2016 Notice of Funding Opportunities Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

As of 12/8/2015

Contents

A. General/Grant Application 1
B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria 10
C. AmeriCorps Members 12
D. Budget/Match Requirements 14
E. Performance Measures/Logic Model 18
F. Evidence 31
G. Sampling 33
H. Evaluation Requirements 34
I. Partnership Challenge 35
J. School Turnaround AmeriCorps 37

A. General/Grant Application

A1. How do I ensure that I'm aware of any changes or new information?

The best way to ensure you get emails to inform you of changes or new information is to sign up for updates. You can do this on the Funding Opportunities page by using the link on the right hand side called "New Funding Opportunities." Also, check these FAQs regularly for additions which will be dated.

A2. Who can apply for Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity Fixed Amount Grants?

Recompeting and previous grantee applicants can apply for Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity Fixed Amount grants. A current cost reimbursement grantee must submit a new application (not a continuation application) if it would like to apply for a Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity Fixed Amount grant. Also, 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. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants may not apply for Full Time Fixed Amount grants.

A3. 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 an implementation 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 competition. The general practice is to not award more than 50 member positions to new grantees.

A4. How many AmeriCorps members will my program receive?

In your application you must indicate the number and type of AmeriCorps member positions you are requesting based on your program design and desired outcomes. If your proposal is approved for funding, CNCS will determine how many AmeriCorps members will be included in your award. Please keep in mind that no new or recompeting applicant should submit an application with less than 20 member slots for the 2016 competition.

A5. 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. Multi-focused intermediaries may also have operating sites.

A6. Is an applicant locked into the proposed operating sites or can they change them later in the process?

We anticipate that applicants have a carefully considered plan for their project implementation and have identified operating sites based on the demonstrated community needs. We expect the sites proposed at the time of 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 through an amendment to the application, if funded.

A7. What is a member service location?

A member service location is the site at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

A8. 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.

A9. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?

You must read the 2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity, NOFO Glossaries and the Application Instructions. The AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550 is also an important reference to understand the requirements of AmeriCorps programs. If you are considering National Performance Measures, you must read the appropriate National Performance Measures instructions. In addition, the NOFO page includes other resources to help you understand this funding opportunity and the application process http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2016.

A10. Some of our offices have AmeriCorps State and VISTA members that will be completing their service next year. Would applying for the national grant on a multi-state level affect local offices from applying for future state and VISTA AmeriCorps members?

AmeriCorps will not fund the same project through separate funding sources. Activities taking place through the Multi-State grant should not to be duplicative of what is happening through activities supported by state commissions or service provided by VISTA members.

A11. Can an applicant be one of the two nonprofits in the Governor and Mayor Initiative and still apply for their own grant in competitive?

Yes, as long as the two applications are for different projects.

A12. How can an applicant without previous AmeriCorps experience be competitive and what percentage of new applicants are funded annually?

CNCS uses applicant responses to selection criteria to assess application quality. Applicants who successfully demonstrate that they can fully address the selection criteria will be scored accordingly. Past program performance is considered in the review process for recompeting applicants, but previous experience with AmeriCorps is not a requirement. CNCS encourages new applicants to apply for AmeriCorps grants. New applicants are only eligible for cost reimbursement or Education Award Program grants. While there is no set percentage, some new grants are awarded each year.

A13. How is "community" defined, in terms of identifying community need, particularly if it is a group of people and not a specific community?

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.

A14. Is there a minimum number of members a program can request as part of this application?

New and recompeting applicants must submit an application with a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps members. Applications that have less than 20 members will be deemed noncompliant and will not be reviewed. For state commissions, “application” refers to each submitted sub-application, not a commission prime application.

A15. What are the character limits in eGrants? Is there a character limit in the evaluation section?

The overall character limit in eGrants is greater than the page limits listed in the NOFO, so print out the application before submission to check its length to make sure you adhere to the page limit requirement. 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.

A16. Should programs use links to research in the narrative? Is it realistic to think that peer/staff reviewers will use a link to read additional information? [Revised 11-25-15]

While CNCS does not specify whether to use links, reviewers are advised not to view links provided in an application, so an applicant may assume that links will not be viewed. Applicants must 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. Please refer to the *Notice* for guidance for submitting additional documents as well as the Evidence section of this FAQ document.

A17. I am a continuation applicant and am getting an error message that the continuation field is full when I enter the requested narrative information. What should I do?

The applicant should delete the previous year's information in the Continuation Changes section and notify their Program Officer that this change has been made.

A18. We are a national organization that does not have free-standing offices in other states. The individual sites we seek to work with through an AmeriCorps grant program are all individual nonprofits that operate within individual states. Are we eligible to apply for a multi-state grant, or do we need to coordinate the submission of multiple requests to individual state offices?

You are eligible to apply for a multi-state grant. Many national organizations are intermediary organizations or work with a consortium of other organizations. As the grantee, you would have specific responsibilities for overall program reporting, management, and oversight and grant administration (even if you choose to subgrant funds to any of the nonprofit organizations).

A19. How do you determine if a project should be a single-state or a multi-state application if the members travel to do service outside of the state in which they are based?

Multi-state grants are for programs that use service and volunteering to address compelling community needs and in which members provide consistent service over an extended amount of time in two or more states. If members will be based in at least two states (in other words, not just a crew that at times crosses state lines to provide service), it may be considered a multi-state program. Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to administer and monitor a federal, multi-site, multi-state grant and have relationships with organizations in different states that will operate the local programs. 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.

A20. As a continuation application, should we submit a request that includes the disability/inclusion slots we were awarded for this year or should we just request the original amount before the extra slot opportunity?

Applicants should request the number of AmeriCorps members they would like to include in their programs. A continuation application that was awarded disability/inclusion slots may request these slots as part of their 2016 continuation application.

A21. How many times can you re-apply for funding?

There is no limit.

A22. 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 someone review the application for you prior to submission to ensure that it is responsive to the information requested in the NOFO.

A23. My commission isn't on the contact list posted on your website. Why?

The commission may not have submitted its application submission information yet. The document will be updated as new information becomes available. Contact information for all commissions is also available here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions/

A24. Are there any planning funds available during this round?

There are no planning grants available as part of this NOFO.

A25. Can we operate an AmeriCorps program in any country?

No, this funding opportunity is only for programs operating in US states and territories.

A26. If our city already has AmeriCorps programs, do we need to check with them?

While it is not required, it is a good idea to address how your intervention is different from the other ones that already exist in your target community(ies).

A27. Is it better to apply individually to multiple state commissions or as a multi-state National Direct grantee?

It is up to you depending on what works best for your organization and your program and the scale of the need that you are addressing.

A28. Does AmeriCorps provide the national service criminal history checks for members and staff?

It is each program's responsibility to conduct the required criminal history checks on covered members and staff and to develop the appropriate protocols for conducting such checks in a compliant manner. You can find more information about the requirement here:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check
They will also be communicated to you if your application is successful in the competition and you receive a grant award.

A29. 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). Tribes may apply during this competition or they may choose to wait and apply to our Indian Tribes specific funding opportunity, which will be available soon and applications will be due in spring 2016. Indian Tribes are not subject to the consultation requirement (see page 7 of the *Notice*).

A30. Are applications either fully approved or denied or are they ever partially funded?

There are instances where an application is approved for funding, but their request for members and funding is reduced as deemed appropriate during the review process.

A31. Which NOFO should professional corps applicants use?

There is no professional corps NOFO, and professional corps applicants can use the cost reimbursement or fixed amount NOFO, depending on what type of application they are submitting. All professional corps applicants must justify their request for operating dollars as is instructed in the NOFO.

A32. Should we submit a bibliography/Works Cited section as part of our application?

