

# 2015 Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Availability Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*As of 5/11/2015<sup>1</sup>*

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## A. General/Grant Application

### *A1. When can Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant activities start?*

CNCS expects that successful applicants will be notified no later than August 31, 2015. CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement, and no official activities can commence until an actual CNCS grant award has been awarded. **As a result, applicants should propose start dates in early October.**

AmeriCorps members may not enroll prior to the start date of the award. AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period.

### *A2. Will Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grants be awarded for a two-year period or a three-year period?*

As stated on p. 8 of the NOFA, Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grants will cover a two-year project period unless otherwise specified. References to a three-year project period elsewhere in the NOFA are in error. Please note that CNCS generally makes an initial award for the first year of operation, and the application is submitted with a one-year budget. The second year of funding, “continuation funding,” is not guaranteed and is dependent on satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds.

### *A3. I don't currently have an eGrants account. How do I set one up?*

Visit <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> or contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677.

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<sup>1</sup> *FAQ additions will be added to the end of the relevant section and marked with the date of when they were added.*

***A4. My organization was recently established. Is there a minimum length of time that an organization must be in existence prior to applying for an AmeriCorps grant?***

No, there is no particular length of time that an organization must have been in existence before applying for a grant. However, the organization must have a DUNS number and be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM). See p. 19 of the NOFA for further information.

***A5. 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?***

CNCS requires one legal applicant organization. An organization can find a fiscal agent to serve as the legal applicant. 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.

***A6. Are Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and/or State Education Agencies (SEAs) eligible applicant types for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps funding?***

Yes.

***A7. 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 a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant. However, your level of requested funding should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization. Additionally, you should keep in mind the total amount of funds available and the maximum Cost per MSY for your program.

***A8. Is there a maximum or minimum number of MSY I can request?***

There is no upper limit on the number of MSY that can be requested; however, please note that the general practice is to award no more than 50 member positions to new CNCS grant recipients. There is also no set minimum number of MSY that can be requested. However, if you are applying for a single-state program through a state service commission, the commission may set a minimum or maximum 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>.

***A9. Is there a limit on the number of applications that can be submitted to CNCS either by an individual applicant or by a State Commission?***

No, there is no limit.

***A10. Does CNCS intend to award a set number of Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grants?***

The number of grants is not pre-determined and will depend on the funds available and the size of the selected.

***A11. Has a portion of the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps funds been specifically designated for Tribal applicants?***

No, there is no Tribal set-aside for the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps competition. However, Indian Tribes are eligible applicants and are encouraged to apply.

***A12. If I don't submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the April 20 deadline, will that affect my chances of receiving a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant?***

No. Submission of a Notice of Intent to Apply is not required and will not be factored into the review/scoring of an application or funding decisions.

***A13. 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.

***A14. 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 in your 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, if selected, through a grant amendment.

***A15. 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. However, if both projects are selected, only one of the projects will be funded in any given year.

***A16. I wish to apply for a single-state Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program, but my State/Territory Commission is not accepting applications. What should I do?***

Organizations applying for a single-state Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant in a state or territory that is not running its own state-level competition should apply directly to CNCS. Refer to the NOFA, Application Instructions, and other relevant guidance on the CNCS website (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/youth-opportunity-ameri-corps-notice-funding>) to guide your application submission. In eGrants, select the relevant NOFA whose title includes the terms "Single State" or "Single Territory."

***A17. How can I find out whether my State or Territory Commission is running a state-level competition for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps, and if so, what the state-specific deadlines are?***

Contact the State/Territory Commission directly. You can find contact information for State and Territory Commissions on the CNCS website: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>

**A18. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?**

You must read the *Notice*, NOFA Glossary, and Application Instructions for the competition you are interested in. The AmeriCorps Regulations which can be found at 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550 are also an important reference. If you are considering National Performance Measures, you must read the appropriate National Performance Measures instructions.

**A19. We have AmeriCorps VISTA members serving at our organization. Can we combine our VISTA project with our Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps project?**

AmeriCorps will not fund the same project through separate funding sources. Activities taking place through the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant should not be duplicative of service provided by VISTA members, and the projects must be distinct. However, the VISTA and Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps activities may be complementary to each other and may operate in the same service location(s). Further, if awarded, the finances for the VISTA program must be kept separate from the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program funds.

