional candidates for doctorates, or one or more established researchers, scholars, and postdoctoral researchers who will be actually doing the research on behalf of the applicant, depending on the category of funding selected by the applicant.

For applicants to the Dissertation Category, the project director working on the dissertation must have completed Ph.D. coursework and passed qualifying exams and achieved All But Dissertation (ABD) status by the time the award begins. The proposed research study must be approved by the student's academic advisor and/or their Ph.D. committee. The academic advisor and/or PhD committee shall write a letter to include in this application that states their approval of the proposed research project and continued support for the applicant's successful completion of the proposed research project. The award will be made based on the research study proposed in the 2015 application. However, should there be any changes to the research design after the award is granted, the awardee and academic advisor will propose the changes and an explanation for the changes to CNCS and in consultation with CNCS, the changes may be approved.

Previously receiving funds from CNCS or another federal agency is not a prerequisite to apply to this Notice.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime may not receive assistance described in this Notice.

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

### **2. Match**

There is no cost share or matching requirement, but providing a match makes the application more competitive. If you opt to provide a match, include a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support the match.

### **3. Other Requirements**

#### **Institutional Review Board**

Applicants proposing to conduct research on human subjects must document in their applications

whether they have obtained approval from their Institutional Review Board (IRB) or plans for doing so. The final research report submitted to CNCS must state whether IRB approval was necessary, and if so, obtained.

## **Meetings**

Award recipients will be expected to participate in three annual meetings, hosted by CNCS. Dates for the meetings will be determined in conjunction with award recipients; CNCS will do its best to find mutually available times for all recipients, however, there is no guarantee that all schedule conflicts will be accommodated. At least one principal investigator from each recipient must participate in each meeting, and each recipient will be required to deliver a presentation on the current status of their respective projects. Applicants should budget for travel and associated expenses for all meetings.

The first meeting will be a day-long, in-person meeting held at CNCS headquarters in Washington, D.C., held during the fall of 2015. This meeting will bring together recipients, relevant CNCS staff, and other subject matter experts. The meeting will provide an opportunity for recipients to participate in a joint discussion of their proposed study designs and research questions, and receive technical assistance from CNCS staff and invited experts. This will allow for knowledge sharing across the various projects, as well as encourage peer-to-peer contacts among each of the recipients if multiple grants are awarded.

A second, day-long meeting will be held during the fall of 2016. It is expected that this meeting will be conducted virtually. Meeting participants will include recipients and CNCS staff, and recipients will be expected to report on progress to date, challenges, adaptations to the initial study design, and lessons learned. The meeting will be an opportunity for recipients to provide feedback to one another and receive feedback and technical assistance from CNCS staff.

A third day-long meeting will be held at CNCS headquarters during the spring of 2018 before the award period ends. Meeting participants will include recipients, CNCS staff, and subject matter experts. Recipients will be expected to present on their studies, including initial and final design plans, data collection, analytical methodologies, results, limitations on the results, policy implications for the results, and directions for future research. It is expected that white papers or draft reports will be submitted to CNCS for distribution to meeting participants prior to the meeting.

## **Deliverables, Publications and Presentations**

In addition to reporting requirements outlined in section F5 Reporting, awardees must submit a final research report prior to the end of the project period. The report must detail the research objectives, data sources and potential sampling methods, analytical methodology, results, and limitations and challenges. The final research report must also document implications for policymakers, practitioners, and future research. Copies of all data collection instruments should be included as appendices. CNCS will provide comments on the report in a timely manner. Generally, any revisions based on comments from CNCS will be optional unless they are related

to misrepresentation of CNCS programs, policies, or related legislation and regulations. After comments have been incorporated into the final research report, the report itself and any derivative products can be distributed as desired by the recipient. In addition, CNCS may choose to publish the report (see section F4 Use of Material).

Generally, results cannot be disseminated prior to the closing of the grant period without approval from CNCS. Exceptions may be made for projects in the Dissertation Category in order to permit completion of dissertation requirement. In all cases, results cannot be disseminated without first providing CNCS opportunity for comment.

## **Relationship with Program Evaluations Required by CNCS of Grantees**

Some CNCS programs require recipients to conduct program evaluations, including AmeriCorps State & National, and the Social Innovation Fund. While recipients in these programs may participate in a proposed research study under the 2015 National Service Research Competition, no part of an awarded project under this competition may be used to replace or fulfill evaluation requirements of these programs.

## **D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

This Notice should be read together with the Application Instructions. These documents are available online at <http://go.usa.gov/39vzG>.

### **1. Address to Request Application Package**

Applicants should refer to the CNCS website to obtain the necessary information to apply. Applicants can also send an email to [NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov](mailto:NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov) or call (202) 606-3778 for a printed copy of the application package. The TTY (Text Telephone) number is (800) 833-3722.

