

## NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

**Federal Agency Name:** Corporation for National and Community Service  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** AmeriCorps State and National FY 2015 Partnership Challenge  
**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement  
**CFDA Number:** 94.006

### Key Dates

Applications are due **Thursday, July 23, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** to CNCS. State Commissions and Territory deadlines may be significantly before the CNCS deadlines, so prospective state applicants are encouraged to contact the commission in the state or territory where they intend to apply as soon as possible. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications may be submitted as early as June 29th.

### A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. CNCS -- through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund -- has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

Through all its programs, CNCS seeks to expand economic opportunity – helping Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment. By helping more Americans graduate, pursue higher education, and find work, national service can provide immediate and long term benefits by expanding individual opportunity, building family stability, and creating more sustainable, resilient communities.

Publication of this Notice of Funding Availability (*Notice*) does not obligate CNCS to award any specific number of grants or to obligate the entire amount of funding available.

#### **Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding**

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that members can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

Through the AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge, nonprofit organizations or public agencies – together with their funding partners – will develop proposals to address community needs by engaging AmeriCorps members. Upon approval, CNCS will provide Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards for AmeriCorps members, while the sponsoring organization will cover full cost of operating the programs, including paying AmeriCorps member living allowances if applicable. Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, references in this *Notice* to “grant” or “award” are limited to the provision by CNCS of Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards for AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps members who successfully complete terms of service will be eligible for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, and will gain valuable skills and experiences to advance their career goals while they make a difference in communities.

This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, the *Notice* Glossary, Application Instructions, and the Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. The documents can be found at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>. The full regulations are available online at [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov). The TTY number is 800-833-3722. For a printed copy of related material, call 202-606-7508.

### **CNCS Focus Areas**

In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, CNCS has the following focus areas:

#### **Disaster Services**

Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters. Grantees also have the ability to respond to national disasters under CNCS cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

#### **Economic Opportunity**

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, including youth identified in My Brother's Keeper to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

#### **Education**

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students prepare for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

#### **Environmental Stewardship**

Grants will provide support for increased individual behavioral change leading to increased energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and communities. Grant activities will decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems; and/or increase green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems.

#### **Healthy Futures**

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by CNCS-supported programs; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

#### **Veterans and Military Families**

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS-supported programs.

## **National Performance Measures**

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS' five-year Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious set of objectives that guided the development of 16 agency-wide Priority Performance Measures. CNCS expects organizations to use National Performance Measures as part of a comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from its work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve its goals. For more information, please refer to the Performance Measure Instructions.

## **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **Award Period**

Unless otherwise specified, AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge awards will generally cover a three-year project period. In approving a multi-year project period, CNCS generally provides Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards to AmeriCorps members who will begin their term of service within the initial year of operation. Continuing provision of Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards is not guaranteed. Factors considered in providing education awards in subsequent program years include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the program, compliance with award requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds. CNCS reserves the right to adjust the amount of education awards provided or elect not to continue providing education awards for subsequent years.

### **Project/Award Period**

The project period is generally one year with a start date as proposed by the applicant. The project start date may not occur prior to the date CNCS makes the award. AmeriCorps members may not enroll 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.

## **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible to apply: public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Indian Tribes. Receiving funding previously from CNCS or another Federal agency is not a prerequisite to applying under this *Notice*.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *Notice*. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 501 (c)(4), that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

### **New Applicants**

CNCS encourages organizations that have never received funding from CNCS to apply. The general practice is to award no more than 50 member positions to organizations participating in an AmeriCorps program for the first time.

### **Type of Applicants**

#### *Single State Applicants*

Organizations that propose to operate in only one state or territory must apply through the Governor-appointed State or Territory Commissions. Each state and territory administers its own selection process

and puts forward to CNCS the applicants it selects to compete for funding. Applicants operating in one state must contact their State Commissions to learn about their state or territory processes and deadlines which may be significantly before the CNCS deadlines and may have additional requirements. The list of State and Territory Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>

#### *Direct Applicants*

Single State Applicants directed by their State Commission to apply directly to CNCS should do so. Please note that, after reviewing applications, CNCS may discuss with the State Commission awarding the grant to the Commission in order for the Commission to award a sub-grant to the applicant. Alternatively, CNCS may award the grant directly to the successful applicant, but also may work cooperatively with the State Commission to assign to them the responsibility to oversee and monitor performance of the grant. State Commissions interested in being assigned responsibility for oversight of AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge awards operating within their state should contact CNCS.

