

## NOTICE OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

**Federal Agency Name:** Corporation for National and Community Service  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2016  
**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement  
**CFDA Number:** 94.006

### Key Dates

Notification of Intent to Apply: Submission of a Notification of Intent to Apply is required to be eligible for this competition and is due **Friday October 30, 2015 at 5:00 CST**. Single-State applicants should provide this information directly to the Commission in the state in which the applicant intends to operate the program.

Application Submission: Single state applications are due to the Volunteer Louisiana Commission no later than **Friday, November 6, 2015 at 11:00pm CST**.

Disclosure: Publication of this Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity (*Notice*) does not obligate the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) or Volunteer Louisiana to award any specific number of grants or to obligate the entire amount of funding available.

### A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of both CNCS and Volunteer Louisiana is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. Volunteer Louisiana - through AmeriCorps, and the Volunteer Generation Fund - has helped to engage thousands of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

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

#### 1. Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations (see page 4) proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that members can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

CNCS and Volunteer Louisiana may award a Cost Reimbursement or a Fixed Amount grant to any successful applicant, but the availability of a Full Time Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants. See Section C.1 and Glossary for more information. In addition to the funding allocated for competitive distribution under this *Notice*, CNCS provides funding based on population directly to Governor-appointed State Service Commissions which they, in turn, award through a process they administer according to state priorities.

This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, the *Notice* Glossary, Application Instructions, and the Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. These documents can be found at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your->

[capacity/grants/funding-opportunities](#). The full regulations are available online at [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov). The TTY number is 800-833-3722. For a printed copy of related material, call 202-606-7508.

### **CNCS Focus Areas**

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

#### **Disaster Services**

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

#### **Economic Opportunity**

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

#### **Education**

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

#### **Environmental Stewardship**

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

#### **Healthy Futures**

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

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

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

## **2. 2016 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities**

CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

- Disaster Services - improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation

- Economic Opportunity - increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically opportunity youth (see Glossary), both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members
- Education - improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics (STEM) or addressing student and school needs through School Turnaround AmeriCorps programming (see Glossary and Appendix)
- Environment - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Service Corps (see Glossary)
- Veterans and Military Families -- positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper (see Glossary)
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities (see Glossary)
- Safer communities - activities that focus on public safety and preventing and mitigating civil unrest e.g., summer programming or engaging communities that are part of The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention.
- Elder Justice AmeriCorps (see Glossary)

In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.

#### Next Gen AmeriCorps

Depending on overall funding available, CNCS is inviting applicants to propose the Next Generation AmeriCorps or Next Gen AmeriCorps. The importance of service remains even within tight fiscal constraints we face as a nation. The goal of Next Gen AmeriCorps is to use innovative strategies to offer the same service opportunities but at a more efficient cost to the government. To participate, applicants must have a cost per member that is lower than \$10,000 per year per full time member using CNCS funding. CNCS is looking for innovative approaches and models to implement, for example: locating operations in Promise Zones, areas that meet Promise Zone criteria, or that demonstrate other indicators of severe need.

#### Encore Programs

Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support Encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. CNCS seeks to meet that target in this competition and encourages Encore programs to apply. Encore will provide an opportunity for current evidence-based Senior Corps Foster Grandparents Program and Senior Companion Program grantees to expand their programs through AmeriCorps funding.

### 3. National Performance Measures

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS's five-year Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious set of objectives that guided the development of 16 agency-wide Priority Performance Measures. Both CNCS and Volunteer Louisiana expect organizations to use National Performance Measures as part of their comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve their goals. For more information, please refer to the National Performance Measure Instructions packet relating to your Focus Area <http://www.volunteerlouisiana.gov/ameriCorps/grant-opportunities/>

All applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary service activity. CNCS/Volunteer Louisiana does not expect applicants to select performance measures to correspond to each and every potential member activity or community impact. CNCS/Volunteer Louisiana values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures. As described in the Application Instructions, applicants must include all their information about their proposed performance measure in the Performance Measure section of the applications in eGrants (CNCS's web-based grants management system). All information requested in the National Performance Measure Instructions must be included in the text of the performance measures themselves, and it must be evident in the performance measure text that all definitions and requirements outlined in the National Performance Measures Instructions and NOFO FAQs are met. Providing performance measures information elsewhere in the narrative cannot be in lieu of providing full information in the Performance Measures section of the application in eGrants.