### **2. Content and Form of Application Submission**

#### **a. Application Content**

Complete applications must have the following components:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: This is automatically generated when applicants complete the data elements in the eGrants system. Many of the fields will be filled automatically with information entered during the registration process.
- Narrative
  - Executive Summary: This is a brief description of the proposed program. Executive Summaries of all compliant applications are published on the CNCS website following the signing of the cooperative agreement.
  - Program Design
    - Research Objectives, Background, and Conceptual Framework
    - Research Design and Work Plan
    - Dissemination Plan
  - Organizational Capability

- Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
- Standard Form 424A Budget
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications

#### **b. Page Limits**

Applications may not exceed **15** double-space pages for the Narrative, including the SF-424 Face Sheet and Executive Summary as the pages print out from eGrants. The page limit does not include the Budget section. It also does not include the curricula vitae and publication list of the principal investigator(s)/project director(s) or research team, which must be submitted as an additional document to [NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov](mailto:NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov) by the application deadline.

Reviewers will not consider material past the page limit in the printed report, even if eGrants allows applicants to enter and submit text over the limit. CNCS strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the “Review and Submit” page prior to its submission in order to check that it does not exceed the page limit.

### **3. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Applications must include a DUNS number **and** an Employer Identification. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. Applicants can obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. CNCS recommends registering at least 30 days before the application due date.

After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants **must** register with the System for Award Management (SAM, [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)) and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete and, if a cooperative agreement is awarded, throughout the life of the award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. CNCS suggests finalizing a new registration or renewing an existing one at least two weeks before the application deadline to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise.

Applicants that do not comply with these requirements may become ineligible to receive an award. See the SAM Quick Guide for Recipients at: [https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/SAM\\_Quick\\_Guide\\_Grants\\_Registrations-v1.6.pdf](https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/SAM_Quick_Guide_Grants_Registrations-v1.6.pdf).

### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

#### **a. Notice of Intent to Apply**

CNCS strongly encourages applicants to submit a **Notice of Intent to Apply** by June 19, 2015. Please submit the intent to [NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov](mailto:NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov) with the email subject line: 2015 National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition Notice of Intent to Apply. The Notice of Intent to Apply must include the name of the applicant organization, name of the principal investigator(s), address, contact person, email address, and phone number. All Notices of Intent to Apply will receive an email response acknowledging receipt.

#### **b. Application Submission Deadline**

Applications are due July 16, 2015 by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. CNCS will not consider applications received after the deadline, except as noted below. CNCS reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted on the CNCS website.

### **c. Late Applications**

CNCS may consider an application after the deadline, but only if the applicant submits a letter to [LateApplications@cns.gov](mailto:LateApplications@cns.gov) explaining the extenuating technical circumstances that caused the delay. CNCS must receive the letter within a business day after the deadline. If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, the letter should include the eGrants ticket number provided by the National Service Hotline. Communication with CNCS staff, including an applicant's program officer, is not a substitute for sending the letter. CNCS will determine whether or not to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis. Please be advised that CNCS will not consider an advance request to submit a late application.

## **5. Funding Restrictions**

Section *F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements* of this Notice contains the regulations that outline the funding restrictions.

### ***Indirect Cost***

CNCS allows applicants to include administrative (indirect) costs in CNCS cooperative agreements budgets. Applicants have the option of using an indirect cost rate that is approved by their cognizant state or federal agency, claiming selected costs directly or using an indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). The option utilized must be applied consistently across all federal awards.

## **6. Other Submission Requirements**

### **a. Electronic Application Submission in eGrants**

Applicants must submit applications electronically via eGrants, CNCS's web-based system (<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>). CNCS recommends that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a word document, then copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants field no later than 10 days before the deadline.

The person who submits the application must be the applicant's authorized representative. The authorized representative must be using eGrants under his or her own account in order to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

Contact the National Service Hotline at (800) 942-2677 or via ([https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask\\_eg](https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_eg)) if a problem arises when creating an account or preparing or submitting the application. National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Be prepared to provide the application ID,

organization's name, and the Notice to which the organization is applying. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

If extenuating circumstances make it impossible for an applicant to submit in eGrants, applicants may send a paper copy of the application via overnight carrier to the following address:

Corporation for National and Community Service  
ATT: Office of Grants Policy and Operations/ 2015 National Service and Civic  
Engagement Research Competition Application  
1201 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20525

Please use a non-U.S. Postal Service carrier to avoid security-related delays. **All deadlines and requirements in this Notice also apply to paper applications.** Paper applications must include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via eGrants. **CNCS does not accept applications submitted via fax or email.**

#### **b. Submission of Additional Documents**

Applicants are required to submit the following additional documents by the application submission deadline:

- Current indirect rate cost agreement, if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Applicants within the Dissertation Category should submit a signed letter from their dissertation advisor certifying that he or she will provide oversight and that the student leading the research is in "dissertation status."
- **Curricula vitae and list of relevant publications of the project director(s)/principal investigator(s) and key project staff.**

All required additional documents must be emailed to [NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov](mailto:NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov) with the following subject line: 2015 National Service and Civic Engagement Research Competition Additional Documents - Application ID number. Within the email, please include the following information:

- the legal applicant name and its point of contact information
- the application ID number
- a list of documents that should be attached to the email
- individually saved files that are clearly labeled
- files that include the legal applicant name and application ID number within the body of each document.