**A20. We have an existing AmeriCorps grant. Does that affect the likelihood that we will receive a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant?**

No. Both existing grantees and new applicants are welcome to apply for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grants.

**A21. What are the character limits in eGrants?**

The overall character limit in eGrants is greater than the 15 page limit listed in the NOFA, so print out the application before submission to check its length to make sure you adhere to the page limit requirements. Within the application format, some sections have character limits. For example, the evaluation plan section has a character limit of 10,000 (however, it is not counted towards the page limit of the narrative). If you are having trouble saving a section of content, try reducing its size to resolve the issue. Any information over the page limit will not be considered in evaluating your application. If you are having difficulty with your application, please contact the helpdesk at 1-800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>.

**A22. How do 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 Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps application, and may differ depending on the specific context. Below is a detailed description of when an applicant or application project is considered “new.”

- 1) What applicants can apply for Fixed Amount grants - 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 apply for Full-Time Fixed Amount grants (they can apply for Cost Reimbursement or EAP 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 reapplying for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (previously received competitive funding for the same project) the program must submit an evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary, or Plan field in eGrants.

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).

***A23. Can CNCS review applications prior to submission to make sure they are complete?***

No, we are not legally permitted to do this. However, it is a good practice to have a non-CNCS employee review your application (the printed version) prior to submission to ensure that it is responsive to the information requested in the NOFA.

***A24. Are there any planning grant funds available for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps?***

Applicants should apply for either a Cost Reimbursement or Fixed Amount grant. However, as noted on page 24 of the *Notice*, during clarification, CNCS may ask an applicant to submit a budget for a planning grant.

***A25. Is it better to apply individually to multiple state commissions or to submit a single National Direct application covering multiple states?***

It depends on what works best for your organization and your program and the scale of the need that you are addressing.

**A26. *The vast majority of our members will be in one state and a handful will be in another state. Is there a specific minimum number of members needed to be in each state in order to be counted as a national direct?***

There are no specific minimums, but your application needs to address the community needs, member activities, and other relevant information related to your program's plans to operate in multiple states.

**A27. *Do Indian Tribes apply through a state commission or directly to CNCS? Do they have to go through the consultation process?***

Indian Tribes typically apply directly to CNCS, though a state commission may choose to submit an application from a tribe as well. Indian Tribes are not subject to the consultation requirement (see page 11 of the *Notice*).

**A28. *Whom should we contact with application questions?***

For questions regarding multi-state, single state direct, or Indian Tribes applications submitted directly to CNCS, please call (202) 606-7508 or send an e-mail to [americorpsgrants@cns.gov](mailto:americorpsgrants@cns.gov). Questions about single state applications that will be submitted through a State or Territory Commission should be addressed to the respective Commission.

**A29. *How do I ensure that I'm aware of any changes or new information about the application?***

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 regularly for additions, which will be dated.

**A30. *One of the State Commissions in a state that is included in my National Direct application has not responded to my request for consultation. What should I do? [Added 5-8-15]***

You may go ahead and submit your National Direct application that includes this state directly to CNCS. Describe in your application the efforts you made to consult with the State Commission.

**A31. *If I apply directly to CNCS as a single-state applicant because my State Commission is not accepting applications, and I am awarded a grant, who will oversee my grant, CNCS or the State Commission? [Added 5-8-15]***

This will be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the State/Territory Commission.

**A32. *I received Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps funding as a supplemental award in 2014. Can I apply for a new grant in 2015 to bring in new sites and members? [Added 5-8-15]***

AmeriCorps grantees that received supplemental awards in FY14 for Youth Opportunity programming, and requested continuation funding, received those funds (for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps) in their 2015 AmeriCorps State and National Award. Grantees that are interested in applying for a new grant may do so, as long as the request does not duplicate funding and member slots awarded through their 2015 continuation grant.

**A33. *Does the 15-page limit on the application narrative apply to all Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps applicants, including multi-focus intermediaries? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes, the 15-page limit applies to all applicants to the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps funding opportunity.

## B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

### ***B1. If my application does not fall into either of the two priority areas designated in the Notice, can my organization still apply for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps funding?***

If you have a strong program design but are outside the two designated priority areas, CNCS encourages you to apply. NOFA priorities are just one out of many factors considered when making funding decisions.