Multi-state: Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to CNCS.

*Federally-recognized Indian Tribes:* An Indian Tribe is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, Regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and services provided under federal law to Indians because of their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

*Territories without Commissions:* Applicants in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands apply directly to CNCS because these Territories have not established a State Commission.

#### **Continuation applicants**

Organizations that have current AmeriCorps awards that do not end in FY15 must submit an application in order to be eligible to receive funding for the following year. Please see the Application Instructions. Requests by existing continuation applicants for increases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the criteria under this *Notice*.

#### **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

The awards under this Notice will only include the provision of Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards to AmeriCorps members who successfully complete their terms of service with the supported program. No operational funding is being provided under this Notice. Applicants applying under this Notice will be responsible for the full costs necessary to run an AmeriCorps program, including the cost of living allowances paid to AmeriCorps members if they choose to provide a living allowance.

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

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

Organizations should refer to the CNCS website to obtain the necessary information to apply.

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

##### **What are the steps that organizations need to take to apply?**

- Determine whether you apply directly to CNCS or through a State Commission
- Get a DUNS number
- Establish an eGrants account
- Coordinate with either State Commission or National Direct applicant

- Write a high quality application responsive to the *Notice*
- Provide required supplemental materials via email, if applicable
- Submit the application via eGrants by the deadline

Please note that state applicants that apply to a State Commission may have different deadlines (likely earlier than those listed in this *Notice*), may have additional narrative questions and/or supplemental materials to submit as determined by the State Commission, and may have different directions and/or systems in which to submit their applications. Single State Applicants directed by their State Commission to apply directly to CNCS should do so.

### **Coordination among State Commissions and National Direct Applicants**

CNCS expects State Commissions and National Direct applicants to consult and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131 of the National and Community Service Act (NCSA) [42 U.S.C. § 12583]. This consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination. The list of State and Territory Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. To ensure coordination:

National Direct applicants, except federally-recognized Indian Tribes, must:  
Before application submission:

- Consult with the State/Territory Commission of each state and/or Territory in which the organization knows it will operate and describe this consultation in their applications. Contact the State/Territory Commissions for details about the consultation process. Provide information that connects the proposed activities to the current State/Territory Service plan and/or State logic model.

After Award:

- Provide the State/Territory Commission with contact information for National Direct programs in the state and/or Territory and update these lists on an annual basis.
- Participate in the State/Territory Commission's annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of its state/territory service plan, as well as appropriate training and other events.
- Include the State/Territory Commission on the National Direct's mailing list and invite it to appropriate training and other events.

State/Territory Commissions must:

Before application submission:

- Consult in a timely manner with the National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, that contact them prior to application submission.

After Award:

- Consider the schedules and needs of National Direct applicants, including Indian Tribes, operating in their states when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
- Include National Direct programs, including Indian Tribes, in their annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of their state/territory service plan.
- Add staff of multi-state programs in their state/territory to their mailing/email distribution list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

CNCS will solicit State/Territory Commission input on National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, proposing to operate in their state/territory. Via eGrants, Commissions have the opportunity to select support, do not support, or neutral and provide comments. Participation by State/Territory Commissions in providing this input is strongly encouraged.

## **How to Submit an Application in eGrants**

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the CNCS web-based system, eGrants. Because it is a unique system, it is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process as soon as possible. Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document and copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields well before the deadline. Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants.

Contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask> if a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants.

National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. If you contact the Hotline, be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying.

If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the application due date. Incomplete applications will not be considered. All additional required documents should include the applicant organization name and Application ID number at the top of the page and are due by the application deadline at [AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov](mailto:AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov). Emails should include in the Subject line, the applicant organization name and Application ID number. State/territory applicants should check the state or territory's application information to determine the process for submission of documents.

Additional documents may include (if applicable): evaluation reports, letters from the consortium members for Multi-focused intermediaries, and up to two evaluation briefs, reports, and/or peer reviewed articles if the applicant has a moderate or strong evidence base.