***Do not submit supplementary material such as videos, brochures, or any items not requested in this Notice. CNCS will not review or return them.***

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1. Criteria**

Applications should include a well-designed plan with clear and compelling justifications for

receiving the requested funds. Reviewers will assess the applications against the selection criteria and rate them accordingly considering the weights assigned to each criterion:

**1. Program Design (60%)**

**a. Relevance of Research Objectives (30%)**

CNCS will consider the overall relevance of the applicant's research objectives to the broad areas defined in section A1 and the potential usefulness of the research results to the advancement of research and policy knowledge and development in those areas.

**b. Research Design (30%)**

CNCS will consider the quality and feasibility of the proposed design based on the soundness, relevance and creativity of the applicant's research plan. A research design should include:

- Relevant background research
- Conceptual or theoretical framework
- Hypotheses to be tested or relationships and concepts to be explored
- Data sources (including primary or secondary) and data collection methods
- Analytical methodologies (quantitative and qualitative)
- Project plan, providing a tentative schedule of major steps in the study
- Dissemination plan for results

**2. Organizational Capability (20%)**

CNCS will consider the capacity of applicants to deliver the proposed activities based on:

- The standing, experience and body of work, including existing publications, of the principal investigators and other staff associated with the project;
- Capacity of principal investigators and the staff associated with the project to produce and manage high quality research projects;
- Ability to manage a Federal grant and/or apply sound fiscal management principles to grants, as evidenced by previous grants experience;
- Ability to undertake broad-based dissemination activities of research findings, including experience promoting research findings to engage policymakers, practitioners and other influential non-researchers.

**3. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (20%)**

CNCS will consider the budget based on:

- Cost-effectiveness of the proposed research;
- The clarity and completeness of the budget and budget narrative;
- Adequacy of the budget based on proposed research design; and
- The proposed level of non-federal share funding (match). There is no requirement to match, but providing match makes the application more competitive.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of considerations. CNCS will engage Staff Reviewers with relevant knowledge and expertise to assess and provide input on the eligible applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities described in this Notice.

### **a. Stages in the Review Process**

#### **Compliance and Eligibility Review**

CNCS staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness. Applications determined non-compliant will not be considered. An application is compliant if the applicant:

- is an eligible organization
- submitted an application and all required documentation by the submission deadline
- submitted an application that is complete; in that it contains all required elements and additional documents, and follows the instructions provided in this Notice

CNCS will screen applications in accordance with the requirements in this Notice to determine if the applicant has met all eligibility and submission requirements. The screening may occur at various stages of the grant-making process. Applicants determined to be ineligible will not receive an award.

#### **Staff Review**

CNCS Staff Reviewers will assess all eligible applications in their entirety based on the selection criteria outlined in this Notice. Staff Reviewers will also consider the comprehensiveness and feasibility of the application, as well as the priorities considerations detailed in this Notice. CNCS will recruit and select Staff Reviewers on the basis of demonstrated expertise in research and evaluation methodology, as well as experience assessing applications. All Staff Reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

#### **Clarification Process**

CNCS may ask some applicants to provide clarifying information. This information is used by CNCS staff to make funding recommendations. A request for clarification does not guarantee an award. Applicants may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked for clarification. Failure to respond to a request for clarification in a timely fashion will result in removal of the application from consideration. CNCS staff may conduct a site visit inspection, as appropriate.

#### **Risk Assessment Evaluation**

CNCS staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to the assessment of the applicant's eligibility and the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria, and results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award.

In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following:

- financial stability

- quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance
- applicant’s record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including:
  - timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements
  - accuracy of data reported
  - validity of performance measure data reported
  - conformance to the terms and conditions of previous federal awards
  - if applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards
- information available through OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as:
  - Federal Recipient Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS)
  - DUNS and SAM
  - “Do Not Pay”
- reports and findings from single audits performed under Subpart F – Audit Requirements, 2 CFR Part 200 and findings and reports of any other available audits
- IRS Tax Form 990
- applicant organization’s annual report
- publicly available information, including information from the applicant organization's website
- applicant’s ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on award recipients.

**Selection for Funding**

The review and selection process is designed to:

- identify applications that demonstrate high alignment with the selection criteria and funding priorities
- yield a diversified portfolio of recipients.