### ***B2. What are the three signature OJJDP youth violence prevention initiatives? Where are they currently operating?***

Below is a summary of the three signature OJJDP Youth Violence Prevention Initiatives:

- **The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (Forum)** represents a network of 15 communities and federal agencies that work together, share information, and build local capacity. Communities use prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies to stop violence and sustain their accomplishments. The Forum is supported by a Federal Coordinating Team that includes the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, Housing, Labor, and Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among others, to align efforts and resources.
- **The Community-Based Violence Prevention Program (CBVP)**, concentrates on stopping youth gang and gun violence in 16 cities through evidenced-based deterrence and public health approaches. CBVP is characterized by partnerships among law enforcement, service providers, residents, and community- and faith-based organizations.
- **The Defending Childhood Initiative** seeks to prevent and more fully understand the impact and associated trauma that result from children’s exposure to violence (CEV). Because CEV is associated with long-term physical, mental, and emotion harm, the Department of Justice awarded demonstration grants to six cities and two tribal nations to develop community-based solutions and reform the policies and practices of the public systems that serve children and families.

The locations where these initiatives are currently operating are as follows:

<b>National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention</b>	<b>Community-Based Violence Prevention Program</b>	<b>Defending Childhood Initiative</b>
Baltimore, MD	Baltimore, MD	Boston, MA
Boston, MA	Baton Rouge, LA	Chippewa Creek Tribe, MT
Camden, NJ	Boston, MA	Cuyahoga County, OH
Chicago, IL	Brooklyn, NY	Grand Forks, ND
Cleveland, OH	Camden, NJ	Multnomah County, OR
Detroit, MI	Denver, CO	Portland, ME
Long Beach, CA	Detroit, MI	Rosebud Sioux Tribe, SD
Louisville, KY	Kansas City, MO	Shelby County, TN
Memphis, TN	Los Angeles, CA	
Minneapolis, MN	Newark, NJ	

New Orleans, LA	Newport News, VA	
Philadelphia, PA	Oakland, CA	
Salinas, CA	Philadelphia, PA	
San Jose, CA	Prince Georges County, MD	
Seattle, WA	Syracuse, NY	
	Washington, DC	

***B3. How is "at risk of incarceration" defined for the purposes of this funding opportunity?***

The NOFA does not provide a specific definition for this term. Applicants wishing to enroll individuals at risk of incarceration as Disconnected Youth members must make the case in their applications for how the targeted individuals can be considered to fit into this category. OJJDP's Model Programs Guide Literature Review on Risk Factors can help applicants define at-risk/high risk youth: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Risk%20Factors.pdf>

***B4. Do youth in foster care automatically qualify as Disconnected Youth?***

Yes, youth in foster care can be considered to be Disconnected Youth at risk of incarceration.

***B5. Do Tribal youth automatically qualify as Disconnected Youth?***

Youth from Indian Tribes do not automatically qualify as Disconnected Youth. No, applicants wishing to recruit Tribal youth as Disconnected Youth members must explain and/or provide data to make the case in their applications that the group of these individuals fit the definition of Disconnected Youth as presented on p. 1 of the NOFA.

***B6. How is "community" defined in terms of identifying community need?***

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.

***B7. Should programs use hyperlinks to research in the Evidence Base narrative? Is it realistic to think that reviewers will use a link to read additional information?***

CNCS does not specify whether or not 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.

***B8. Are youth enrolled in alternative education programs/site or continuation schools eligible to be considered Disconnected Youth? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes. Enrollment in alternative or other nontraditional education programs does not preclude an individual from meeting the definition of Disconnected Youth.

***B9. Do individuals adjudicated or convicted in the adult justice system rather than the juvenile justice system qualify as Disconnected Youth? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes, as long as they meet the age requirements and other aspects of the definition of Disconnected Youth in the Notice of Funding Availability.

***B10. Do programs need documentation proving that the individuals enrolled as Disconnected Youth members have been adjudicated or convicted in the criminal justice system? [Added 5-8-15]***

There are no specific requirements for documenting an individual's status in the criminal justice system. However, programs should have internal systems in place to verify that all Disconnected Youth meet the definition provided in the NOFO.

***B11. Are Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs required to leverage volunteers? [Added 5-8-15]***

No, it is not a requirement that Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps members recruit or manage volunteers. However, successful applicants must report any volunteers leveraged by programs on the Grantee Progress Reports.