You may if you choose to, but it would count as part of the narrative page limit. Alternatively, you can use in-text citations.

A33. When will CNCS be making funding decisions? When can activities begin?

Depending on the availability of funding, CNCS expects that successful State and Territory Commissions and National Directs will be notified no later than May 13, 2016, contingent on timely full year appropriations. CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. No official activities can commence until an actual CNCS grant award has been awarded.

The project start date is proposed by the applicant and is generally one year. The project start date may not occur prior to the date CNCS awards the grant and applicants may not propose project start dates earlier than 7/1/2016. 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.

A34. Do we have an assigned CNCS Program Officer to assist with questions? Whom should we contact with application questions?

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. Questions about single state applications should be addressed to the respective State or Territory Commission.

A35. Can you do a program model where the local affiliates are recruiting the members?

Yes, as a grantee you can delegate that role to your affiliate. However, as the grantee you are still ultimately responsible to CNCS for all funds and activities. So you will need to put into place a process for oversight and monitoring of any operating sites and service locations to ensure their compliance with the AmeriCorps rules and regulations.

A36. Could you please clarify how 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 AmeriCorps State and National application. Whether or not a project is "new" can be different depending on which context. Below is a detailed description of when an applicant or application project is considered "new."

1) <u>What applicants can apply for Fixed Amount grants</u> - 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 receive Fixed Amount 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.

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. CNCS will consider a project to be new if there is a meaningful difference between it and previous projects in a comparison of the following characteristics, among others: the objectives and priorities of the projects; the nature of the services provided; the program staff, participants, and volunteers involved; the geographic locations in which the services are provided; the populations served; and the proposed community partnerships. (§ 2522.340).

- 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). Please note that, though you will select New to allow eGrants to process your application correctly, for the purposes of development and review of the application narrative, applicants that have previously received AmeriCorps funding for the same program model are not considered new applicants for the grant review process. Past performance will still be assessed for previous grantees per the Notice.

- 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. Past performance will be assessed as applicable per the Notice.

- 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 recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (previously received competitive funding for one 3-year cycle of AmeriCorps funding for this project, the program must submit an evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary, or Plan field in eGrants.

- If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time (has received two or more 3-year cycles of competitive funding), the program must submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period.

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).

A37. The NOFO was amended and reposted on October 9, 2015. What are the key changes made to the document? [Added 10/9/2015]

- Update on page 1: Announcement type updated to reflect that the Notice has been amended.
- Correction on page 23: The highlighted language was corrected in the description of Phase One Review: There are two components to Phase One.
- Deletion on page 23: The highlighted language was removed from the description of Phase One Review: There are two components to Phase One: 1) An assessment of the applicant's past performance for the same program model (if applicable), 2) a review of Theory of Change and Logic Model portion of the application narrative, and 3) a review of the Evidence portion of the application. Each application will be read by several CNCS staff.
- Deletion on page 23: The highlighted language was removed from the description of Phase One Review:

State Commission staff will assess their recompeting subgrantees' past performance and submit those assessments to CNCS. CNCS will assess its recompeting direct grantees related to past performance. This assessment is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this assessment will inform funding decisions. In evaluating programmatic performance, CNCS will consider the following for applicants that are current formula and competitive grantees and are submitting applications for the same program model:

- Grant progress reports – attainment of Performance Measures
- Enrollment and retention
- Compliance with 30 day enrollment and exit requirements in the AmeriCorps portal
- Site visit or other monitoring findings (if applicable)
- Significant opportunities and/or risks of the grantee related to national service
- Commission Rank

External reviewers will review and assess the evidence base criteria in the *Notice.*

- Clarification on page 23: The highlighted language was added to the description of Phase Two Review: CNCS staff will use the Phase One results and assess the remaining portions of the application on the basis of the selection criteria.
- Clarification on page 23: The highlighted language was added to the description below Phase Two Review: During Phase One and Phase Two, External Reviewers will review and assess the evidence base criteria in the *Notice*. Assessments of evidence base will be applied during Phase Two.
- Clarification on page 24: The highlighted language was added to the description of Feedback to Applicants: All compliant applications will receive feedback from the external review of the evidence base portion of their application.

A38. We wish to propose a program in which members are based in one state but serving beneficiaries all over the country via an online format. Would it be considered a national direct or a single-state program? [Added 11/6/2015]

This would be considered a single-state program. Multi-state programs require a physical location in more than one state.

A39. How should organizations planning to operate only in South Dakota apply for 2016 AmeriCorps State and National Competition? [Revised 12/8/15]

As South Dakota will not have an active state service commission in 2016, all organizations planning to operate in South Dakota should apply directly to CNCS. Cost reimbursement applicants will apply to the FY 2016 AmeriCorps National Direct (New and Continuations) NOFA. Fixed-amount applicants will apply to the FY 2016 AmeriCorps Direct Fixed Amount and EAP (New and Continuation) NOFA. This applies to both new/recompete and continuation applicants.

A40. We plan to apply for a national direct grant to operate in four states. Will we be able to set our own program state, or will we be given guidance by the state commission in each state? Does the start date have to be the same for each state, or can we have different start dates for each state? [Added 11/25/2015]

National Direct grantees may propose their own start dates and are not bound by state commissions' requirements for their subgrantees. A National Direct grant start date applies to all of the operating sites awarded under the grant; however, the start dates for AmeriCorps member service terms may vary between operating sites as long as all members are enrolled within the grantee's approved enrollment period. Per the NOFO, the project start date may not occur prior to the date CNCS awards the grant. AmeriCorps members may not enroll prior to the start date of the award, nor may they enroll prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award.

A41. How do I print my application narrative in eGrants to check the page length prior to submission? [Added 12/8/2015]

You can print sections of your application, including the application narrative, by clicking the "Review" link on the left hand side of the application screen and then selecting the relevant document to print in the "View/Print Your Application" section of the page.

A42. I understand that the Governor of South Dakota has removed the designation of Serve South Dakota as a State Commission on National and Community Service as of December 31, 2015. If I want to apply for an AmeriCorps grant to operate a program only within South Dakota, how do I apply? [Added 12/8/2015]

As a result of the Governor's action, Single-State Applicants in South Dakota will now apply directly to CNCS because South Dakota will no longer have a State Commission as of December 31, 2015. The statement in the Notice that single state applications submitted to CNCS will be considered noncompliant and not be reviewed will not apply to single state applications from South Dakota.

A43. I am a South Dakota state agency that wants to apply for an AmeriCorps grant to run a program within South Dakota. Do I file an application with CNCS like other South Dakota Single State Applicants? [Added 12/8/2015]

As a result of the Governor's action to cancel the designation of Serve South Dakota as the state's Commission on National and Community service, state agencies of South Dakota are no longer eligible to apply for AmeriCorps grants. The National and Community Service Act provides that the only state agency that may apply for AmeriCorps grants is a State Commission. Unless it has a compliant State Commission in place, applications from South Dakota state agencies will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed.

A44. I am an organization planning to operate only in South Dakota for the 2016 AmeriCorps State and National Competition; however, I received a message indicating that I am not eligible to submit my Notification of Intent without a Commission. Do I have to submit a notice of intent? [Added 12/8/2015]

Yes. Submission of a Notification of Intent to Apply is required to be eligible for this competition. For South Dakota SubApplicants only there are two options:

Option 1: complete the SurveyMonkey link and for Question 2— indicate that your organization is a Governor-Appointed State or Territory Service Commission; then for Question 3—provide your Organization's contact information and include "South Dakota SubApplicant" in the Name. You should then be able to submit your organization's Intent.

Option 2: Send your Notification of Intent to IntentToApply@cns.gov using the Subject Line "South Dakota SubApplicant." In the body of the email, the Notification of Intent to Apply must include your organization's contact information (name of the applicant organization, address, contact person, email address, and phone number) and the focus area(s) the anticipated application will address.