If extenuating circumstances make the use of eGrants impossible, applicants may send a hard copy of the application and include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via eGrants to the address provided in Section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s), via overnight carrier. Applicants must use a non-U.S. Postal Service carrier because of security-related delays in receiving mail from the U.S. Postal Service. All deadlines and requirements in this *Notice* apply to hard copy applications. CNCS does not accept applications submitted via fax or email.

## **Application Fields and Page Limits**

In eGrants, applicants will enter text in the following fields

- Executive Summary
- Program Design
- Organizational Capability
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
- Evaluation Plan

Applications may not exceed 15 pages for the Narratives (18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries), including the Executive Summary and SF 424 Facesheet, as the pages print out from eGrants. CNCS strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the "Review and Submit" page prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit. This limit does not include the

narrative portion of the evaluation plan or the logic model, budget, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable.

Reviewers will not consider submitted material that is over the page limit in the printed report, even if eGrants allows an applicant to enter and submit text over the limit. Do not submit other items not requested in the *Notice* or Application Instructions. CNCS will not review or return them.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Each applicant must clearly describe a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant community problem. CNCS urges applicants to submit high quality applications that carefully follow the guidance in this *Notice* and in the Application Instructions. The quality of an application will be an important factor in determining whether an organization will receive funding.

### **Threshold Issues**

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the type of AmeriCorps program they propose to operate as an AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge award. For example: If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must clearly describe how the program will meet these requirements.

CNCS will assess an applicant's strategic considerations. Applicants must check the relevant boxes in the Performance Measure tab in eGrants in order to be considered for CNCS' assessment of the strategic considerations. Applicants should only check the boxes if the strategic consideration is an intentional part of their program design and they have implementation strategies described in the application.

### **Application Fields**

#### **A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)**

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [what the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)].\* The CNCS investment of \$[amount of request] in Segal Education Awards will be leveraged with an investment by [Name of the organization] of \$[amount of leveraged resources]\*\*.

\*If the program is not operating in a CNCS' focus area, omit this sentence.

\*\* Applicants should list as their leveraged resources the full value of cash and in-kind resources the applicant projects will be used to operate the program.

CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications on [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

## **B. Program Design (50 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

### ***1. Problem/Need (9 points)***

- The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by the program.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and the need has been well documented with relevant data.

### ***2. Theory of Change and Logic Model (17 points)***

- The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change.
- The applicant clearly describes how the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.
- All elements of the logic model are logically aligned.

The logic model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
  - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
  - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
  - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention).
  - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week.)
  - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level).
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served.) Identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

The logic model shall be no more than three pages in length.

Programs may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the logic model. While performance measure outcomes should be consistent with the program's theory of change, programs are not required to measure all outcomes that are included in the logic model. The Logic Model should identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention.

### ***3. Evidence Base (8 points)***

Applicants will be awarded up to 8 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. Applicants shall provide a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge, and should describe how this evidence places them in one of the five evidence levels listed below. Applicants must fully describe how they meet the requirement of that level, using results from studies and evaluations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the

evidence that supports the strongest evidence tier, and all relevant evidence presented must be included in this section. This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. 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. Studies should be sent to [AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov](mailto:AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov) by the application deadline and include in the subject line the application ID and “evaluation studies.”

For each report cited, include the date of the report, a description that shows its relevancy to the proposed program model, the methodology used in the study, and the strength of the findings (e.g. confidence level.)

For current grantees that are required to submit an evaluation report: The evaluation report will be considered as part of the evidence base of the program. Grantees may opt to include that evaluation report as one of the two studies, or submit two separate studies in addition to the evaluation report. In the latter case, all three studies will be reviewed against this criterion.

The five tiered evidence levels are:

**No evidence** (0 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

**Pre-preliminary evidence** (1 point) means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking. An example could be gathering feedback from program participants following their receipt of the intervention.

**Preliminary evidence** (2 points) means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program’s contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence base consists of at least one non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program beneficiaries over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track program beneficiaries through a service pipeline and measure beneficiaries’ responses at the end of the program; and 2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether beneficiaries have improved on an intended outcome.

**Moderate evidence** (4 points) means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence. The evidence base consists of one or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR two or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR one or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention. Examples of research that meet the standards include: well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e. a similar population that does not receive the intervention).