#### **4. Program Authority**

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), as amended, 42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq. The full text of the NCSA is available online at <http://uscode.house.gov>. The full regulations are available online at <http://www.ecfr.gov>

CNCS's Fiscal Year 2016 Congressional Budget Request includes a request for additional statutory authority to operate summer-based programs for disadvantaged Opportunity Youth who are 14 or older at the time they begin their national service.

### **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

#### **1. Estimated Available Funds**

CNCS expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps FY 2016 competitive grant competition. The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations, which have not yet been made. Grant awards have two components: operating funds and AmeriCorps member positions. Grant award amounts vary – both in the level of operating funds and in the type and amount of AmeriCorps member positions.

#### **2. Award Period**

Unless otherwise specified, the grant generally covers a three-year project period. In approving a multi-year project period, CNCS generally makes an initial award for the first year of operation. In most cases, the application is submitted with a one-year budget. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds. CNCS reserves the right to adjust the amount of a grant or elect not to continue funding for subsequent years.

#### **3. Project/Award Period**

The project start date is generally one year with a start date proposed by the applicant. 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. AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period.

### **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

#### **1. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible to apply: public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and federally

recognized Indian Tribes. Receiving funding previously from CNCS or another Federal agency is not a prerequisite to apply under this *Notice*.

In addition to being eligible to apply under this *Notice*, federally recognized Indian Tribes will also be eligible to apply under a separate Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for Indian Tribes for operating or planning grants released later in the fall with an application deadline of spring 2016.

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

### **New Applicants**

Both CNCS and Volunteer Louisiana encourage organizations that have never received funding from CNCS to apply. The general practice is for CNCS to award Competitive grants of no more than 50 member positions (slots) and at least 20 member positions (slots) to organizations receiving an AmeriCorps grant for the first time. *Volunteer Louisiana allows organizations to submit applications for programs with a minimum of 5 MSYs; please note that these applications can only be considered for Formula funding in the FY16 application process.*

New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants but not eligible to apply for Full Time Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement 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.

### **Continuation Applicants**

Organizations that have current AmeriCorps awards that do not end in FY16 must submit an application in order to be eligible to receive funding for the following year. Please see p. 13 of the Application Instructions. Requests by existing continuation applicants for increases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the criteria under this *Notice*.

### **Type of Applicants**

#### Single-State Applicants

Organizations that propose to operate in only one state must apply through the Governor-appointed State or Territory Commissions. Each state and territory commission administers its own selection process and submits to CNCS the applicants it selects to compete for funding. Single-State applicants in Louisiana must contact Volunteer Louisiana to learn about our processes and deadlines which are significantly *earlier* than the CNCS deadlines and have additional requirements. [A single state application submitted directly to CNCS by the applicant rather than to Volunteer Louisiana will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed.](#)

#### National Direct Applicants

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

*Federally-recognized Indian Tribes:* Applicants that are Indian Tribes apply directly to CNCS. An Indian Tribe is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, Regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and services provided under federal law to Indians because of

their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

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

### **Fixed Amount Grants and Education Award Program Grants**

There is no specific match requirement for Full Time Fixed Amount, Education Award Program, and AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge grants. CNCS does not provide all the funds necessary to operate the program; therefore organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.

### **Cost Reimbursement Grants**

A first-time successful applicant is required to match at 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60

Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. 12571(e)) requires programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant to report the amount and source of these funds to CNCS on a Federal Financial Report. Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout.

The living allowance or salary provided to AmeriCorps members in Professional Corps programs (see Glossary) does not count toward the matching requirement.

### **Alternative Match**

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations at 45 CFR §2521.60(b). To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. Applicants that plan to request an alternative match schedule must submit a request at the time the application is submitted. State programs submit requests for alternative match to the State Commission. State Commissions submit on behalf of their state applicants and National Directs submit their requests directly to [ACAAlternateMatchScheduleRequests@cns.gov](mailto:ACAAlternateMatchScheduleRequests@cns.gov).

