TO: State Service Commissions and AmeriCorps Direct Grantees

FROM: Chester W. Spellman
                  Director of AmeriCorps State and National

SUBJECT: 2018.02: AmeriCorps State and National – Changes in the Enrollment Process to
                  Facilitate SSN and Citizenship Verification and Promote Criminal History Check
                  Compliance and Posting Member Opportunities on CNCS Recruitment Website.

DATE: May 30, 2018

Eligibility requires documentation of a member's status as a citizen or as a Legal Permanent Resident. CNCS requires documentation to "manually" verify eligibility whenever eligibility is not automatically verified based on social security number. In order to keep children and vulnerable populations safe, clearance for criminal history requires that members be checked and cleared prior to the start of service on National Sex Offender Public Website and that state and FBI checks as appropriate for the member and their service be initiated no later than the day members start their service.

Pre-enrollment
Among the most common or recurring audit and monitoring findings for AmeriCorps State and National grantees are lack of documentation demonstrating member eligibility and late and incomplete NSOPW.gov, state, and FBI checks.

In order to address these persistent issues, the timing of the automated Social Security Number and citizenship verifications for AmeriCorps State and National members is being shifted to an earlier stage in the invitation and enrollment process. These checks will now occur at the time an applicant or invitee accepts an offer from the program, instead of being the last step a program takes when it enters Placement Information to enroll a member. By moving up the validity checks to earlier in the enrollment process, the verification results will be ready for review by the program the morning of the next business day after the member submits their acceptance.

This means that some programs may have to adjust the timing of their own applicant screening and selection practices to earlier in the process. CNCS is willing to adjust a program's start dates if this is

necessary. Grantees may also request approval for pre-award costs related to recruitment and screening if that would be helpful.

We are also adding two boxes to the enrollment screen requiring program staff to certify they have conducted, reviewed and adjudicated a compliant NSOPW.gov check, and have initiated the state of service, state of residence, and FBI checks as may be appropriate for the specific individual in their proposed assignment. It is hoped that by compelling program staff to certify they have completed required pre-enrollment procedures, there will be greater compliance with these important applicant screening steps.

These requirements will be included in a new section of the Enrollment Screen titled **SSN, Citizenship, and Criminal History Check Verification Information** that will display both the SSN and Citizenship verification statuses, as well as the two certification boxes for criminal history checks.

The Enroll Member button in the Placement Information section (the place where program staff enter the start date, program year, program title, service location, and slot type) at the bottom of the Enrollment Screen will not activate until a member's SSN and Citizenship statuses are Verified automatically or Manually Verified by CNCS Hotline staff, and program staff have certified completion of the NSOPW check and initiation of the State and FBI checks. This will prevent unfortunate financial consequences for programs by the inadvertent enrollment of ineligible individuals and we hope this will encourage greater compliance with criminal history checking requirements.

Consistently over the past seven years of data, ninety-six percent of all members are verified for both SSN and citizenship in the initial screening by the Social Security Administration. Any cases where members are not able to be verified by Social Security will have to be resolved by the program submitting appropriate documentation that validates the SSN status and/or supports citizenship or Legal Permanent Residence status before the member can be enrolled in the National Service Trust and start earning service hours. CNCS is building additional capacity to handle the pre-enrollment screening for the four percent of individuals that can't be confirmed by Social Security to address concerns by programs that this will unnecessarily delay their programs.

Additional Requirements related to prompt reporting of enrollments
Programs will be required to complete the Placement Information section of the enrollment screen and take the Enroll Member action within five days of a member's start date. This is a reduction of the time permitted by program to take this same action under the existing 30-day enrollment process. The changes in the screens will prevent programs from entering or selecting a date-value earlier than five days prior to the certification of enrollment date.

For the Future
Enhancements to the enrollment process including a method to process multiple records at the same time and to submit external records are under development.

AmeriCorps Position Listings

All positions for AmeriCorps members will be required to be listed in the MyAmeriCorps Portal for the 2018-19 program year. AmeriCorps programs will need to list member positions as Service Opportunities by creating a Service Opportunity Listing in My AmeriCorps portal.

This will enable all AmeriCorps open service opportunities to be publically accessible in one recruitment platform. We believe a centralized recruitment platform will be helpful with AmeriCorps State and National recruitment because all potential AmeriCorps applicants will be able to view all service opportunities in one location.

If you have questions regarding the process of posting positions in the MyAmeriCorps Portal please contact your program officer. Additional resources about creating service opportunity listings and use of the on-line recruitment system can be found at:
https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/member-assignment-listings.

Timing and Transition to the New Process

At this time, the improvements to the system are scheduled to go into effect on July 2, 2018 for members starting after July. Programs should make their best effort to complete enrollment of all members that are pending in the Pending Enrollment Workbasket in the MyAmeriCorps Portal by July 1, 2018 to avoid possible transition challenges. After July 1, 2018, programs are going to have to request the Hotline to take action to have the member's record sent to Social Security for the SSN and citizenship varication check. This could result in a delay in their enrollment.

The changes being made are on the enrollment screen and will affect any members, regardless of program year, being enrolled after the modifications have been deployed.

Going Forward:

In order to assist programs during the initial period of implementation, I am assigning a single point of contact to work in collaboration with your program officer to address challenges you might encounter with enrollment of your members. If you or your program face challenges during this period, please contact your program officer and Jim Stone, Senior Program and Project Officer at jstone@cns.gov for assistance in resolving challenges encountered during the transition to the new process.

I understand that changing the way programs process members may represent a change in the timing and sequence of grantee's screening and selection of potential members. I recognize that on fairly short notice programs are going to have to change the way they are doing business. I am hopeful that through this new process that programs will be better protected from inadvertently enrolling ineligible members and by requiring certifications for criminal history checks it will reduce or

eliminate the number of late or noncompliant criminal history checks. We are all working to ensure children and vulnerable populations are safe and that only eligible members are participating.