**Strong evidence** (8 points) means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence. This consists of one or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes.

The description of evidence in this section should include as much detailed information as possible. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from their strongest studies rather than only cursory descriptions of many studies. Reviewers will examine criteria that may include: a) how closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant; b) the methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.); c) the recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years; and d) strength of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a large and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels.

#### ***4. Member Training (5 points)***

- The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.
- The applicant clearly describes how members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.

#### ***5. Member Supervision (4 points)***

- The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations and expectations.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will provide members with excellent guidance and support throughout their service.

#### ***6. Member Experience (4 points)***

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have opportunities to establish connections with each other and the broader National Service network to build esprit de corps.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term.
- The applicant clearly describes how the program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.

#### ***7. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (3 points)***

- The applicant clearly describes how members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how the staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

### **C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

#### ***1. Organizational Background and Staffing (7 points/10 points for new applicants)***

- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants.

- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

As documentation of community support and commitment to the program; please procure, keep on file, but do not submit to CNCS, letter(s) from the applicant's most significant community partner(s). The letter(s) should include what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant's AmeriCorps members and what activities would not happen without the AmeriCorps members.

**2. Compliance and Accountability (11 points/15 points for new applicants)**

- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).

**3. Past Performance for Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only (7 points for recompeting applicants and formula Grantees) Any applicant that has received competitive or formula funding for the same project in any of the past three years must address this criteria.**

- The applicant clearly describes how it has met performance measurement targets during the last three years of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member enrollment, in the most recent full year of program operations, or if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member retention, in the most recent full year of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes any compliance issues or areas of weakness/risk identified during the last three years of program operations (if applicable) and describes an effective corrective action plan that was implemented.

**D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

**1. Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy (25 points)**

- The applicant clearly describes the cash and in-kind resource the applicant will use to operate the program.
- The leveraged funds are sufficient to carry out the program effectively and align with the applicant's program design.
- The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise all non-CNCS resources needed to fully support the program.
- The applicant clearly describes understanding of the scope of costs involved in running the program.
- The leveraged funds include the required operating expenses such as criminal history checks.

Applicants must fill out the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget narrative (requested information in the budget screens):

- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments.

### **E. Evaluation Plans and Reports (Required for recompeting grantees - 0 percent)**

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the Evaluation Plan field since it pertains only to recompeting grantees. If the applicant is applying for an AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge award for a program that is the “same project”<sup>1</sup> that previously received one AmeriCorps grant, the program must submit its evaluation plan in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. If the applicant is applying for an AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge award for a program that is the “same project” that previously received more than one AmeriCorps grant, the program must submit its evaluation report via email to [AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov](mailto:AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov) by the application deadline, as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants.

Evaluation plans must include the following:

- A description of the theory of change, or why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results;
- Clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation;
- Concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes;
- A proposed research design for the evaluation;
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator; and
- The estimated budget.

The evaluation requirements differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710.

All applicants under this Notice who are required submit evaluations plans or reports must conduct either an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required by 45 CFR 2522.730.

A program will be considered a recompeting application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan. If the project does not satisfy the definition of recompeting, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, summary, or completed evaluation.

The Evaluation Plan field of eGrants does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit. Applicants should print out the report to ensure the narrative is not cut off.

### **F. Amendment Justification (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant and needs to amend it.

### **G. Clarification Information (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.

### **H. Continuation Changes (0 percent)**

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter changes in the application narratives in continuation requests.

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<sup>1</sup> Two projects will be considered the same if: they address the same issue areas, priorities, and objectives; serve the same target communities and population; utilize the same sites; and use the same program staff and members.

## **1. Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online:

<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, CNCS suggests registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM. To register online go to <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

## **2. Submission Dates and Times**

### **Application Submission Deadline**

Applications are **due Thursday, July 23, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** to CNCS. State Commissions and Territory deadlines may be significantly before the CNCS deadlines, so prospective state applicants are encouraged to check with the Commission in the state or territory where they intend to apply as soon as possible. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications may be submitted as early as June 29th.

CNCS will not consider applications received after the deadline, except when noted below. CNCS reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted.