***B12. Will applicants that serve Opportunity Youth as program beneficiaries receive priority consideration? [Added 5-8-15]***

No. All Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs are required to enroll Disconnected Youth as members, but the Notice of Funding Availability does not prioritize programs that serve Opportunity Youth as program beneficiaries.

## **C. AmeriCorps Members**

***C1. In what type of activities should the AmeriCorps members engage for a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program?***

All AmeriCorps members should engage in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions that will strengthen communities and result in intended solutions to community problems. Both Disconnected Youth members and mentor members must carry out direct service activities to address a compelling community need in one or more of CNCS's six Focus Areas (see page 5 of the NOFA for the list of Focus Areas). Service activities should result in meaningful outputs and outcomes for program beneficiaries. It is up to each applicant to define what your compelling community need(s) are and how members can best address those need(s).

***C2. How much time should mentor members spend on mentoring activities for Disconnected Youth members vs. activities to address the defined community need?***

There is no set target or "cap" on the number of service hours that mentor members may spend on mentoring activities; applicants should structure their member service activities in the way that makes the most sense for their program design.

***C3. Do the AmeriCorps members serving as Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps mentors need to have any particular qualifications?***

Yes. Members serving as mentors must have mentoring experience and/or applicable life experience to serve as mentors for Disconnected Youth. Successful applicants will ensure that mentor members receive high-quality training in mentoring and follow established best practices for mentoring relationships.

***C4. Do Disconnected Youth members and mentor members need to be matched 1:1?***

Either 1:1 or small-group mentoring could be acceptable depending on your program design, provided that the mentoring relationships between Disconnected Youth and mentor members are well structured and of high quality.

***C5. Must Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members be from the local community/ies where the program will serve?***

It is not a requirement that every Disconnected Youth member and mentor member be from the specific area(s) where the program will serve. However, one of the Selection Criteria by which applications will be reviewed and scored is as follows: "The applicant clearly describes how the program will recruit both Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members and mentor AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate." Thus, applicants should have a clear plan in place to recruit members locally to the greatest extent possible.

***C6. What are the CNCS expectations for member retention for a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program?***

As for all AmeriCorps programs, CNCS expects 100% member retention for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grantees (that is, 100% of members successfully completing the program and earning an Education Award). We are aware that different but equally effective program models may have some variation in the level of member retention; however, all programs should strive for the highest member retention rate possible.

***C7. Does the 20% cap on member service hours spent in education and training activities (45 CFR § 2520.50) apply to Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs?***

Yes. No more than 20 percent of the aggregate of all AmeriCorps member service hours in your program, as reflected in the member enrollments in the National Service Trust, may be spent in education and training activities. This includes adult education or continuing education activities such as GED preparation. Keep in mind that the 20% limit is an aggregate cap, not a cap for any individual member; thus, Disconnected Youth members may spend more hours on education and training than other AmeriCorps member as long as the total aggregate education and training hours for your entire member cohort remains at 20% or below.

***C8. Are members in the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program required to undergo drug testing? How frequently does the testing need to take place? Can we pay for drug testing using grant funds?***

All Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members must receive periodic drug testing in order to comply with the required Performance Indicator on p. 7 of the NOFA. Drug testing may be done by the grantee, or the grantee can request the sharing of drug testing data from relevant community partners, including probation and parole offices. Mentor AmeriCorps members do not have to undergo drug testing.

The NOFA does not specify the required frequency of drug testing, so applicants can propose the frequency that makes the most sense for their program design. The cost of drug testing is an allowable expense in the grant budget.

***C9. Are Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members required to undergo criminal background checks? Are the criminal history check requirements different than for other AmeriCorps programs?***

All AmeriCorps members, including Disconnected Youth members, plus staff in covered positions under a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant must undergo criminal background checks. The specific requirements for these checks are listed on pp. 25-26 of the NOFA. The criminal history check requirements are the same as for all other AmeriCorps programs, and the disqualifying offenses are also the same: an individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives CNCS funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. A criminal record that consists of offenses different than those listed above does not disqualify an individual from serving as an AmeriCorps member or AmeriCorps program staff member, although programs may set their own additional criminal history requirements.