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

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

Organizations should refer to the Volunteer Louisiana website to obtain the necessary information to apply.

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

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

- Determine whether you are a National Direct applicant that will apply directly to CNCS or a Single-State applicant that will apply through Volunteer Louisiana
- For Single-State Applicants: Contact Volunteer Louisiana for the application materials and deadline
- Submit a Notification of Intent to Apply via email to Volunteer Louisiana by Friday October 30, 2014
- Obtain a DUNS number
- Establish an eGrants account
- For National Direct applicants: Coordinate with State Commission(s) for the location where proposed grant activities will occur
- Write a high quality application that is responsive to the *Notice*
- Provide required additional documents via email, if applicable
- Complete and submit the application via eGrants by the deadline
- Submit a request for an alternative match schedule, if applicable.

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

CNCS expects State Commissions and National Direct applicants to consult and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131 of the NCSA (42 U.S.C. § 12583). This consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination.

To ensure coordination:

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

Before application submission:

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

After Award:

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

State/Territory Commissions must:

Before application submission:

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

After Award:

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

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

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

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the CNCS web-based system, eGrants (egrants.cns.gov). Because it is a unique system, it is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document and copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields no later than 10 days before the deadline. Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants. CNCS will consider the number of pages as they print out through eGrants when determining compliance with any page limits in this *Notice*.

Contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or [https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask\\_eg](https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_eg) if a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants.

National Service Hotline hours are as follows: Mon - Fri, 9 am – 7 pm ET (Jan, Aug, Sept)  
Mon - Thu, 9 am – 7 pm EST (Oct, Nov, Dec). In addition to those hours, the Hotline will also be open Oct 30, 31 and November 1, December 4-6 and 11-13 as well as the one weekend prior to the application deadline (January 16-18) from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. ET to assist applicants. If you contact the Hotline, be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying.

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

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

### **Submission of Additional Documents**

Applicants must submit all required additional documents by the application deadline. All additional required documents should be labeled with the applicant organization name and Application ID number at the top of the page and are due by November 6, 2015 at [strahan@crt.la.gov](mailto:strahan@crt.la.gov). Emails should include in the Subject line, the applicant organization name and Application ID number.

Additional documents may include (if applicable): evaluation reports, letters from the consortium members for Multi-focused intermediaries, and up to two evaluation briefs, reports, and/or peer reviewed articles if the applicant has a moderate or strong evidence base. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applications must submit the additional documents that are outlined in the Glossary and Appendix.

Failure to submit the required additional documents may have a negative impact on the assessment of an application. Do not submit other items not requested in this *Notice*. Neither Volunteer Louisiana nor CNCS will not review or return them.

### **Application Fields and Page Limits**

In eGrants, applicants will enter text in the following fields:

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

Applications may not exceed 15 pages for the Narratives (16 pages for Multi-State applications with more than five operating sites, 18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries, School Turnaround, and Next Gen AmeriCorps applicants). Application content considered in determining page limit compliance includes the Executive Summary, SF 424 Facesheet, and the Narrative Sections contained in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy as the pages print out from

**eGrants.** Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants. CNCS/Volunteer Louisiana will consider the number of pages as they print out through eGrants when determining compliance for page limits. Applicants are strongly encouraged to print out the application from the “Review and Submit” page prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit. The application page limit does not include the budget, narrative portion of the Evaluation Plan, the Logic Model, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable.

The Logic Model may not exceed more than three pages when printed from the application.

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

### **Assessment Criteria**

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

### **Threshold Issues**

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. No applicant interested in being submitted to CNCS for Competitive consideration should submit an application with less than 20 member slots; applicants interested in being considered for Formula funding only may submit an application with as few as 5 MSYs. If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place AmeriCorps members serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals. If an applicant is applying for a Full Time Fixed Amount grant, the application should reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. An application for the Governor and Mayor Initiative should clearly reflect that the application is from one Governor, one Mayor, and a minimum of two nonprofits. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must describe how the program will meet these requirements. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants must meet the threshold requirements outlined in the Glossary and Appendix.