### **Late Applications**

CNCS may, at its discretion, consider an application received after the deadline, but only if the applicant submits a letter to [LateApplications@cns.gov](mailto:LateApplications@cns.gov) explaining the extenuating circumstance that caused the delay. Communication with CNCS staff, including the program officer of a current grantee, is not a substitution for the above protocol. The letter must be received no later than one business day after the application deadline. If the applicant experiences technical difficulties with eGrants that are unresolved, the correspondence must include the National Service Hotline ticket number. CNCS determines whether or not to accept a late application for review on a case-by-case basis.

If extenuating circumstances make the use of eGrants impossible, applicants may send a hard copy of the application and include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via eGrants to the address provided in Section G. Agency Contacts, via overnight carrier. Applicants must use a non-U.S. Postal Service carrier because of security-related delays in receiving mail from the U.S. Postal Service. All deadlines and requirements in this *Notice* apply to hard copy applications. CNCS does not accept applications submitted via fax or email.

## **5. Funding Restrictions**

### **A. Types of Grants**

Awards made under this Notice are limited to the provision by CNCS of Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards for AmeriCorps members who successfully complete their terms of service. No funding will be provided through these awards.

**B. Member Living Allowance**

*Applicants under this Notice* are not required to provide a living allowance, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Table below. (EXCEPTION: as noted in Section B.1.)

**Table 1: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance**

Service Term	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full-time	1700	\$12,530	\$25,060
One-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$13,265
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,950
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,635
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,420

1. *Professional Corps* (see Glossary) may provide members a living allowance or salary that exceeds the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above.

**C. Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FY 2015**

AmeriCorps members serving in programs supported under this *Notice* who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of \$5,730 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly smaller awards for less than full-time service. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service to use the Education Award.

**Table 3: Term of Service and FY15 Education Award**

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	FY15 Education Award
Full Time	1700	\$5,730.00
One-Year Half Time	900	\$2,865.00
Reduced Half Time	675	\$2,182.78
Quarter Time	450	\$1,515.55
Minimum Time	300	\$1,212.44

**D. Special Condition Regarding AmeriCorps Program Compliance Enforcement**

CNCS has a strong interest in ensuring recipient compliance with the statutory, regulatory, and agency terms and conditions applicable to recipients of awards that only provide Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards. CNCS has an equally strong interest in holding members harmless in cases of recipient noncompliance where the noncompliance was entirely outside the members’ control. Awards under this Notice will contain a special condition which balances these interests by enabling CNCS to require that award recipient fund the members’ Education Award, up to its full amount, in cases where the recipient’s noncompliance was outside the control of the member and would otherwise imperil the earned value of the Education Award.

This special condition will require AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge awardees to agree:

- To make members whole on the earned value of the members’ Education Award, as determined by CNCS, if recipient’s actions or omissions would result in a reduction of that award below its earned value due to recipient noncompliance that is entirely outside of the control of the member (e.g., national service criminal history checks).

- That failure to comply with any terms and conditions of the award (e.g., the national service criminal history check requirements for staff or members in covered positions) may, at the sole discretion of CNCS, result in the recipient—
  - Being required to provide funds to CNCS to sponsor members’ Education Awards, or
  - Being determined to have made erroneous certification under 42 U.S.C. 12602a(b) and 45 CFR 2526.70.

The provisions of this Special Condition will not limit the ability or authority of CNCS to take any other actions under 2 CFR 200.338 or as authorized by law.

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1. Criteria**

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. CNCS staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the selection factors described in this *Notice*.

In addition, the review and selection process will identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- High alignment with narrative assessment criteria
- Relative risk and opportunity

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

#### **A. Compliance Review**

CNCS staff will review all applications submitted to CNCS to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to Internal Review, an applicant must satisfy all the following requirements:

- Submit an application and all required additional documents by the application submission deadline.
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and additional documents and follows the instructions provided in this *Notice*.

#### **B. Internal Review**

CNCS staff<sup>2</sup> will assess the entire application based on the published selection criteria. Some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application. This information is used by CNCS staff in making final recommendations. Applications may be recommended even if they are not asked clarification questions. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award. Failure to respond to requests for additional information in a timely fashion will result in the removal of applications from consideration.

CNCS staff will determine which applications to recommend for selection based on their assessment of the applicants on a rolling basis.