A45. When will the National Service Hotline be available to help applicants? [Added 12/8/2015]

The National Service Hotline is normally open Monday through Thursday, 9 am - 7 pm ET. However, it is open some Fridays and weekends for applicants. These dates include:

2015
Fri, Dec 4
Sat, Dec 5
Sun, Dec 6
Fri, Dec 11

2016
Fri, Jan 8
Sat, Jan 9
Sun, Jan 10
Fri, Jan 15
Sat, Jan 16
Sun, Jan 17
Mon, Jan 18
Wed, Jan 20 (deadline for applications is 5pm ET)
Thur, Jan 21

eGrants will be offline for maintenance from Friday, 8 pm (EST) on December 11 until Monday, December 14 at 8 am (EST). As a result, the National Service Hotline will be closed December 12 and 13th even though the NOFO listed it as being open.

B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

B1. What does the list of priorities mean for funding distribution?

CNCS does not use set asides for priority areas.

B2. Will my program receive more priority for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure?

A program can select more than one Focus Area in their application. However, no additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure.

B3. Would a partnership between a Governor and a Board of Supervisors be considered an eligible applicant for the Governor and Mayor Initiative? Would a Public School District that is a subdivision of a State be an eligible applicant?

If the Board of Supervisors is considered the designated state agency by the Governor then they may be the applicant. If a school district is a subdivision of the state, the Governor could identify that the school district be the legal applicant.

B4. If the Governor and Mayor Initiative are required to go through the State Commission, are they included in the program ranking or is there a separate review process?

The Governor and Mayor Initiative application is the same as any other competitive application and would be included in the commission program ranking.

B5. Does the Governor and Mayor Initiative need to be a new initiative or could an application be considered for a recompeting program?

It is not required that it be a new initiative.

B6. What percentage of grants is funded outside of priority areas?

There is no set percentage. If you have a strong program design but are outside the priority areas, CNCS encourages you to apply. NOFO priorities are just one out of many factors considered when making funding decisions.

B7. For programs proposing to operate in the Environmental Stewardship focus area, do organizations need to be a member of 21CSC in order to apply?

No, unless you are applying as a 21st CSC program to be considered under the Environment – 21st Century Service Corps funding priority (see the NOFO Glossary for definition).

B8. Could you provide more detail on how applicants can indicate intersection with My Brother's Keeper milestones -- will there be checkboxes in addition to the narrative portion? Is the Corporation looking for programming that specifically addresses these milestones or overlaps them?

As the Glossary states, the applicant needs to demonstrate that their program addresses one or more of the five listed milestones. The application form will include a check box for the My Brother's Keeper initiative, but the applicant also needs to explain in the narrative how the proposed project addresses the applicable milestone(s).

B9. The NOFO and Glossary state that Encore Programs must engage a "significant number of participants age 55 or older". What counts as significant and is there is a minimum threshold?

We do not have a specific threshold. However, the applicant needs to make the case for why they consider the proposed number of members 55 and over as being a significant and intentional aspect of their program, if it is not inherently apparent in the program design.

B10. In a Governor and Mayor Initiative application, may a Governor apply with more than one Mayor in his/her state? [Added 11/13/15]

Yes, a Governor and Mayor Initiative application may include more than one Mayor.

C. AmeriCorps Members

C1. 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.

C2. 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 receipt of 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 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:

<u>Nonduplication.</u>

Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless there is nondisplacement, 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.

(1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, 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.

C3. Can organizations set their own rules for selection of AmeriCorps members?

Yes, a program can make rules about selection based on specific qualities relevant to the program or type of service, as long as the selection rules are consistent with AmeriCorps' eligibility requirements and are not discriminatory.

C4. We are trying to decide whether to have full-time or half-time members. How do we determine the feasibility of the member types to 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).

C5. 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 be eligible to serve in AmeriCorps.

C6. We would like to have a member serve in two sequential slots (900-hour and 300-hour) within the same program year. Is there a specific process we should use to facilitate this? [Added 11/6/15]

Programs wishing to enroll members in sequential terms of service should follow the regular guidelines for enrolling and exiting members. This includes the required 30-day enrollment and exit timeframes, criminal history checks, timesheets, member evaluation requirements, member service agreements, etc.

C7. May an AmeriCorps program choose only to enroll as members individuals with disabilities? [Added 11/6/15]

While it is not permissible to ask whether candidates have disabilities during the candidate selection process, Programs are allowed to ask all applicants what, if any, experience they have had serving or working with those with disabilities, and/or what, if any, training or experience they have in identifying and planning for the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, Programs can facilitate getting a higher yield of members with disabilities by targeting their outreach within the disability community. Grantees have conducted successful disability inclusion outreach by sharing notices of opportunities to serve in their national service program with organizations comprised of people with disabilities, independent living centers, vocational rehabilitation programs and college/university offices for students with disabilities.

C8. Will serving in AmeriCorps State and National impact a member's disability benefits from the Social Security Administration? [Added 11/13/15]

The H.E.A.R.T. Act made it possible for members with disabilities to serve in AmeriCorps without the living allowance or education award impacting their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) from the Social Security Administration. The Act ensures that the living allowance and education award are excluded from calculations used to determine and maintain eligibility since it does not consider them income or assets. This allows those on SSI to maintain their SSI during and following service and also allows them to receive the living allowance and education award.

Since the H.E.A.R.T. Act does not apply to members receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), serving and receiving the living allowance will impact these benefits. The Social Security Administration will consider the service and living allowance a "return to employment" and eventually SSDI benefits will terminate (even though service is not employment). Therefore, members who wish to maintain SSDI benefits should understand that their benefits will be impacted by serving in AmeriCorps. These members have the ability to serve in our AmeriCorps VISTA program without an impact to their SSDI.

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 (MSY) and represents the 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 $100,000 in CNCS funds and 20 MSYs, then the cost per MSY is $5,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the

Segal Education Award a member may earn. Living allowance is an amount provided to members to assist with supporting them during service and is one of the line items in the budget.

D2. Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?

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

D3. 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. Approval of such funding is not guaranteed and is subject to many factors including grantee performance, AmeriCorps funding availability, funding priorities, and funding decisions on New and Recompete applicants.

D4. If explanations about specific budget line items are to be part of the budget narrative rather than the proposal, will there be ample space to provide complicated explanations?

The character limits in the budget narrative will not change. If you cannot provide enough information to explain a line item, you may include additional explanation in the proposal narrative as part of the application narrative page limit. If you received clarification on an item in a previous funding round, it will likely be clarified again unless you can provide the additional information in the budget narrative.

D5. Do all grants have to have a cash and in-kind match? If so, does the entire cash amount given through the grant have to be matched in full?

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. 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%

D6. How do we determine our budget? How much/what percentage of the grantee match must be cash? What is the match requirement for living allowance?

The budget should be determined by you based on your organization's needs/resources and the structure of your proposed program. There is no required percentage for the portion of grantee match that must be cash. There is also no specific match requirement for living allowance; it may be covered by CNCS funds, non-federal cash match, or a combination of both. The Knowledge Network website has resources

on how to put together a budget: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management/preparing-grant-budget-americorps-programs-ecourse

D7. What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?

The living allowance is paid by the grantee using federal grant funds, matching funds, or a combination of both. 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/sites/default/files/documents/ogc_flsa1998.pdf.

D8. Are Tribal applicants exempt from budgeting for healthcare for members if members already receive coverage through the Indian Health Service facilities?