In order to be considered for Competitive funding, new and re-competing 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 Competitive funding consideration.

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

### **Application Fields**

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

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from the template below.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [what the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the

first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)].\* The CNCS investment of \$[amount of request] will be matched with \$[amount of projected match], \$[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and \$[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

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

Fixed Amount grant applicants (EAP and Fulltime Fixed) should list their Other Revenue (see Glossary) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program. CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded Competitive grant applications on [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

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

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants should respond to the additional criteria in the Glossary and Appendix.

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

- The community problem/need is clearly defined and aligns with the proposed intervention.
- The community problem/need is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and has been well documented with relevant data. (Endeavor to use data that is 3 years old or less.)

#### **2. Theory of Change and Logic Model (15 points)**

- The applicant's proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant's intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change. The theory of change should be either evidence-informed or evidence-based, meaning that the proposed intervention is guided by the best available research evidence that supports its effectiveness in the evidence section.
- The proposed outcomes represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem/need identified by the applicant.
- The applicant's AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem. (Why AmeriCorps?)

The logic model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem/need outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
  - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
  - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
  - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
  - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
  - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)

- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served.) Identify, by Code (ie. ED2, O12, etc..)which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

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

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention. Logic model content that exceeds the three pages will not be reviewed.

### **3. Evidence Base (12 points)**

Applicants will be awarded up to 12 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the logic model. Applicants shall provide a description of up to two research studies or evaluations that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the target population and community problem, and should describe how this evidence places them in the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible. Applicants should pay particular attention to the requirements for each tier of evidence. More points are awarded for higher tiers of evidence.

Applicants requesting consideration for the moderate and strong evidence levels should reference the Submission of Additional Documents section for guidance on the submission of evaluation studies.

All applicants must include as much detailed information as possible in the Evidence section of the application. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from two of the strongest and most relevant studies. Studies must be evaluations of specific programs or interventions. Research that does not focus on a specific program or intervention, but rather focuses on a broader issue area or population, will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

All applicants must include a description of up to two research studies or evaluations in order to earn points, including the following information:

- 1) The date of the research or evaluation was completed, and the time period for which the intervention was examined
- 2) A description of the target population studied (e.g. the demographics)
- 3) The methodology used in the study (e.g.; outcome study, random assignment, regression discontinuity design , or propensity score matching)
- 4) A description of the data, data source, and data collection methods
- 5) The outcomes or impacts examine and the study findings
- 6) The strength of the findings (e.g. confidence level, statistical power of the study design and statistical significance of findings).

Reviewers will examine the descriptions (and attached studies if relevant) using the following criteria:

- a) How closely the intervention evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant;
- b) The methodological quality and rigor of the studies presented (e.g., sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, use of control or equivalent comparison groups, baseline equivalence and study attrition, etc.);
- c) Strength and consistency of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a meaningful and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels; and

- d) The date of the study, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years.

If the evidence submitted as part of an application does not describe a well-designed and well-implemented evaluation, the applicant will be considered for a lower tier of evidence and related point values.

Requirements associated with the five evidence tiers are described next.

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

**Pre-preliminary evidence** (1-2 points) means the applicant has demonstrated data collection experience testing or tracking at least one aspect of its logic model. For example, the applicant has collected systemic and accurate data on one or more of the following: the community need the proposed intervention will address, the program intervention's activities and services delivered, participation in the intervention by the target population, and/or participant outcomes (for example, performance measurement data or a process evaluation assessing implementation of the intervention.)

The data collection process and results must be described fully and the applicant should explain the link between data collection and the relevant component(s) of its logic model. Evidence for the pre-preliminary tier should be described in the Evidence section of the application but does not require submission of supplemental documentation.

**Preliminary evidence** (3-6 points) means the applicant has described up to two outcome studies about the intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or a similar intervention that the applicant will replicate with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows:

- The applicant must describe at least one outcome study that was conducted of their own intervention. This must include a detailed description of the outcome study data from pre and post-tests without a comparison group or post-test comparison between intervention and comparison groups. An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement. This description should explain whether the outcome study was conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant.