#### **C. Risk Assessment Evaluation**

CNCS staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant. This evaluation is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant’s eligibility or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award. In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following:

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<sup>2</sup> For applications that request more than \$250,000 in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, CNCS staff will also obtain and consider the views of external reviewers.

- Information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as—
  - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS),
  - Dun and Bradstreet, or
  - “Do Not Pay”
- Financial stability
- Quality of financial management systems and ability to meet the administrative standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance
- History of performance as reflected in the applicant’s record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including
  - Timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements, and
  - If applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards, and
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F and findings of any other available audits.

#### **D. Due Diligence Reviews**

In applying the selection criteria in this notice, CNCS may, with respect to a particular application, also consider one or more of the following for purposes of clarifying or verifying information in a proposal, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant’s ability to manage the program to be supported:

- All sources of information listed in 45 CFR § 2522.470
- An applicant organization's annual report
- Publicly available information including information from an applicant organization's website, and
- Any other information available to CNCS which reflects upon the applicant’s ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

#### **E. Selection for Funding**

The staff will recommend individual applications for consideration by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO.) The CEO will make the final decision on each application recommended.

#### **F. Transparency**

Following grant awards, each applicant will receive the results of Internal Review pertaining to their application. Feedback will be based on the review of the original application and will not reflect any information that may have been provided in response to clarification questions, if any.

CNCS is committed to transparency in grantmaking. The following information pertaining to this competition for new and recompeting applications will be published on the CNCS website (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>), within 90 business days after all grants are awarded:

- A list of all compliant applications submitted.
- Executive summaries of all compliant applications submitted by the applicants as part of the application.
- Data extracted from the Standard Form 424 Face Sheet (SF424) and Program Narrative submitted by applicants for successful applications.

### **3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition depending on the availability of appropriations. CNCS expects that successful State and Territory Commissions and National Directs will be notified **no later than August 28th, 2015.**

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

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

Applicants will be notified via email as to decisions to support their programs. This notification is not an authorization to begin program activities. The Notice of Grant Award signed by the grant officer is the authorizing document for program activities.

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

#### **Documents that Govern the Grant**

The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant as well as the AmeriCorps regulations and grant provisions.

#### **Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards**

Awards under this Notice are subject to 2 CFR Part 200 and CNCS regulations issued to implement that Part. 2 CFR Part 200, supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, and A-122 (which have been placed in OMB guidance); Circulars A-89, A-102, and A-133; and the guidance in Circular A-50 on Single Audit Act follow-up.

#### **Use of Material**

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS support are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, CNCS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so. 45 CFR § 2543.36; 2541.30

### **3. Reporting**

Awardees supported under this Notice will not be required to file financial reports. Applicants will need to complete a pre-award financial assessment and budget adequacy review with CNCS to ensure that the applicant has the financial capacity to implement and manage the award effectively.

Awardees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports and an internal or external evaluation report.

While applications will not be evaluated on these criteria, awardees will be expected to have data collection and data management policies and practices that provide reasonable assurance that they are providing CNCS with high quality performance measure data. At a minimum, awardees should have policies and practices which address the following five aspects of data quality:

- The data measures what it intends to measure;
- The grantee collects data in a consistent manner;
- The grantee takes steps to correct data errors;
- The grantee ensures that the data reported is complete; and
- The grantee actively reviews data prior to submission.

#### **Progress Report Data**

In addition to semi-annual reporting outcomes and progress toward the grant approved performance measures, additional data must be reported annually (as applicable).

### **G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)**

This *Notice* is available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>. The TTY number is 202–606-3472. For further information or for a printed copy of this *Notice*, call (202) 606-7508. For questions regarding multi-state 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 should be addressed to the respective State and Territory Commission. A list of all Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. The mailing address is:

Corporation for National and Community Service  
ATT: Office of Grants Policy and Operations/AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge Application  
1201 New York Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525

### **H. OTHER INFORMATION**

In addition to consulting the Application Instructions, Supplementary Materials, and AmeriCorps regulations as directed in this *Notice*, State/Territory Commissions and National Direct applicants are encouraged also to consult the CNCS web site for a schedule of technical assistance conference calls, and Frequently Asked Questions – that are updated during the competition period. Applicants in a single state should consult with their State/Territory Commission.