***C10. If an AmeriCorps member is sentenced to confinement in jail/juvenile detention prior to completing his/her term of service, can the member be exited for compelling personal circumstances and receive a pro-rated Education Award?***

Per our regulations and grant provisions, compelling personal circumstance is determined by the organization responsible for granting the release. Because being incarcerated is beyond the member's control, being confined or detained satisfy the AmeriCorps regulation on compelling personal circumstances at 45 C.F.R. § 2522.230(5)(i).

***C11. Do the mentor AmeriCorps members have to be Opportunity Youth?***

No. Disconnected Youth members are a sub-set of Opportunity Youth, but mentor members do not need to fall into this category.

***C12. 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.

***C13. 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, referred to as *Prohibited 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 such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

In addition to the *Prohibited Activities* listed above, the following restrictions also apply to the service of AmeriCorps members (these are typically referred to as *Unallowable Activities*):

Nonduplication (45 CFR § 2540.100(e))

Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already being provided by the program. 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 (45 CFR § 2540.100(f))

- (1) An employer may not displace an employee 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.

Fundraising Limitations (45 CFR § 2520.45-.50)

- (1) An AmeriCorps member may spend no more than ten percent of his or her originally agreed-upon term of service, as reflected in the member enrollment in the National Service Trust, performing fundraising activities.
- (2) Examples of fundraising activities AmeriCorps members may perform include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Seeking donations of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers teach children to read;
  - b. Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers;
  - c. Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals;
  - d. Securing financial resources from the community to assist in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the members of the community and is delivered, in whole or in part, through the members of a community-based organization;
  - e. Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members.
- (3) AmeriCorps members may not:
  - a. Raise funds for living allowances or for an organization's general (as opposed to project) operating expenses or endowment;
  - b. Write a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.
- (4) .

***C14. We are trying to decide whether to have full-time or part-time members. How do we determine what is right for the program?***

This depends on several factors, such as the nature of your program, population served, proposed interventions and specific member activities, etc. The applicant must determine the appropriate member roles and ensure that proposed positions would provide members with the opportunity to serve the necessary number of hours for their slot type while addressing the demonstrated community need(s). Please also note that some types of Fixed Amount grants have specific requirements for the type of member slots requested; see p. 21 of the NOFA.

***C15. Within a single AmeriCorps grant application, is it possible for us to apply for different types of member slots?***

You can propose any slot configuration that is appropriate for your program design, as long as the configuration is consistent with the specific grant application you are applying to (e.g. full-time fixed amount grants can only include full-time members or members serving in full-time capacity). And, fixed amount grants are not available to new grantees.

***C16. Do individuals under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) meet the citizenship requirements to be AmeriCorps members? Can refugees without legal permanent status apply to be members?***

No, individuals must be US citizens or permanent residents to serve in AmeriCorps.

***C17. May AmeriCorps members have jobs outside of their service commitment?***

Yes, provided that the members are still able to fulfill all of the hours and requirements for their AmeriCorps service term. However, CNCS has a long-standing practice of advising against an AmeriCorps participant being simultaneously employed by the organization with which the participant is serving.

***C18. Who actually pays the AmeriCorps members?***

You, the grantee, are responsible for paying the 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.

***C19. What are the expenses and resources I am going to need to support an AmeriCorps member?***

Member Costs are identified as "Living Allowance" and "Member Support Costs." This does not reflect other support costs such as member training or supervision which a program should plan for.

- **Living Allowance** -The minimum and maximum living allowance amounts are provided in the *Notice*.
- **Member Support Costs** - Consistent with the laws of the states where your members serve, you must provide members with the benefits described below.
  - **FICA.** Unless exempted by the IRS, all projects must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance, even when CNCS does not supply the living allowance.
  - **Worker's Compensation.** Some states require worker's compensation for AmeriCorps members. You must check with State Departments of Labor or State Commissions where members serve to determine if you are required to pay worker's compensation and at what level. If you are not required to pay worker's compensation, you must obtain Occupational, Accidental, Death and Dismemberment coverage for members to cover in-service injury or accidents.
  - **Health Care.** You must offer or make available health care benefits to full-time members in accordance with AmeriCorps requirements.

**Unemployment Insurance and Other Member Support Costs.** Include any other required member support costs here. Some states require unemployment coverage for their AmeriCorps members. You may not charge the cost of unemployment insurance taxes to the grant unless mandated by state law. Programs are responsible for determining the requirements of state law by consulting State Commissions, legal counsel, or the applicable state agencies.

