Operation AmeriCorps Request for Informal Public Feedback
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the *Operation AmeriCorps* Grant Competition?**
   - CNCS is seeking to partner with federally-recognized tribes, Territories, and localities to engage AmeriCorps members as the transformative catalyst to address a pressing problem.
   - Leaders (a tribal leader, mayor, county executive, or other chief executive) will identify a high-priority local issue that AmeriCorps members can address and solve in a relatively short period of time (no more than two years).
   - The solution must be place-based and ambitious in order to succeed in the competition.
   - The solution may be a new initiative or it may use AmeriCorps to scale up an existing successful effort.
   - Applicants will engage AmeriCorps members to achieve a dramatic and measurable improvement in the lives of community members that could be replicated in other localities across the country.
   - Applicants will be asked to provide evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in their theory of change.
   - Applicants are expected to contribute and engage significant community support and resources for the transformative effort including funds from public, private, and non-profit partners.

2. **What is CNCS asking the public to do during the public comment period?**
   We are soliciting both project ideas and informal feedback on this new grant competition.

3. **What will CNCS staff be doing during the 30-day comment period?**
   - We will be accepting comments and specific project ideas as a way to improve the future competition via OperationAmeriCorps@cns.gov and www.regulations.gov.
   - We will be conducting focused outreach to key stakeholders so they can inform their constituents or actively lead a planning process.
   - We will be consulting directly with potential applicant teams.

4. **What makes this competition different from other AmeriCorps competitions?**

DISASTER SERVICES | ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY | EDUCATION | ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP | HEALTHY FUTURES | VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

AMERICORPS | SENIOR CORPS | SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND | VOLUNTEER GENERATION FUND

- **Access three types of AmeriCorps resources through one application**: Applicants will submit a single grant application for resources from AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). Applicants will engage AmeriCorps members to achieve their desired outcome. This support may include:
  - A grant to support direct service and/ or capacity building by AmeriCorps State and National members.
  - A team of NCCC members for short-term, 8-12 week service projects. NCCC is a residential program; these AmeriCorps members will need housing during their engagement.
  - AmeriCorps VISTA members who focus on capacity building for organizations working on poverty-related issues.

- **Streamlined two-stage application process**: Applicants will first submit a short concept paper (no more than 10 pages) that will focus on the purpose and design of their proposed solution. Based on an evaluation of the concept and its potential for impact, a select group of applicants will be asked to provide additional information.

- **Engage additional national service partners**: Applicants are encouraged to consult with the State Commission in the state during their planning process. State Commissions are valuable resources and can provide thought leadership and significant expertise. They are listed here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions/. In addition, applicants are encouraged to work with other local national service programs in the area being served, if appropriate.

5. **Is there a role for Senior Corps, SIF, and other existing national service projects?**
   - While only AmeriCorps members (via an AmeriCorps State and National grant, AmeriCorps VISTA members, and AmeriCorps NCCC teams) will be awarded in this grant competition applicants are expected to coordinate their activities with existing CNCS grantees, including SIF and Senior Corps.
   - As part of the application process applicants will be asked to show evidence of consultation and/or coordination with state service commissions (some of which are VGF grantees), National Directs, Senior Corps projects, or SIF grantees.

6. **Who can apply for these grants?**

DRAFT

- Governments of U.S. cities, counties or towns, federally-recognized Tribes, Territories, and school boards will be eligible to apply.
- Applicants will be required to work with local partners including public or private nonprofit organizations, faith-based and other community organizations, institutions of higher education, other government entities, labor organizations, partnerships and consortia, and other national service programs.

7. **How much funding is available?**
   - CNCS expects to fund 5-10 pilot projects.
   - Grant allocations will depend on the applications received.
   - We expect the total to be around $12 million, including grant funds, AmeriCorps NCCC and VISTA members and education awards.

8. **What is the project period?**
   The project period will be two years.

9. **What is the timeline for this competition?**
   We expect to publish the Notice in early fall with a winter deadline.

10. **What are the proposed funding priorities?**
    Priority One
    - Priority One applications will propose a transformational project that uses a national service solution to ensure that every high school senior has a career or educational opportunity upon high school graduation.
    - The goal is for every graduating high school senior to pursue one of the following five options following high school graduation:
      - Higher education, including two- or four-year institutions of higher education
      - Military service
      - National service in AmeriCorps
      - Employment
      - A paid internship, registered apprenticeship, or job training program.

    Priority Two
    - Priority Two applications may propose transformational projects that address any of CNCS's six focus areas: economic opportunity, education, disaster

DRAFT

services, veterans and military families, healthy futures, or environmental stewardship.

- Examples might include projects that use national service resources to ensure all students in a school are reading at grade level, significantly increase energy efficiency, or eradicate veterans' homelessness.

11. How will the application process work?

Two-Step Application Process

Applications will respond to the program design criteria and may not exceed 10 pages in length.

1. Step 1: Program Design

Each applicant will clearly describe a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant community problem including the following:

- The extent and severity of the problem, demonstrated by data such as the high school graduation rate, the unemployment rate, the poverty rate, or other measures that give context to the problem that AmeriCorps members will address.
- How AmeriCorps members will solve the problem, including the direct service and/or capacity building that will be provided by AmeriCorps State and National members, the capacity building service that will be provided by AmeriCorps VISTA members, and/or the focused surge capacity that will be provided by AmeriCorps NCCC members.
- The plan for partnership with existing CNCS and national service programs and how national service and community resources will be coordinated as part of the proposed solution.
- The timeline and plan for implementation.
- Expected program outcomes and how they will be measured including the logic model, performance measures, and evaluation plan.

2. Step 2: Organizational Capability and Budget

- In Step 2, selected applicants will be asked to provide additional information about their plan to provide a high-quality member experience; their organizational capability; additional information on evaluation; as well as information on and cost effectiveness and budget adequacy.
- Applicants will complete a detailed budget in Step 2.

DRAFT