

2015 AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Notice of Funding Availability Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*Updated 4/15/15

Q1: Is one focus area (Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, Veterans and Military Families) higher priority than another?

A: No, all focus areas are of the same importance.

Q2: Are grantees able to make changes to the grant, i.e. number of service members?

A: Yes; there is latitude to make changes to the grant in Year 2 of the grant; pending Program Officer approval.

Q3: Is a tribally-controlled community college an eligible applicant under this funding opportunity, or are applications accepted just from the Tribes?

A: Tribal colleges are eligible grant applicants if they can show that they are an Indian Tribe (documentation showing that they are owned and operated by) or a tribal organization.

Q4: Do you know when the planning grant instructions will be available?

A: The planning grant instructions are now available on the website as of 3/24/15. You can find them here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-indian-tribes-grants-fy-2015#fund,glossay,appinst>

Q5: If we were to apply for a planning grant this year, would we be able to apply for a program grant next year?

A: Yes! If you apply for a planning grant this year, you can apply for a program grant next year.

Q6: Have the dates and location of the April 2015 Tribal Training been confirmed?

A: The training took place April 8-10, 2015 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC.

Q7: Are grantees able to make changes to the grant, i.e. number of service members?

A: Yes; there is latitude to make changes to the grant during the program year pending program officer approval.

Q8: Are there sample grant applications available on the CNCS website?

A: AmeriCorps posts application narratives of funding applications from previous grant competitions. This information is available on our website: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>

Q9: Will there be a webinar on eGrants prior to application submission?

A: We will not have a webinar specific to navigating eGrants. There are eGrants resources available on the CNCS website on this page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants> and a tutorial on completing the eGrants performance measurement model on the main page for our Notice of Funding located here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-indian-tribes-grants-fy-2015#performance>

Q10: Can multiple grants be submitted at the same time?

A: Yes. The same applicant can submit more than one proposal for review. CNCS will not award funding in two different grants to support the same project activities, so it is important that applicants demonstrate that the programs are different if submitting multiple applications to CNCS.

Q11: What are the reporting requirements for the Grants?

A: Two Progress Reports submitted through eGrants are due each year: Mid-Year and an End of Year (Annual) report. The reports provide narrative on program activities as well as performance measurement data. Some grantees (with cost-reimbursement grants) must also submit a mid-year and end of year Federal Financial Report.

Q12: Are there resources on Performance Measurements prior to the Performance Measurement Webinar in April?

A: Yes. Performance Measurement resources are available on our website, <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-indian-tribes-grants-fy-2015#performance>, and include:

- 2015 Performance Measure Instructions
- Tutorial for completing the Performance Measures screens in eGrants
- AmeriCorps Performance Measure Resources

Q13: Is there a ratio of organizational capacity for maintaining members? There is a cap of 50 members mentioned.

A: Programs do not have to request 50 members; 50 members is the maximum that a new grantee can request. The current tribal grants contain 5-40 members. AmeriCorps does not have a specific ratio of staff to members, but the number of staff members and amount of time devoted to managing the program should be reasonable and necessary.

Q14: Is there an overall cost reimbursement grant cap?

A: No, the program can request the amount of funding that is needed to support the program costs and members. Keep in mind that CNCS has a published cost per member service year (MSY) in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and if an applicant

exceeds that amount it must provide justification in the narrative of the application for the higher cost per MSY. As the NOFA states, cost per MSY is a competitive factor with a lower cost per MSY potentially benefiting an applicant.

Q15: What are the restrictions on religious groups working with tribes to apply?

A: Please refer to Page 5 of the NOFA to review requirements for a nonprofit working with Federally Recognized Tribes and applying on behalf of a tribe. Additionally, there are prohibited activities related to religious activities that applicants must be aware of when creating member service positions. You can review those here: http://learning.nationalserviceresources.org/pluginfile.php/27665/mod_resource/content/3/prohibited_activities.htm

Q16: What are the restrictions on sources of match?

A: Any entity can secure match funding from state, local, tribal, private or federal sources. In the case of federal sources, the federal agency providing the funding needs to provide permission to the Indian Tribe to utilize the funding as match funds for the AmeriCorps grant.

Q17: Who are the AmeriCorps Members – are they chosen by CNCS/AmeriCorps State and National or chosen by the program?

A: It is the responsibility of grantee organization/program to recruit, select, train and supervise the AmeriCorps members.

Q18: Is there somewhere we can look at a list of pros/cons or general benefits of fixed amount grants vs. cost-reimbursement grants to help determine which is the best for our organization?

A: CNCS does not have a pro/con list that contrasts a fixed amount grant vs. a cost reimbursement grant. The descriptions in the NOFA are available to you in order to understand the differences. It is important to note that a fixed amount grant is not available to new applicants to AmeriCorps. If your tribe or organization has not operated an AmeriCorps grant in the past, it must apply for a cost-reimbursement grant.

Q19: Our understanding from reading is that you cannot do part-time positions with fixed amount grants. Is this accurate?