Tribal applicants are not exempt from providing healthcare to full-time members or those serving in full-time capacity who do not have health care coverage. If your members already receive coverage through the Indian Health Service facilities, you can note that in the application. However, your program must also have a plan and a budget for providing coverage for individuals who may not have coverage through this or other sources.

D9. 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 that they are providing, in addition to the value of the housing, does not equal more than the maximum living allowance outlined in the *Notice*.

D10. Can matching funds be from other federal sources?

There are some restrictions about matching from federal agencies. Each agency sets their own requirements. You will have to check with the agency directly to see if you can count their funding as match on an AmeriCorps grant.

D11. Can we have a different living allowance based on location?

You may vary your living allowance based on location as long as you provide justification.

D12. Within a single AmeriCorps national grant application, is it possible for us to apply for different types of slots?

You can propose a 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).

D13. Do I have to have the entire match amount secured at the time of application?

As is stated in the NOFO, 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 resources to fully support an AmeriCorps program, in addition to CNCS funding.

D14. Please confirm that, as we are applying for an EAP Fixed Amount grant, we are not required to provide health insurance coverage to members.

EAP, Professional Corps, or programs where members are covered under a collective bargaining are not required to provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to members. Please note that in such circumstances, members are still bound by the individual mandate requirement.

D15. Who actually pays the AmeriCorps members?

The grantees are responsible for paying their members. 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 also comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements.

D16. 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.

D17. When budgeting for member health care benefits, can an applicant take into account the expected enrollment in the program-provided health plan? For example, could a program indicate that it will offer health benefits to its 20 full-time members but that it is budgeting for only 16 members to enroll, since some members are likely to be covered through other sources? [Added 11/6/15]

The expectation is that applicants will budget for health insurance for all full-time members. If an applicant has a strong justification (historical program data on health insurance enrollment rates, etc.) for budgeting health care for less than 100% of its full-time members, they must include this justification in the budget narrative and it will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the nature of the justification, CNCS may require the applicant to increase this line item prior to award to account for all full-time members.

D18. If we're required to pay FICA, are we also required to pay what would be the employee's share of FICA? [Added 11/13/15]

Unless an AmeriCorps grant recipient obtains a ruling from the Social Security Administration or the Internal Revenue Service that specifically exempts its AmeriCorps members from FICA requirements, the recipient must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance. The FICA can be allocated to CNCS or Grantee Share. The recipient also must withhold 7.65% from the member's living allowance.

D19. Can we use grant funding for meals at trainings? [Added 11/13/15]

If an event is giving information and meals are provided, that may be an allowable cost.

D20. Is the 5% CNCS share of indirect costs in addition to the maximum cost/MSY published in the NOFO? [Added 11/13/15]

The indirect cost that is allocated to CNCS is part of the total budget which determines the cost per MSY. It is not in addition to the total budget.

D21. Is there a separate section where the budget narrative should be entered? Or is this simply the text we enter in the budget section under "purpose" and "calculation"? [Added 11/13/15]

The applicant completes budget line item details in the budget section and completes the budget narrative as specified in the NOFO in the narratives section.

E. Performance Measures/Logic Model

E1. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?

AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary intervention and aligns with the program's theory of change.

E2. 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.

E3. What is the difference between Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures?

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

E4. How did CNCS decide which grant activities would be represented in the National Measures?

CNCS leadership from across the agency reviewed the goals and priorities in our 2011-2015 Strategic Plan and focused our work on a limited set of Priority Measures. To identify these priorities, CNCS considered whether the measures: were specific, measureable, achievable and result-oriented, provided useful information to guide decision making, aligned with previous investments that have demonstrated effectiveness, and collectively tell a compelling story about the value of national service and other CNCS resources.

E5. 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.

E6. If I select National Performance Measures this year, will I maintain the same measures next year?

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

E7. Are National Performance Measures required?

The use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged but is not required.

E8. If we are in a Continuation year of our grant should we select National Performance Measures?

In general, performance measures should be consistent over the life of a three-year grant cycle so that progress can be measured over time. If a grantee's current measures are not serving the program well and the grantee would prefer to select National Performance Measures, the grantee may choose to revise their measures at the time of Continuation.

E9. What should a continuation grantee who is measuring an output or outcome that has a changed definition do in the continuation application?

If the grantee is unable to measure the output or outcome as defined in the Performance Measures Instructions, the grantee should choose a different performance measure.

E10. 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 recompete 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 the system for use by continuation applicants who wish to retain these measures through the end of their three-year grant.

E11. How do I decide if my program should select National Performance Measures?

If the National Performance Measures align with your program‘s activities, then CNCS strongly encourages your participation. The National Performance Measures Instructions provide definitions, requirements and guidelines that will help you determine which are right for you. These instructions can be found on the NOFO webpage.

E12. If I select National Performance Measures, will I also have to create "applicant-determined" performance measures?

There are two circumstances in which your program will need to create self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the National Performance Measures. First, if your program selects National Performance Measures for activities that do not represent your primary intervention, then your program will also have to provide an aligned set of applicant-determined performance measures for your primary intervention because AmeriCorps regulations stipulate that a program must have an aligned set of performance measures that represent its primary intervention. Second, if you select a National Performance Measure that does not have its own aligned outcome, you will need to create an applicant-determined outcome to complete the alignment. The need to create an aligned applicant-determined outcome measure is clearly stated in the National Performance Measures Instructions.

E13. What is an aligned performance measure?

An aligned performance measure is an output paired with an outcome. Most of our National Performance Measures include aligned measures, but in some cases you may need to create your own aligned applicant-determined outcome.

E14. How many performance measures should I propose?

Each program should have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) reflecting its primary intervention. It is appropriate to have additional aligned performance measures for other significant components of your program. Performance measures reflecting non-primary 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.

E15. Are member development and volunteer generation performance measures required?

Member development and volunteer generation are required components of all AmeriCorps programs, but performance measures for these activities 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 member development should review the member-focused Economic Opportunity Measures to see if they are applicable. 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.

E16. When I last applied for funding, why did CNCS ask me to remove some of my performance measures from my grant application?

Applicants were asked to remove from their applications performance measures that didn't reflect the program's theory of change and that didn‘t need to be reported to CNCS. However, this wasn‘t an indication that these activities were not worthwhile. In many instances, the program would want to

measure these activities and track the results to ensure program quality even though they aren't reflected in the approved AmeriCorps application.

E17. If I select National Performance Measures, are there specific outputs and outcomes I am required to use?

Yes, in most cases there are specific requirements for outputs and outcomes as well as data definitions and collection expectations. Please read the National Performance Measures Instructions carefully.

E18. What programs can select the Teacher Corps Measures in the Education Focus Area?

The Teacher Corps measures are intended to be used by AmeriCorps programs where the AmeriCorps members serve as the primary teacher in a classroom setting during their terms of service. The AmeriCorps members may serve in public, charter, or private schools to address a critical shortage of teaching professionals in a high needs area or school.

E19. Can Teacher Corps programs opt into non-Teacher Corps outcomes, such as ED5, ED27A or ED27B?

Yes, Teacher Corps programs are required to select a National Performance Measure that reflects the community impact of the program.

E20. 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.

E21. May programs opting into National Performance Measures in Education use a school or LEA's participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP16-2015os.pdf) to determine economic disadvantage for student beneficiaries?

Yes. The following definition of "Economically Disadvantaged" may be used as an alternative to the existing definitions in the National Performance Measure Instructions under performance measures ED1, ED2, ED3A, ED4A, ED20, and/or ED21: "Students enrolled in schools that are participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)."

E22. 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.

E23. 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.

E24. Is H12 limited only to education activities?

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

E25. Must members counted in O14 and O17 be economically disadvantaged?

Yes, members counted in all member development National Performance Measures must be economically disadvantaged.

E26. Does ED14 measure individuals teaching during the term of service, or after the term of service?