OR

- The applicant must describe at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation (e.g. propensity score matching) that found positive results for the same intervention that the applicant plans to replicate. The description should include details about how the intervention studied and the applicant's proposed approach are the same and how the applicant will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model. The study must have been conducted by an entity external to the organization whose program was studied.

OR

- The applicant may submit evidence from both bullets listed above. In this case, the applicant must provide data from an outcome study of an intervention it has previously implemented (see above) and also proposes to modify their program by replicating another random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation. Applicants should describe their previous outcome study and should also describe and submit the study (ies) of the proposed evidence-based intervention.

For the purposes of this Notice, “replicate” means that the key elements of the applicant’s intervention are implemented as the evidence-based program model describes (e.g., in terms of content or curriculum, delivery process, and target population), and the applicant’s adaptations are relatively minor. For example, an applicant implementing an intervention using certified teachers to administer the curriculum would not be considered replicating that program with fidelity if it replaces teachers with AmeriCorps members who are not certified teachers, because the documented success of the intervention relied on the specialization of certified teachers.

**Moderate evidence** (7-9 points) means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies that evaluated the same intervention described in this application and identified evidence of effectiveness on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant’s logic model. Evidence of effectiveness (or positive findings) is determined using experimental design evaluations (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)) or quasi-experimental design evaluations (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site). The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Applicants classifying their evidence as **Moderate** must submit up to two evaluation reports from external sources or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

Current CNCS grantees are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report *may* count towards one of the two studies required for Moderate evidence tier *or* may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not a current grantee, then more than two studies will not be considered.

**Strong evidence** (10-12 points) means the applicant has demonstrated that the intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented QED or RCT. Alternatively, the proposed intervention’s evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive. Findings from the RCT or QED studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Applicants classifying their evidence as **Strong** must submit up to two evaluation reports from external sources or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

Current CNCS grantees are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report *may* count towards one of the two studies required for Strong evidence tier *or* may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not a current grantee, then more than two studies will not be considered.

#### **4. Notice Priority (3 points)**

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2016 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined on page 3 and more fully described in the Glossary.
- The proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed on page 3 and in the Glossary.

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

- AmeriCorps members will receive high quality training to provide effective service. Specifically address PSO, additional training topics and a general timeline for implementation of training/member development.
- AmeriCorps members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to AmeriCorps requirements including the rules regarding prohibited activities (see Glossary).

### **6. Member Supervision (2 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will receive high quality guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service. Discuss how this will occur.
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations. Include verbiage addressing topics/types of training and preparation, dosage, etc..

### **7. Member Experience (3 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences, including opportunities for reflection and connection to the broader National Service network.
- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the programs operate.

### **8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (2 points)**

- Members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- Staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members. Describe the steps the applicant will take to ensure that this occurs.
- AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

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

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

### **1. Organizational Background and Staffing (10 points)**

- The organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- The organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants effectively.
- The organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

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

### **2. Compliance and Accountability (15 points)**

- The applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues. Discuss the process(es) in place.
- The applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified. Discuss the process(es) in place.

- The organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).
- The AmeriCorps members service will not duplicate, displace, or supplant volunteers, staff and/or interns. Discuss how this will be ensured.

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

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

##### **1. Cost Effectiveness (18 points)**

- The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.\*
- The budget aligns with the applicant's narrative.\*
- The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost.
- The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program.
- The applicant, if recompeting, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Glossary) than approved in previous grants, or provides a compelling rationale for the same or increased cost including why this increase could not be covered by the grantee share.

\*Program costs not included in the formal budget, including for Fixed Price and Partnership Challenge grantees, must be described in this section in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess their sufficiency and alignment.

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 requests above the maximum cost per MSY (see Section 5.C.), it must justify its request. Please note that such requests are rarely approved.

##### **2. Budget Adequacy (7 points)**

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated. Each line item must have a calculation.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget (Source of Funds section).