A: Fixed amount grants may have members that are serving in part-time positions, meaning AmeriCorps member terms of service that require completion of less than 1,700 hours, however, a member serving with a program that operates a fixed amount grant must serve in a full-time capacity.

For example: A member in a quarter-time slot must serve a minimum of 450 hours, and that time would need to be full-time, i.e. that member must serve approximately 40 hours a week. So full-time capacity means that the 450 hours are earned over the course of approximately 12 weeks.

Q20: Is it possible and/or appropriate for an Indian Tribe that has had one type of grant switch in a new cycle to the other type? Would this switch in their application jeopardize their application?

A: Yes, it is possible for a grantee who receives a cost-reimbursement grant in its first grant cycle to apply for a fixed amount grant in their next grant cycle (or vice versa). Applicants must demonstrate through the application process that they have the organizational capability to operate the program, including sufficient financial and in-kind resources as outlined in the selection criteria.

Q21: What is an example of a qualified institution that accepts the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award?

A: Qualified institutions are institutions of higher education (including graduate and professional programs), as well as qualified vocational schools that currently participate in the Department of Education's Title IV student aid programs. An institution is considered a Title IV school, if it has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education making its students eligible for at least one of the federally backed forms of financial assistance (such as Pell Grants, Perkins Loans, Stafford Loans, National Direct Loans, and Federal Consolidated Loans).

Legislation enacted in 2009 expanded the use of the award to include enrolling in courses, programs of education, apprenticeships, and on job training programs that have been approved under the Montgomery and Post 9/11 G.I. Bills. These programs and educational institutions or training establishments offering the programs are referred to as "G.I. Bill approved programs". Since not all G.I. Bill approved programs are offered by Title IV educational institutions, special rules apply.

If an educational program is both a G.I. Bill approved program and offered by a Title IV Institution, anyone with an education award can use it for that program, by virtue of it being a Title IV school. To make sure that a course or program is qualified, check with the financial aid office, business office, or veterans affairs office of the institution before making specific plans.

Q22: What type of slot should a program use to benefit a program design?

A: It is the applicant's responsibility to make the determination for what slot type or member position is the best fit for the proposed program design. Applicants should create member positions based on the dosage, duration and intensity of the intervention(s) provided by the program.

Q23: Does CNCS have a tracking system for grantees to review and analyze their own data?

A: CNCS has a system of record for grant reporting and member management (recruitment, enrollment and exit) called eGrants. Grantees are required to create their own tracking systems for their program data collection. Programs vary greatly in what

they do and how they collect information and the grantees themselves are best equipped to determine how they will manage their data collection.

Q24: What if data used for documenting the problem to be addressed is old?

A: Applicants without access to recent data should explain in their application why they are using the sources of information that they choose to include. It should be clear to reviewers why the information is being used to address the selection criteria.

Q25: What if a program is providing a service in the form of multiple trainings and participants come only once or do not come consistently to receive all of the training, what should the program count in terms of participants reached?

A: The program should define what the minimum dosage is for a participant to be counted as having been served by the program.

Budget Questions

BQ1: When is prior approval required by CNCS for budget changes?

A: Prior approval is required in the following cases:

- When a grantee is making a budget change of more than 10% of the total budget
- When a grantee is adding to a line item that previously was not budgeted

It is a best practice to communicate any changes to the CNCS program and grants officers for your grant.

BQ2: Can a program budget food for meetings?

A: The program should explain anytime food is included in the budget. Food for lunch meetings or all day trainings is an allowable budget expense. Food for the purposes of entertainment is not allowable.

BQ3: For a new applicant, the match is 24%, can an applicant budget for more than 24%?

A: Applicants must budget to meet the minimum match requirement for the appropriate year of their program. The minimum match requirement for new programs is 24% of the overall program costs.

BQ4: When should an applicant submit a match waiver request?

A: A request for a waiver of match should be submitted if needed at the time the application is due.

BQ5: If a program has been a fixed amount grant for 3 years and is now submitting for a cost reimbursement grant, what is the appropriate match rate for the program?

A: If the program being submitted is the same program as previously funded, the match rate starts at year 4, which is 26%. If the program being proposed in the new grant application is a different program, the match would be for year 1 at 24%.

BQ6: When budgeting for background checks, the costs can differ based on whether a member is coming from a different state to serve with my program. How do we account for that variance in costs?

A: When costs are different, it is acceptable to provide an average in your cost calculation on the budget.

BQ7: If housing is provided to members as a member support costs, how can a program show this on the budget?

A: Programs can include the cost of member housing in Section II of the budget in the Other Member Support Costs section.

BQ8: Does the match for the grant include the indirect costs?

A: Yes, see the budget instructions in the application instructions that explain the two different ways from which an applicant can choose to budget for indirect costs. There is a calculation that can be used by tribes or organizations without a federal indirect cost rate agreement and a calculation to use if a tribe or organization has one. ***NOTE: Any tribe or organization with a current indirect cost rate agreement must apply for an extension with your cognizant agency.***

BQ9: What are indirect costs?

A: Indirect costs are those that have been incurred for common or joint purposes. These costs benefit more than one cost objective and cannot be readily identified with a particular final cost objective without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. .