ED14 measures the number of individuals teaching during the term of service.

E27. 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.

E28. 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.

E29. 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.

E30. 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.

E31. 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 only 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.

E32. 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.

E33. How do I indicate that I am selecting National Performance Measures?

Programs will select Focus Areas and National Performance Measures in the eGrants performance measure screens at the time of application. In addition, the Focus Areas, National Performance Measures, and proposed targets should be referenced in the application narrative and/or logic model as outlined in the NOFO and Application Instructions.

E34. Am I allowed to allocate funds 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.

E35. We have similar reporting requirements and measures for another funder. Can I just report on that measure instead?

No. If the program chooses to select National Performance Measures, it will need to report to CNCS on the Measure as it is defined.

E36. What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?

They are the same as for program not using National Performance Measures. The reporting requirements are contained in the grant provisions.

E37. Why does CNCS require applicants to provide information on the proportion of Member Service Years (MSYs) devoted to each Focus Area?

The Focus Areas listed in the Serve America Act create the expectation that CNCS will be able to report resources allocated by Focus area. Because many applicants direct their activities to more than one Focus Area, it is important for CNCS to collect expected MSYs devoted to each Focus Area.

E38. How should I determine the MSYs allocated to each Focus area and strategic plan objective?

A program requests a certain number of MSYs in order to meet particular needs in their community. Programs determine what needs are addressed by members serving in that Focus Area and strategic plan objective and assign the MSYs accordingly. Refer to the Application Instructions for additional guidance on calculating MSY allocations.

E39. 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.

E40. In order to measure ED5, which is the number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math, may we propose to use state assessments because they are consistently available and are aligned with our goals of building student proficiency in ELA and math and helping schools to improve on the outcomes that are most meaningful to them?

Programs may request to use the state standardized test but need to demonstrate that it is appropriate for their circumstances. For all programs that propose to use the state standardized test, including Teacher Corps programs, please provide a justification that explains how the test is sufficiently tailored to the material taught, how the timeline for obtaining test data will meet national service reporting requirements, and why gains in the test are likely to be attributable, in part or in whole, to the efforts of national service participants.

E41. Where do I find a copy of the webinar that helps applicants walk through the performance measures module?

This tutorial, http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/egrants-performance-measures-module-americorps, 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.

E42. eGrants won't let me enter MSYs and slots for member development National Performance Measures. 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.

E43. What is a theory of change?

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.

E44. 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 as directed.

E45. On the logic model chart there are three outcome levels (short, medium and long) being requested. The focus has been on understanding that outputs and outcomes in performance measures should be linked by a sound theory of change and evidence. Do you have any new guidance on linking outputs and outcomes and how they mesh given this outcome structure?

The logic model is a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed intervention (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. A program may have a theory of change that is based on accomplishing a long-term change in conditions that is not measurable in the program year. However, there may be shorter-term changes that can be linked to this ultimate goal that are strong indicators that the long-term change is likely to happen. All of these outcomes may be included in the logic model, and grantees are not required to measure or report on all outcomes that appear in the logic model. For performance measurement purposes, outcomes must measure changes that can be measured within the program year. Not all programs will include all three types of outcomes – just those that are relevant to a solid understanding of their theory of change and the indicators of change that they will measure in the performance measures.

E46. Do continuation applicants need to submit a logic model?

Some applicants in continuation may have applied for Year 1 funding prior to the logic model module being added in eGrants. These applicants would have submitted the logic model as an attachment as part of their initial application. In most cases, there will be no need for a continuation whose logic model is not part of the eGrants module to enter their logic model into eGrants as part of their continuation application. However, if a continuation applicant is proposing a change to the logic model and it is not in eGrants, they will need to enter the logic model into eGrants.

E47. What does CNCS consider to be economically disadvantaged? How is that tracked? Is this where the county level economic data comes in?

"Economically disadvantaged" is defined/tracked slightly differently depending on what performance measures are being used by the applicant. You can refer to the performance measure instructions for more information about how economically disadvantaged participants/recipients are defined in different contexts. But county level economic data could be a useful reference to assess and describe the community/ies being served by a proposed project.

E48. Must a certain percentage of MSYs be allocated to an activity in order for it to be considered a significant aspect of the program design?

"Significant" in this context refers 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.

E49. Is a logic model necessary for each performance measure?

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.

E50. What age group is considered disadvantaged youth, according to AmeriCorps?

"Disadvantaged youth" is defined in the National Performance Measure instructions for performance measure ED4A (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Performance_Measure_Instructions_2016.pdf) as follows:

> **Disadvantaged youth**: "includes those youth who are economically disadvantaged and 1 or more of the following: (A) Who are out-of-school youth, including out-of-school youth who are unemployed. (B) Who are in or aging out of foster care. (C) Who have limited English proficiency. (D) Who are homeless or who have run away from home. (E) Who are at-risk to leave secondary school without a diploma. (F) Who are former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency. (G) Who are individuals with disabilities." (from SAA) It is the grantee's responsibility to ensure the beneficiaries of service meet the eligibility requirements provided in the definition.
>
> **Economically disadvantaged**: eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch; may or may not actually be accessing free/reduced lunch.
>
> "Opportunity Youth" is defined in the NOFO as "economically disadvantaged individuals age 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months prior to service." Opportunity youth are a sub-set of individuals who might be a good fit for the member outcomes performance measures.

E51. Can our members be considered economically disadvantaged members who will receive financial literacy services?

Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants (i.e. AmeriCorps members) are defined in the National Performance Measure Instructions for performance measure O12 (http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measures-instructions) as follows:

> **Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants:** Current National Service Participants who are receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance.
>
> However, the economically disadvantaged individuals counted under performance measure O1 and O9 as receiving financial literacy services should be service recipients/beneficiaries, not National Service Participants. AmeriCorps members may be counted under measures O12-O17.

E52. 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.

E53. Is there a guide that we can print out that defines interventions listed under each performance measurement objective?

We do not have a list of interventions or a guide that describes them, as they are fairly generic under each objective, such as “training,” “tutoring,” etc. If the applicant does not see an intervention that describes their activity, they can always select “other.”

E54. How do I enter MSYs in the performance measures section of the application?

The performance measures module collects information about MSYs in two locations: the MSY tab and within each performance measure.

MSY Tab
The MSY tab is intended to show how program resources are allocated to activities that serve program beneficiaries. The total number of MSYs entered on this tab must equal the number of MSYs requested in the budget. For each strategic plan objective selected, except the “Find Opportunity” objective and the “Teacher Corps” objective, enter the number of MSYs that will be allocated toward activities that address the objective and lead to beneficiary, rather than member, outcomes.

The Find Opportunity objective addresses member development activities and is connected to national performance measures for member development. If you have selected Find Opportunity, enter 0 MSYs for this objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

Teacher Corps programs, enter 0 MSYs for the Teacher Corps objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

Performance Measures
MSYs entered at the performance measure level show the proportion of program resources allocated to achieving the outcomes of the performance measure.

MSYs may not be allocated to member development performance measures. Information about MSYs allocated to member development activities is collected in the demographics section of the application.

MSYs should not be allocated to Teacher Corps performance measures or any other measures that measure member outcomes rather than beneficiary outcomes (EN2.1, V2, V10). Enter 0 MSYs in the performance measure.

CNCS does not require that 100% of MSYs are allocated to performance measures.

E55. Does the ED5 measure apply to adult education?

Education measures are for K-12 and in some cases post-secondary education, not adult education. Adult education is addressed by Economic Opportunity measures.

E56. What is the definition of "National Service Participant" for O13 and O16?