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

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

#### **E. Evaluation Plan (Required for recompeting grantees - 0 percent)**

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the Evaluation Plan field since it pertains only to recompeting grantees. If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of "recompeting" below) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report via email to [AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov](mailto:AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov) by the application deadline, as

well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. Evaluations plans submitted outside of eGrants will not be reviewed.

Evaluation plans must include as much information as possible for each of the following (see Frequently Asked Questions: Evaluation, available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cncs-evaluation-policies>):

- A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation
- Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes
- Study components – a) a proposed research design for the evaluation including a rationale for the design selected, an assessment of its strengths and limitations, and a description of the main components; b) description of the sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures, and c) an analysis plan
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator
- The estimated budget.

For more information about evaluation plans visit the CNCS Knowledge Network's Evaluation Resources: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/planning-evaluation>.

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

- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee (other than an Education Award Program grantee), and its average annual CNCS program grant is \$500,000 or more, it must arrange for an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 CFR §2522.730.
- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee whose average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program Grantee, it must conduct an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 CFR §2522.730.

A program will be considered a re-competing application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” (see Glossary) and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the upcoming 3 year grant. If the project does not satisfy the definition of re-competing, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, or completed evaluation report.

The Evaluation Plan field of eGrants does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit. Applicants should print out the plan to ensure the narrative does not exceed the character limits when entered in eGrants.

State/Territory subgrantees and/or National Direct Grantees with an average annual CNCS program grant of \$500,000 or more that are re-competing for funds are eligible to apply for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. Grantees requesting approval of an alternative evaluation approach should submit a request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach along with their evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in eGrants. The request should clearly explain: (a) the evaluation constraints faced by the program, (b) why the proposed approach is the most rigorous option feasible, and (c) how the proposed alternative approach will help the grantee build their evidence base. Evaluation

plans should include, at a minimum, the required elements listed in this Notice. The evaluation plan must be consistent with the information submitted in the competitive funding application and in the request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. More information on alternative evaluation approaches can be found at:

[https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/files/guidance\\_for\\_grantees\\_approval\\_of\\_alternative\\_evaluation\\_approach.pdf](https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.pdf).

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 filed 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

#### **Notification of Intent to Apply**

Submission of a Notification of Intent to Apply is required to be eligible for this competition and is due **by Friday, October 30, 2015 at 5:00pm CST** Via email to [strahan@crt.la.gov](mailto:strahan@crt.la.gov). Please include the following information in the Notice of Intent: organization name, Focus Area of application, brief description of the proposed service. The subject line of the email should read: NOTICE OF INTENT FY16.

Volunteer Louisiana will not consider notifications received after the deadline. Failure to submit a Notification of Intent to Apply will render an applicant ineligible to apply. All Notifications of Intent to Apply will receive an email response acknowledging receipt.

Continuation grantees that are only submitting continuation applications should not submit a Notice of Intent to Apply .

### **Application Submission Deadline**

Applications are **due Friday, November 6, 2015 by 11:00pm Central Time** to Volunteer Louisiana via eGrants.

Volunteer Louisiana will not consider applications received after the deadline, except as noted below. Volunteer Louisiana reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted. This deadline applies to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants.

### **Late Applications**

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

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

## **5. Funding Restrictions**

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

AmeriCorps grants can be awarded on a cost reimbursement or fixed amount basis. CNCS will not provide both types of grants for the same project in one fiscal year. See Glossary.

## General Summary

| Grant Types   | Cost Reimbursement |  | Fixed Amount   |       |  |
|---|--------------------|--|--|-------|--|
|   | Traditional        | Professional Corps   | Full-Time/Less than FT Serving in a full time capacity                                     | EAP   | Professional Corps   |
| Maximum Cost per MSY  | \$13,730           | Up to \$1,000*   | \$13,430   | \$800 | Up to \$1,000*   |
| Type of Slots in the National Service Trust                             | All                | All  | Full-Time or Less than Full-Time Serving in a full time capacity Only                      | All   | Full-Time Only   |
| Budget Submission Required  | Yes                |  | No   |       | Yes, if requesting operating funds   |
| Availability of Funds linked to enrollment and retention of awarded MSY | No                 |  | Yes  |       |  |
| Special Requirements  | N/A                | Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Member salaries must be paid entirely by organization where member serves and not included in the budget. | School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants are not eligible for Full Time Fixed Amount grants | N/A   | Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. No CNCS funds may be used to pay member living allowance or salary. |
| Match Requirements  | Yes                | Yes; Living allowance or salary paid to members may not be counted toward the match requirement.   | No, but organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.   |       |  |
| Financial Reporting Requirements  | Yes                |  | No   |       |  |
| Available to New Applicants   | Yes                |  | No   | Yes   | Yes  |