***C20. What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?***

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>.

***C21. Can participants earn an alternative to a GED while they are in the program, like an External Diploma Program (EDP) or other secondary graduate certificates? [Added 5-8-15]***

Programs should consult with the state Department of Education in the state(s) in which they intend to operate. Any option permitted in a particular state for earning a high-school diploma or its equivalent is acceptable for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps participants.

***C22. May programs provide bonuses or incentives to members to encourage retention or good performance during the term of service? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes, as long as the program has a written policy in place and the distribution is fair. Please note that while small monetary or in-kind bonuses are acceptable, programs may not provide bonus service hours to members. Also, the total cash and value of the monetary or in-kind incentive provided together, cannot exceed the maximum living allowance published in the *Notice* of \$25,060.

***C23. Is it permissible to hire AmeriCorps members as staff members after they have completed their terms of service? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes, as long as the member is not exiting the AmeriCorps program early to take the job. Please also note that AmeriCorps member positions may not duplicate, displace, or supplant staff roles.

***C24. Can I use grant funds to pay for member trainings and for travel to the trainings, even if the trainings are out of state? [Added 5-8-15]***

Member training and related travel are allowable grant expenses. It is up to programs to determine what training(s) are most appropriate for their members to attend, and to describe this training plan in their grant applications.

***C25. For mentor AmeriCorps members, does prior service in AmeriCorps count as mentoring experience and/or applicable life experience to serve as mentors? [Added 5-8-15]***

It could, but only if the prior service was directly related to mentoring. Previous AmeriCorps service does not automatically make an individual qualified to serve as a mentor AmeriCorps member.

***C26. Our organization already has at-risk youth doing volunteer service and receiving stipends at our organization. Can we enroll these individuals as minimum-time members under a Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grant? [Added 5-8-15]***

Only if their AmeriCorps service roles would be distinct (i.e., different or enhanced) as compared to what they were already doing at the organization. Per 45 CFR § 2540.100(e)-(f), AmeriCorps grants cannot be used to duplicate, displace, or supplant paid employment or existing volunteer programs.

## **D. Budget/Match Requirements**

***D1. What does Cost per MSY mean? How is it different from a member living allowance?***

Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the overall 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 the cost of child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award that a member may earn.

Living allowance is an amount of money paid by the grantee to AmeriCorps members to assist with supporting them during service and is one of the line items in the application budget. Living allowance may be included in the CNCS share of the budget, the matching share, or a combination of both.

***D2. Are Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps applicants eligible to request the higher cost/MSY mentioned in the NOFA (p. 22)?***

Since Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs recruit Disconnected Youth (a sub-set of Opportunity Youth) to serve as AmeriCorps members, yes, they may request up to \$13,930 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members who are Disconnected Youth. The applicant must include a compelling case as to why the applicant's cost per MSY must be higher.

***D3. Should the cost of Education Awards for AmeriCorps members be included in my grant budget?***

No. Education Awards are provided directly by CNCS's and should not be included in the grant budget.

***D4. Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?***

No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with CNCS 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.

***D5. 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. Decisions about whether to award additional funding are subject to many factors including grantee performance, AmeriCorps funding, funding priorities, and funding decisions on New and continuation applications.

CNCS expects that the Cost per MSY for continuation applicants will decrease or remain the same. Any continuation grantee with a request for an increase in Cost per MSY must justify the increased cost in their application..

***D6. What are the match requirements for an AmeriCorps grant?***

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 (note that all federal sources of match must be

specifically identified, and applicants must consult with the relevant federal agency to see if their funding can be counted as match on an AmeriCorps grant.) 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 much/what percentage of the grantee match must be cash?***

There is no required percentage of grantee match that must be cash; however, keep in mind that any portion of the member living allowance covered by matching funds will need to be cash because the living allowance needs to be paid to the members - not in kind

***D8. 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, in addition to the value of the housing, does not equal more than the maximum living allowance.

***D9. Will the 3.5% increase to the living allowance over 2014 levels be considered as part of a compelling rationale for requesting the same or increased cost per MSY for recompeting programs?***

It can be part of the rationale but is not a compelling basis for requesting an increase cost per MSY by itself.

***D10. From the Budget Adequacy criteria, it appears that no text in the narrative sections is required to explain budget structure and components, other than the detailed calculations included in the budget screens for either a cost-reimbursement grant or a Fixed Amount Grant. Is this correct?***

The Budget Adequacy section is solely based on the budget and the calculations submitted as part of it. No explanation in the narrative section is required or considered.