National Service Participant refers to the AmeriCorps members themselves. Because these measures apply to the members, programs that select them must also select additional performance measures that measure community impact. If a performance measure does not state that it is for national service participants, it refers to the beneficiary population being served by the AmeriCorps members (community impact).

E57. Will applicants be able to select more than one focus area and, within the focus areas, more than one intervention?

Yes, applicants are able to select more than one focus area and more than one intervention within a focus area.

E58. Will applicants who select more than one intervention be required to identify a primary intervention and secondary intervention as in prior years?

Applicants must select their primary intervention. Additional or secondary interventions are not required.

E59. Are there changes to the Education performance measures?

The following changes were incorporated into the Education performance measures for 2015 competition and they are reflected in the 2016 performance measures:

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.

E60. Is there a preference for having applicants use national performance measures to the greatest extent possible?

Your performance measures should be consistent with your program's theory of change. If the national performance measures align with your program design and your theory of change, you should use them.

CNCS does not require programs to allocate 100% of program activity, or any specific percentage of program activity, to national performance measures.

E61. For My Brother's Keeper and other priority initiatives, are there preferred or required national performance measures?

No.

E62. Will CNCS continue to accept self-nominated measures? Will they be accorded any value in scoring this section? Would a broad intervention that does not have an associated measure (e.g. improving an attendance rate for a whole school, not just individual students) be appropriate to include in the logic model? For a self-nominated measure, is it acceptable to use a percentage or rate of success to track outcome, as opposed to a numeric target?

The Corporation will continue to allow applicant-determined performance measures. Performance measures are evaluated according to how well they align with the program's theory of change and logic model. The logic model should reflect your program design and the outcomes that occur as a result of your intervention(s), including applicant-determined performance measures if applicable. It is not acceptable to utilize percentages or rates of success for any performance measures, including applicant-determined measures.

E63. We have identified at least ten performance measures we would like to use in our application. Is that a good number?

You are encouraged to use measures that reflect the most significant member activities. It is common for programs to track data that they do not necessarily report to CNCS. The quality of performance measures and how well they are aligned with the program's theory of change are more important than the quantity of performance measures. There are some programs that have many measures, but it is not common.

E64. Can you please clarify the MSY allocation requirements in the MSY Tab and in the Performance Measure Tab in the Performance Measure module of the application?

The MSYs entered on the MSY tab must equal the number of MSYs budgeted. The purpose of the MSY tab is to show how all grant activity will be allocated across CNCS focus areas and objectives. The MSYs entered in performance measures do not have to equal the total MSYs for the entire grant, since applicants are not required to measure 100% of their activity. Applicants cannot, however, enter more MSYs in a performance measure or measures than they have allocated to the objective in which those performance measures fall.

E65. The NOFO describes some very distinct CNCS priority areas, while the National Performance Measures list a number of performance measures as "priority" (vs. "complementary") which seem to be broader than the priorities in the NOFO. Can you clarify the difference?

The "Priority" designation on certain National Performance Measures means that these particular measures are used across multiple CNCS programs, not just AmeriCorps State and National. This use of the term "Priority" in the Performance Measure instructions is not directly related the priority areas in the NOFO and does not factor into CNCS' evaluation process.

E66. Can we include the interventions of volunteers we recruit and manage in our performance measures? For example, if the AmeriCorps members recruit and manage the volunteers who deliver tutoring services, may we report the outputs and outcomes of that service?

Yes. 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.

E67. For Performance Measures, is it acceptable to solely select measures related to the Capacity Building Objective or must additional objectives/measures be chosen from within the other Focus Areas as well?

This depends on the program design and theory of change. Performance measure outcomes should be consistent with the program's theory of change and percentage of members' time allocated to each objective. Selection of only Capacity Building Objectives is allowable.

E68. The definition of structures in EN1 includes government owned buildings, but it looks like EN1.1 talks only about households. If the program is retrofitting government owned buildings, can they not use this aligned measure?

Yes, if they are counting government buildings in EN1 they would include government buildings in EN1.1.

E69. The National Performance Measure I want to select doesn't appear in the drop-down menu. What should I do?

Only performance measures corresponding to objectives selected on the Objectives tab will appear in the drop-down menu. Refer to the Performance Measure Instructions to determine which objective to select for each performance measure.

E70. Item 6 on page three of the published School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix to the NOFA states, "School Turnaround AmeriCorps programs must select from the following Performance Measures in Education: ED2, ED4A, ED5, ED27A, ED27B, ED30. 100% of the MSYs must be in those performance measures. Programs may also select ED1, ED3A, ED7, ED9, and/or ED10." However, the published 2016 Performance Measure instructions do not contain an ED7. Should this have been a different number?

Performance Measure ED7 was retired in 2015. Continuation grantees may retain this measure for the duration of their three-year grant. Recompeting applicants may not select ED7 although it is available for selection in eGrants.

E71. May programs opting into National Performance Measures in Education use a school or LEA's participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP16-2015os.pdf) to determine economic disadvantage for student beneficiaries? [Added 11/6/15]

Yes. The following definition of "Economically Disadvantaged" may be used as an alternative to the existing definitions in the National Performance Measure Instructions under performance measures ED1, ED2, ED3A, ED4A, ED20, and/or ED21: "Students enrolled in schools that are participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)."

E72. Can the same beneficiaries be served by two different programs? [Added 11/6/15]

Yes, two different programs can serve the same beneficiaries.

E73. My logic model did not copy over into my continuation application. Must I re-enter the logic model in eGrants? [Added 11/13/15]

Continuation applicants do not need to re-enter their logic models unless they are proposing changes to the originally submitted logic model.

F. Evidence

F1. Can I describe more than two studies in the evidence narrative if I have additional studies and performance measurement data from my program?

Applicants should summarize the complete body of evidence that exists for their program, including additional evaluations of the program and performance measurement data, in the evidence narrative. While applicants should focus on presenting high-quality evidence from two of their strongest and most relevant studies that place them in the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible, they should also keep in mind that applicants may be considered for a lower evidence tier as described in the NOFO. However, under no circumstances should applicants submit more additional documents than specified in the NOFO or FAQs.

F2. What is the difference between evidence-based and evidence-informed?

An evidence informed program uses the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but does not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the program itself and is not replicating an evidence-based program.

A program that is evidence based uses a program model that has been rigorously evaluated and has demonstrated positive results. Rigorous evaluation means at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation, either of the program itself or of another program that the applicant is proposing to replicate.

Applicants that have not yet collected data from their own programs may be evidence-informed if they have incorporated research from other evidence-based programs into their program designs.

If applicable, applicants should describe how they are evidence-based and/or evidence-informed in the evidence narrative.

F3. My program has not conducted a randomized control trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental study (QED). Can we still submit two studies to support our level of evidence?

There are only two cases where it is acceptable for an applicant to submit a study that is not a QED or RCT of its own program:

1) If the applicant has an evaluation report due as described in the CNCS evaluation requirements (45 CFR §2522.710), and the evaluation is not a RCT or QED, the applicant should submit the report.

2) If the applicant is eligible for the preliminary evidence tier because it is replicating an evidence-based program, the applicant should submit at least one randomized control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation that found positive results for the same intervention that the applicant plans to replicate. If the applicant is currently replicating the program and has conducted a process evaluation of the replication, the applicant may also submit the process evaluation.

In all other cases, the applicant should describe its evidence in the evidence narrative of the application but should not submit additional documents.

F4. Are all current grantees required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program?

No. Applicants that have received only formula funding and applicants that are recompeting for their second three-year competitive grant are not required to submit an evaluation report. Refer to the CNCS evaluation requirements (45 CFR §2522.710) for more information.

The CNCS-required evaluation report may count toward one of the two studies required to demonstrate moderate or strong evidence, or preliminary evidence as described in FAQ F3. In this case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria. If the applicant is a current CNCS grantee but is not required to submit an evaluation, then more than two studies will not be considered.