\*CNCS's assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non-CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider requests for operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources.

### B. Member Living Allowance

The proposed budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that is between \$12,530 (minimum) and \$25,060 (maximum) per member except as noted below. A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage.

Cost reimbursement programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the maximum limits in Table 1 below. For Cost Reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either CNCS or grantee share. (EXCEPTION: as noted in Section B.1. and B.3.)

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements to members (EXCEPTION: as noted in section B.2. and B.3.) Most Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to indicate that amount in the application and should request those positions as “without living allowance” in the budget.

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

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

**1. Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements (for programs existing prior to September 21, 1993)**

If a program existed prior to September 21, 1993, a living allowance is not required. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement, but not the maximum requirement.

**2. EAP Grantees** are not required to provide a living allowance, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Table above.

**3. Professional Corps Grantees** must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. School Turnaround AmeriCorps EAPs may exceed the maximum living allowance.

**C. Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)**

Maximum Costs per MSY are set forth in Table 2 below. The CNCS cost per MSY is determined by dividing the CNCS share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. It does not include child care or the value of the education award a member may earn. The maximum amount an applicant may request from CNCS per MSY is determined on an annual basis.

New and re-competing State Commission sub-grantees/applicants will be held to the maximum cost per MSY for their grant type.

**Table 2: 2016 Maximum Cost per MSY**

| <b>Grant Program</b>  | <b>Maximum</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Individual Competitive State/Territory Program (cost reimbursement) | \$13,730       |
| Professional Corps Grant (Cost Reimbursement)                       | Up to \$1,000* |
| Professional Corps Fixed Amount Grant                               | Up to \$1,000* |
| Education Award Program Fixed Amount Grant                          | \$800          |
| Education Award Program Partnership Challenge Grant**               | \$0            |
| State/Territory Commission Average (of all its subgrants)           | \$13,730       |

\*CNCS's assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non CNCS resources.

**\*\* Partnership Challenge applicants should apply as an EAP program in eGrants but will request \$0 cost per MSY.**

Programs operating in rural communities (as defined in the Glossary) and programs that recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to \$13,930 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members that will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants serving exclusively in rural schools may request up to \$15,000 cost per MSY. All applicants must include a compelling case as to why the applicant's cost per MSY must be higher.

**D. Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FY 2016**

AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded with FY 2016 dollars who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of \$5,775 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly smaller awards for less than full-time service. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service to use the Education Award.

**Table 3: Term of Service and FY16 Education Award**

| <b>Term of Service</b> | <b>Minimum # of Hours</b> | <b>Education Award</b> |
|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Full Time              | 1700                      | \$5,775.00             |
| Half Time              | 900                       | \$2,887.50             |
| Reduced Half Time      | 675                       | \$2,199.92             |
| Quarter Time           | 450                       | \$1,527.45             |
| Minimum Time           | 300                       | \$1,221.96             |

## E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 1. Selection Criteria

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. CNCS will engage external reviewers to provide insight and input with respect to eligible applications. In addition, CNCS staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and strategic consideration described in this *Notice*.

Specifically, the review and selection process will:

A. Identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- High alignment with narrative assessment criteria
- High alignment with priorities outlined in this *Notice*, including priority-specific requirements as detailed in the Glossary
- Relative risk and opportunity.

B. Consider:

- State/Territory Commission rank and recommendations on state applicants
- State/Territory Commission input on National Direct applications, except federally-recognized Indian Tribes.