The Chief Executive Officer will select the final awardees based on the staff recommendations and priorities.

*CNCS reserves the right to change the review and selection process in case of extenuating circumstances.*

**3. Feedback to Applicants**

Following awards, compliant applicants will receive summary comments from the Staff Review. This feedback will be based on the review of the original application and will not reflect information that may have been provided in response to clarification.

**4. Transparency in Grant-making**

CNCS is committed to transparency in grant-making. The following information for new and re-competing applications will be published on the CNCS website

(<http://nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>) within 90 business days after all cooperative agreements are awarded:

- a list of all compliant applications submitted
- Executive Summaries of all compliant applications submitted by the applicants
- data extracted from the SF-424 Face Sheet and the submitted program narratives for successful applications

## **F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **1. Federal Award Notices**

CNCS will make awards following the cooperative agreement selection announcement. CNCS anticipates announcing the results of this competition by early September 2015. Applicants will be notified via email as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin cooperative agreement activities. The Notice of Grant Award signed by the grant officer is the authorizing document for cooperative agreement activities. Unsuccessful applicants will also receive a notification that their application was not approved for funding.

A recipient may not expend federal funds until the start of the Project Period identified on the Notice of Grant Award.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of the binding commitments under the cooperative agreement, as well as the requirements of applicable sections of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and other applicable statutes. Awards will also be subject to the specific terms and conditions established for a cooperative agreement or defined in the Terms and Conditions or Special Conditions attached to the award. If necessary, applicants will have an opportunity to negotiate conditions before they accept an award

Cooperative agreements under this program are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance, now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205). This final guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122 (the former Cost Principles), A-110 and A-102 (the former Administrative Requirements), A-133 and A-50 (the former Audits and Audit Follow up), and A-89 (the former Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information).

### **3. National Service Criminal History Check Requirements**

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. The law requires recipients to conduct and document NSCHCs on any person (including award-funded staff, national service participant, or volunteer) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend or education award through a program receiving CNCS funds. An individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives such CNCS funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. The cost of conducting NSCHCs is an allowable expense under the award.

Unless CNCS has provided a recipient with a written exemption or written approval of an alternative search procedure, recipients must perform the following checks—

All award-funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW); *and*
2. *Either*
  - A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person's state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work *or*
  - A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

Special Rule for Persons Serving Vulnerable Populations. Award-funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers *with recurring access to vulnerable populations* (i.e., children age 17 or younger, individuals age 60 or older, or individuals with disabilities) must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based check of the [NSOPW](#); *and*
2. *Both*
  - A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person's state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work; *and*
  - A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

See 45 C.F.R. § 2540.200–§ 2540.207 and <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check> for complete information and FAQs.

#### **4. Use of Material**

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to recipients and non-recipients, CNCS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so (2 CFR §200.315).

#### **5. Reporting**

Recipients are required to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of an award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time.

Recipients are required to provide annual progress reports and semi-annual financial through eGrants, CNCS's web-based grants management system. Additionally, all recipients must provide quarterly financial reports through the Payment Management System (PMS) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition, at the end of the award period, recipients must submit final financial and progress reports that are cumulative over the entire award period and consistent with the close-out requirements of CNCS's Office of Grants Management. The final financial and progress reports are due 90 days after the end of the agreement.

Award recipients will be required to report at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over

\$25,000, and may be required to report on executive compensation for the recipient organization and its subrecipients. Recipients must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See [2 CFR Part 170](#) for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

Once the grant awardees are selected, they will be expected to complete and report to CNCS on the proposed performance measures. Awardees must identify critical outcomes of their work, indicators of success, and how progress will be measured. Awardees will be expected to work with CNCS to finalize the performance measures that will be used in the Cooperative Agreement.

Failure to submit accurate, complete, and timely required reports may affect the recipient's ability to secure future CNCS funding.

For further guidance and training resources see – Resources: Data Collection and Instruments: [https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/home#.U9qVL\\_ldW3o](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/home#.U9qVL_ldW3o)

## **G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS**

For more information or a printed copy of related material(s), call (202) 606-3778 or email [NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov](mailto:NationalServiceResearch@cns.gov). The TTY number is (800) 833-3722.

For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, call the National Service Hotline at (800) 942-2677. National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Potential applicants can also use this link: [https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask\\_for\\_questions](https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_for_questions). Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying.

## **H. OTHER INFORMATION**

### **1. Technical Assistance**

CNCS will host one technical assistance call to answer questions about the funding opportunity and eGrants. CNCS strongly encourages all applicants to participate in these sessions. The call will be held on June 11 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Call-in information for the technical assistance calls can be found on CNCS's website: <http://go.usa.gov/39vzG>

### **2. Re-Focusing of Funding**

CNCS reserves the right to re-focus program dollars in the event of disaster or other compelling needs.