F5. If I am submitting evaluation studies for review, why do I have to describe them in the narrative?

Different reviewers will assess different parts of the application, including the evidence narrative and the additional documents submitted. Sufficient narrative should be provided in the evidence narrative to assess the applicant's level of evidence, which will be confirmed by reviewing the submitted documents.

F6. If my program has moderate or strong evidence, do I need to submit two studies or is one sufficient?

One study is sufficient if it demonstrates moderate or strong evidence as described in the NOFO.

F7. If my program is replicating an evidence-based program, what aspects of my program are expected to be the same as the program I am replicating? [Added 10/13/15]

Applicants proposing to replicate an evidence-based program with fidelity must describe how their program is the same as, or very similar to, the program they will replicate in the following areas:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
- Training for the AmeriCorps members and/or other individuals, such as volunteers, delivering the intervention
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Applicants must also describe how they will assess whether they are implementing the intervention with fidelity to the intervention they are replicating.

F8. Is it possible for a program that implemented an approved alternative evaluation approach to be approved at the moderate or strong evidence level? [Added 10/19/15]

The Alternative Evaluation Approach is concerned with ensuring that a grantee conducts an evaluation that will meet CNCS requirements regardless of evidence tier. An applicant's evaluation must meet the requirements outlined for the moderate or strong evidence tier in the NOFO in order to be considered for that tier.

F9. Does CNCS value quantitative methods more than qualitative methods, and does it value some outcomes (such as improved academic achievement) more than others? [Added 10/19/15]

The type of evaluation methods used, and the outcomes measured, depend on a program's theory of change and research questions. Programs should evaluate one or more significant outcomes of their theory of change. Many high quality evaluations combine qualitative and quantitative methods.

F10. In tiers where we don't have to submit studies, can we still reference them? [Added 10/19/15]

Yes, you should describe the complete body of evidence that exists for your program in the evidence section. You should provide citations for studies you describe, if applicable; however, reviewers will not review any narrative that is not part of the application or that is not a study submitted in accordance with the NOFO instructions.

F11. For the moderate and strong evidence tiers, do the studies I submit have to be from my own program? [Added 10/19/15]

Yes. Only studies from your own program can demonstrate moderate or strong evidence.

F12. The NOFO describes how strong evidence could include two QEDs"....with different populations within a local geographic area." If one study looks at students in schools A, B, and C (all in one particular city), does the second study need to look at totally separate schools? Or, can there be some overlap of the locations? [Added 11/25/15]

There is no definite rule; what matters is that the findings can be generalized beyond a single study's context to establish as broad a base of evidence as possible. If two studies examine the same or similar populations within the same geographic area, then generalizing beyond that becomes more difficult. Different geographic areas or somewhat dissimilar populations provide stronger evidence because these studies broaden the ability to generalize.

F13. Can two evaluations of the same program in different years count as separate evaluations? For example, if we did an evaluation of the program in Year 1 and then presented a separate evaluation of Year 2, does that count as separate studies? [Added 11/25/15]

A single evaluation that included two years of program data would be considered one study. Two entirely separate evaluations would be considered two separate studies. Note, however, that if the two studies were identical in design, research questions, and study population then the second study would likely not expand the evidence base beyond the results generated by the first study.

G. Sampling

G1. Under what circumstances is it ok for grantees to use sampling?

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 when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population.

G2. 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.

G3. 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.

G4. 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 would need to make a compelling case for why they can no longer do so.

G5. 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.

H. Evaluation Requirements

H1. Please provide more detail on how the evaluation report (required for current grantees) 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 evidence tier. An applicant can submit other sources of evidence as outlined in the NOFO. If a grantee has received approval of an alternative evaluation approach for timing considerations, it is still required to submit an implementation report during the current grant cycle.

H2. 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

H3. Does the Evaluation Plan section count towards the page limit?

No.

H4. Is there a place where we can discuss an alternative evaluation approach and what do we need to do to submit such a request?

Applicants should submit their request, along with their evaluation plan, in the Evaluation Plan field of the application as directed in the NOFO.

H5. 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.

H6. If an applicant requests a grant award in excess of $500k and includes a proposal for an external evaluation plan (even if they would not be required to based on the last-three-years rule), but were awarded an amount below the threshold, would they be given the opportunity to revise for an internal evaluation plan? [Added 11/13/15]

Yes. CNCS doesn't "approve" evaluation plans during the application process; they give feedback on the plans they receive and provide TA to assist the large grantees with their plans. A grantee can revise their evaluation plan at any time as long as they remain on track to meet the evaluation requirements.

I. Partnership Challenge

I1. What process should those applying for Partnership Challenge slots use?

The AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge opportunity is part of the larger process of the FY2016 competitive funding opportunity. Therefore, applicants need to follow the same process outlined in the NOFO. Applicants should use the Education Award Program NOFO. The slots would be requested as without living allowance and the federal request is $0 cost per MSY.

I2. If we have a regular application that we are submitting, can we include partnership slots or do we need to submit a separate application?

You can merge the two and submit one application. If you are in continuation, you can add the Partnership request as an expansion request.

I3. Do the living allowance maximums apply to Partnership slots?

Yes, the Partnership applicants follow the same guidelines as other applicants.

I4. How long are the Partnership funds available?

As will regular competitive awards, the slots awarded under this opportunity will be available for three years through the continuation process.

I5. Do organizations need to purchase the education awards? Do members also qualify for loan forbearance

Under this opportunity, CNCS will provide the education awards. Yes, members have access to the same loan forbearance benefit as other AmeriCorps members.

I6. We are applying to the AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge EAP funding opportunity? Can we propose half-time members?

Yes, you may apply for less than full-time member positions.

I7. Should grantees awarded Partnership Challenge Grants during the stand-alone Partnership Challenge competition (Notice posted in July 2015) apply for continuation through this Notice or wait for a distinct Partnership Challenge competition?

Partnership Challenge grantees awarded during our stand-alone Partnership Challenge competition seeking to continue for a second year should apply for Continuation through this *Notice.* CNCS does not expect to run a separate Partnership Challenge process in 2016.

I8. Should current Partnership Challenge grantees apply through this competition? [Added 10/19/2015]

CNCS does not currently plan to conduct a stand-alone Partnership Challenge competition in 2016. Partnership Challenge grantees seeking continuation funding for a second year of program operation should apply for continuation via the current open AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2016 Competition. Information about this competition can be found here: http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2016

Partnership Challenge grantees funded as single state directs will apply under the following NOFO: FY 2016 AmeriCorps Direct Fixed Amount and EAP (New and Continuation)
Partnership Challenge grantees funded as multi-state directs will apply under the following NOFO: FY 2016 AmeriCorps Direct Fixed Amount and EAP (New and Continuation)
Partnership Challenge grantees funded as single state via a Commission will apply through their applicable Commission.

I9. I am a current Partnership Challenge grantee. Can I submit an application for a cost-reimbursement application in addition to, or in place of, my Partnership Challenge continuation application? [Added 11/13/2015]

Partnership Challenge applicants are eligible to apply for both a Partnership Challenge continuation application and a regular cost-reimbursement application under the 2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity. However, CNCS does not award duplicate projects. Per the NOFO, having a low cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. New applicants that submit with a low cost per MSY and recompeting applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher

priority for funding. Applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than funded in previous years must justify their requests.

If an applicant does not submit a continuation application for its current Partnership Challenge grant, it will not receive a Partnership Challenge continuation award. So, in a circumstance where an applicant chooses to apply for a regular competitive grant instead of a Partnership Challenge continuation and the regular application is not selected for funding, the organization would not receive an AmeriCorps award in 2016.