***D11. The full-time fixed award maximum is listed as \$13,430 in the NOFO and as \$13,000 in the Application Instructions attachments. Which is correct?***

The \$13,430 amount listed in the NOFO is correct. The amount listed in the attachments is an error.

***D12. Do I have to have the entire match amount secured at the time of application?***

As is stated on p. 17 of the NOFA, your application needs to demonstrate that you have raised or have a sufficient plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the proposed program. This applies to Fixed Amount, EAP, and Cost Reimbursement grants. Even though Fixed Amount and EAP applicants do not have a prescribed match amount, they need to demonstrate an ability to leverage additional resources to fully support an AmeriCorps program, in addition to CNCS funding.

***D13. What impact does the new Super Circular have on my application?***

Applicants should follow the information in the application instructions (e.g., the fixed percentage method for indirect costs is 5% maximum federal share, and grantee match for administrative costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs).

***D14. What technical assistance resources are available from CNCS for putting together an application budget?***

The budget should be determined by you based on your organization's needs/resources and the structure of your proposed program. The Knowledge Network website has resources on how to put together a budget: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management/preparing-grant-budget-ameri-corps-programs-ecourse>

**E. Performance Measures/Logic Model*****E1. What are the performance measurement requirements for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs?***

Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps grantees must provide data that reflects the outputs and outcomes achieved by the program with respect to both the Disconnected Youth members and the community beneficiaries. All Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps applications must include the Required Performance Measures listed on pp. 6-7 of the NOFA. In addition, applicants must also select at least one performance measure (output and outcome) from one of CNCS's six Focus Areas that is aligned with the primary service intervention and reflects the community impact of the program.

In addition to the required performance measures, Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps programs must also report on specific performance indicators related to Disconnected Youth members (see p. 7 of the NOFA). The performance indicators do not have to be entered as part of the application; however, applicants that are selected for funding must report on these indicators annually.

***E2. Should the performance measure(s) related to community impact reflect the activities of both Disconnected Youth members and AmeriCorps members?***

Yes. Both Disconnected Youth members and mentor members will engage in direct service activities to address a compelling community need, so the efforts of all members should be reflected in performance measure targets and actuals for the measure(s) that relate to community impact (however, the Required Performance Measures listed on pp. 6-7 of the NOFA should count only Disconnected Youth members). Keep in mind, though, that performance measures do not have to capture 100% of member service activities; you are only required to have one performance measure aligned with your primary intervention that reflects the community impact of the program.

***E3. Should the "Decreased Recidivism for Disconnected Youth Members" and "Increased Positive Engagement for Disconnected Youth Members" Required Measures both use the same output?***

Yes, both of these measures should use the same output: "Number of Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members that successfully complete the program." The output and two associated outcomes can be grouped into a single aligned performance measure in eGrants.

***E4. Are applicants required to use National Performance Measures as their community impact performance measure?***

No, this is not an absolute requirement. However, if the National Performance Measures align with your program's proposed activities, then CNCS expects you to use these measures.

***E5. 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.

***E6. What is the difference between Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures?***

The National Performance Measures are split into two categories: 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 are not included in the strategic plan.

***E7. 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.

***E8. If I select particular performance measures this year, will I be expected to maintain the same measures next year?***

Yes. Performance measures should be consistent over the life of a grant so that progress can be measured over time. However, it is possible that some measures, definitions and guidance may change.

***E9. Some performance measures are available for selection in eGrants but do not appear in the performance measure instructions. May I select these measures?***

New and recompeting applicants should select only the performance measures that are included in the performance measures instructions. Some performance measures have been eliminated but are still available in eGrants for use by continuation applicants who wish to retain these measures through the end of their grant.

***E10. How many community impact performance measures should I include in my application?***

In addition to the Required Performance Measures in the NOFA, each Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps program must have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) that is aligned with the primary service intervention and reflects the community impact of the program. It is appropriate to have additional aligned performance measure(s) for other significant community impacts of your program. Performance measures reflecting non-significant 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. (Note: the terms "Primary" and "Significant" in this context refer 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.)

***E11. Are volunteer generation performance measures required?***

Performance measures for volunteer recruitment and support 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 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.