J. School Turnaround AmeriCorps

J1. What schools are eligible to participate in a School Turnaround AmeriCorps program?

Only SIG eligible schools are eligible to participate in the new grant. SIG eligible schools are SIG Tier I and Tier II schools at the time of the applicant's application due date; and/or priority schools or focus schools during the 2015-2016 school year.

J2. May a recompeting School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicant include schools that were previously served by the program but are no longer SIG eligible?

Only SIG eligible schools are eligible to participate in the new grant. This is true regardless of the school's previous participation in the program.

J3. How do we find out which schools are SIG eligible?

To find out which schools are SIG eligible, and therefore eligible to participate in a School Turnaround AmeriCorps project, you will have to contact the relevant State Education Agency (SEA).

J4. Can feeder pattern schools that pipeline into eligible schools be served as part of a School Turnaround AmeriCorps project?

Each school served must meet the eligibility requirements in its own right. A feeder school must be an eligible school in order to qualify.

J5. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants need to submit letters of commitment from their local education agencies and eligible schools. Would having a contract or MOU in place with these agencies meet that requirement, or would it actually need to be a letter of commitment for the grant?

A MOU cannot be used in place of a letter of commitment because the letter of commitment has specific requirements that are outlined on pages 7-8 of the *2016 Notice School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix*. The letters of commitment must demonstrate the schools' commitment to partnership as part of the proposed AmeriCorps program going forward.

J6. The 2016 Notice School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix states on page 4 that "CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in rural schools." However, in our state, there are only 8 SIG eligible schools in rural areas, though a majority of the geographic area of the state is considered rural and these areas are in desperate need of assistance. Will programs focusing on serving rural schools that are not SIG eligible be eligible for a School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant?

Programs focused on serving rural schools that are not SIG eligible schools would not qualify for a School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant. However, such applicants may apply for a regular AmeriCorps education grant.

J7. Can a School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicant apply for a Full-Time/Less than Full-Time Serving in a Full-Time Capacity fixed amount grant?

School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants may not apply for Full-Time/Less than Full-Time Serving in a Full-Time Capacity fixed amount grants. Applicants with prior AmeriCorps history as School Turnaround AmeriCorps or other AmeriCorps grants may apply for EAP School Turnaround AmeriCorps grants. All School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants may apply for cost reimbursement grants.

J8. What activities are School Turnaround AmeriCorps AmeriCorps members allowed to perform?

Allowable activities are limited to those interventions that are aligned with one or more of the six strategies listed on pages 2-3 of the 2016 *Notice School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix*. Members may not engage in prohibited activities (45 CFR §2520.65). Programs may not engage members in roles that duplicate or displace school staff. Roles including substitute teaching, exam proctoring, excessive data entry, etc., are unallowable for AmeriCorps members when they duplicate or displace school staff duties. Additionally, programs may not include activities that address non-School Turnaround AmeriCorps priorities, include non-School Turnaround AmeriCorps interventions, or *place* members at locations other than eligible schools (see the next FAQ). 100% of the program's MSY must be in the following Performance Measures: ED2, ED4A, ED5, ED27A, ED27B, and ED30. Programs may also select ED1, ED3A, ED7, ED9 and/or ED10. If an applicant plans to provide programming that is broader than School Turnaround AmeriCorps, then the applicant should submit a second applicant that proposes a non-School Turnaround AmeriCorps project to conduct activities that are appropriate for AmeriCorps but not School Turnaround AmeriCorps.

J9. The above FAQ says that members may not be place at locations other than eligible schools. Must all proposed grant-related activities take place at school?

While the Notice does not prohibit activities from taking place off-campus, providing services that are based exclusively at a community-based organization is not permitted. These types of activities can only be done in addition to activities that are school-based. An applicant proposing to have members serve a portion of their time at a community-based location must demonstrate that the community-based activities are aligned with the school turnaround plan and that grant funds would be used to support students from eligible schools.

J10. Are individual schools and individual school districts eligible to apply for a School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant?

Yes, individual schools and individual school districts are eligible to apply. Organizations planning to operate an AmeriCorps program in a single state must apply through a State Commission.

J11. Are State Education Agencies (SEAs) eligible to apply for School Turnaround AmeriCorps funds to support programming in SIG eligible schools? Or must the applicants be Local Education Agencies (LEAs)?

Both SEAs and LEAs are eligible to apply. Organizations planning to operate an AmeriCorps program in a single state must apply through a State Commission.

J12. Are nonprofit organizations eligible to apply for School Turnaround AmeriCorps funding?

Yes, nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. A single-state applicant must apply through a State Commission. Organizations planning to operate the program in more than one state will apply directly to CNCS.

J13. Can we apply on behalf of multiple schools?

A lead applicant may apply on behalf of multiple schools if each school meets the eligible school criteria as indicated in the 2016 *Notice School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix*.

J14. Do we have to decide in advance how many AmeriCorps members would be placed at each school?

While an applicant does not need to decide in advance how many AmeriCorps members will be placed at each school, the applicant will need to specify in the proposal how many members they are requesting.

J15. Will State Commissions submit applications for School Turnaround AmeriCorps grants on the competitive prime/NOFA in eGrants along with other competitive applications, or are School Turnaround AmeriCorps applications supposed to be submitted on a separate prime/NOFA in eGrants?

State Commissions will submit applications for School Turnaround AmeriCorps grants on the competitive prime/NOFA in eGrants along with other competitive applications. Financial and programmatic reporting on the School Turnaround AmeriCorps subgrants will be through separate FFRs and GPRs, however, and impact and accounting for School Turnaround AmeriCorps subgrantees must be segregated from other subgrantees.

J16. If we were to be awarded a grant, would all of our AmeriCorps members have to serve in the same location, or could they serve at different schools across the state?

AmeriCorps members may serve at one or more schools across the state (or states, if proposing a multi-state project) as long as all schools are eligible (per the *2016 Notice School Turnaround AmeriCorps Appendix*) and approved as part of the defined project.

J17. Must AmeriCorps members be active directly in the classroom or can they also be part of an after-school program?

Activities may be in the classroom and/or after school.

J18. Can SIG funds be used to satisfy the School Turnaround AmeriCorps match requirement?

The U.S. Department of Education has determined that SIG funds can be used as match for a School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant, if the use of SIG funds is otherwise allowable under the SIG requirements and is in accordance with the cost principles governing the SIG program. For example, an SEA may allocate some or all of the SIG funds it set aside for administration, evaluation, and technical assistance to satisfy the match requirement of the School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant. However, the SEA may not set aside additional funds to meet the match, because doing so would violate the SIG final requirement that at least 95% of SIG funds be awarded to LEAs.

J19. What are the evaluation requirements for School Turnaround AmeriCorps grantees recompeting in 2016? [Added 11/6/15]

School Turnaround AmeriCorps grantees recompeting in 2016 are required to submit an evaluation plan. If funded, these grantees will conduct an evaluation in their next three-year grant cycle.

J20. Should School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants recompeting in 2016 submit or discuss the national evaluation as part of their evidence base? [Added 11/6/15]

School Turnaround AmeriCorps grantees recompeting in 2016 should not submit the national evaluation as this evaluation was not an impact evaluation. If the applicant has performance measurement data or other evaluations of the intervention they are implementing for their School Turnaround grant, they should discuss this complete body of evidence in the evidence section of the application and may submit evaluations as described in the evidence section of the NOFO.

J21. Are schools in receivership eligible to participate as School Turnaround AmeriCorps schools? [Added 11/25/15]

SIG Tier I and Tier II schools and/or priority schools or focus schools during the 2015-2016 school year are eligible for School Turnaround AmeriCorps regardless of receivership status.