***E12. If I select National Performance Measures, are there specific outputs and outcomes that need to be paired with each other?***

Yes, in most cases there are specific requirements for how outputs and outcomes must be paired. Please read the National Performance Measures Instructions carefully.

***E13. 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.

***E14. 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.

***E15. 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. If you are a summer program working on this issue, you can create and enter your own applicant-determined measure.

***E16. Is H12 limited only to education activities?***

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

***E17. Must the members counted in the "Increased Educational Opportunities for Disconnected Youth Members" Required Measure (O13 and O16) be economically disadvantaged?***

Yes, all members counted under O13 and O16 must be economically disadvantaged per the National Performance Measure instructions.

***E18. 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.

***E19. 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.

***E20. 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. 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. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once within any one specific National Performance Measure.

***E21. 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.

***E22. 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 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.

***E23. 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.

***E24. 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.

***E25. Am I allowed to allocate funds in my budget 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.

***E26. 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.

***E27. Where do I find a copy of the webinar that helps applicants walk through the eGrants performance measures module?***

This tutorial, <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/egrants-performance-measures-module-ameri-corps>, 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.

***E28. eGrants won't let me enter MSYs and slots for O13 and O16. 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 (that is, the measures under the "Finding Opportunity for National Service Participants" objective), including O13 and O16.

***E29. What is a Theory of Change? Is it the same as the Logic Model?***

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.

***E30. Is a Logic Model necessary for each distinct program activity or focus area?***

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.

***E31. 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.

***E32. 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.

***E33. Will applicants who select more than one focus area be required to identify a primary activity and secondary activity for each focus area?***

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.

***E34. What changes have been made to the Environmental Stewardship performance measures for 2015?***

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.

***E35. What changes have been made to the Education performance measures for 2015?***

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.

***E36. Should my Logic Model include outcomes related to Disconnected Youth, outcomes related to the community impact of the program activities, or both? [Added 5-8-15]***

Both. Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps applicants are required to include both Disconnected Youth outcomes and community outcomes in their Logic Models.

***E37. Do I need to include my performance measure outputs and outcomes in the Logic Model? [Added 5-8-15]***

Yes, the Logic Model should identify which performance measures will be used as output and outcome indicators, including required output and outcome measures related to Disconnected Youth AmeriCorps members.

## **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 if it is impractical or 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 are unlikely to be able 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.

## **G. Evaluation Requirements**

***G1. Please provide more detail on how an evaluation report submitted by a current grantee will be scored. If a grantee has applied for Alternative Evaluation Approach (specifically, for timing considerations) how will that impact this score?***

The evaluation report will be considered as one source of information in determining the level of evidence for the proposed intervention. An applicant can offer other sources of evidence to support the intervention as outlined in the NOFO. To be considered as having moderate or strong evidence, reports demonstrating that evidence must be submitted.

***G2. Where can I get more information on the evaluation requirements?***

We have developed a *Frequently Asked Questions* document to help answer some common questions related to CNCS evaluation requirements:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/ACSN\\_Evaluation\\_FAQs\\_FINAL\\_7\\_17\\_13.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/ACSN_Evaluation_FAQs_FINAL_7_17_13.pdf)

***G3. Is there a place where we can discuss an alternative evaluation approach and what do we need to do to submit such a request?***

If the grantee is a continuation applicant in 2015, they must submit their request for an alternative evaluation approach by December 31st following the process outlined in the guidance located here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/amicorps/evaluation-resources-amicorps-state-national-grantees>. If the grantee is re-competing in 2015, they should submit their request, along with their evaluation plan, in the Evaluation Plan field of the application as directed in the NOFA.

***G4. Together, our evaluation plan and the alternative evaluation approach request exceed the 10,000 character limit for the evaluation plan section of eGrants, and thus cannot be entered into eGrants together. How should we submit the alternative approach request?***

If the request for the alternative evaluation approach and the evaluation plan itself will exceed the character limit of the evaluation summary or plan field in eGrants, the applicant should do the following:

- Enter the evaluation plan in the evaluation summary or plan field in eGrants.
- Include a note in the evaluation summary or plan field stating that the applicant is requesting an alternative evaluation approach.
- Include the alternative evaluation approach at the END of the application narrative with the heading “REQUEST FOR ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION APPROACH.” This section of the application narrative will not count against the page limit.