C. Yield a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:

- Meaningful representation of
  - Geographic diversity
  - Rural communities (see definition in Glossary)
  - Small and medium programs
  - Single and multi-state programs
  - Faith- and community-based organizations
- Focus area representation
- Organizations and/or program models that recruit and engage traditionally underrepresented populations as AmeriCorps members (e.g.; people with disabilities, low-income individuals, older Americans, etc) and expand opportunities to serve as AmeriCorps members
- High ratio of match and/or other revenue to CNCS investment
- Evidence levels
- Promise Zone designees or cities that have had a Strong Cities, Strong Communities community solutions team.

### 2. Review and Selection Process

#### A. Compliance and Eligibility Review

PLEASE NOTE: The Volunteer Louisiana Commission follows a similar process in evaluating applications on the state level. This includes applications that will be submitted to CNCS for Competitive consideration, AND applications that will be considered for Formula funding only.

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

- Submit a Notification of Intent to Apply by the deadline
- Submit an application by the application submission deadline
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and follows the instructions provided in this *Notice*

- Submit an application with a minimum of twenty AmeriCorps members.\*

\*for applicants who wish to be considered for Competitive funding. All other applicants must have a minimum of 5 MSYs to be considered for Formula funding.

### **B. Phase One Review**

There are three 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 Base portion of the Application. Each application will be read by several CNCS staff.

Volunteer Louisiana staff will assess our re-competing subgrantees' past performance and submit those assessments to CNCS. CNCS will assess its re-competing 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*.

### **C. Selection of Applications for Phase Two Review**

Applications will advance to Phase Two Review based on the results of the Phase One Review, as well as consideration of the priorities and the strategic considerations outlined in the *Notice*. Those applications that do not advance to Phase Two Review will not be recommended for funding.

### **D. Phase Two Review**

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

### **E. Financial and Risk Assessment Evaluation**

CNCS staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding, the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria, and the assessment of programmatic past performance. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award. In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following, but not limited to:

- Financial stability
- Quality of financial management systems and ability to meet the administrative standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance
- History of performance as reflected in the applicant’s record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including:
  - Timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements,
  - If applicable, meeting matching requirements, and
  - If applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards
- Information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as—
  - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS),
  - Dun and Bradstreet, or
  - “Do Not Pay”
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under OMB Circular A-133 and findings of any other available audits
- IRS Tax Form 990
- An applicant organization's annual report
- Publicly available information including information from an applicant organization's website;
- Any other information listed in 45 CFR § 2522.140; and
- The applicant’s ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

#### **F. Selection for Funding**

Applicants that do not advance to Phase Two will not be selected for funding. The CEO will select the final portfolio, based on staff recommendations on the quality of response (including clarification responses) against the criteria, programmatic and financial risk assessments, external review input, *Notice*’s priorities and strategic considerations.

#### **G. Feedback to Applicants**

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

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

- A blank template of the internal review form.
- A blank template of the external review form of the Evidence Base.
- A list of all compliant applications submitted.
- Executive summaries of all compliant applications submitted by the applicants as part of the application.
- Data extracted from the Standard Form 424 Face Sheet (SF424) and Program Narrative submitted by applicants for successful applications.
- Summaries of external reviewers’ comments for successful applications.
- A list of external reviewers who completed the review process.

### 3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. Depending on the availability of funding, CNCS expects that successful State Competitive and National Directs will be notified **no later than May 13, 2016**, contingent on timely full year appropriations. Formula grant awards will be made approximately August 1, 2016, contingent on timely full year appropriations.

## F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 1. Federal Award Notices

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

### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

#### Documents that Govern the Grant

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

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

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

#### National Service Criminal History Check Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of national service. The law requires recipients to conduct and document NSCHCs on any person (including award-funded staff, national service participant, or volunteer) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend or education award through a program receiving CNCS funds. An individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives such CNCS funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. The cost of conducting NSCHCs is an allowable expense under the award.

Unless CNCS has provided a recipient with a written exemption or written approval of an alternative search procedure, recipients must perform the following checks–

All award-funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW); *and*
2. *Either*
  - A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person's state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work *or*
  - A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

Special Rule for Persons Serving Vulnerable Populations. Award-funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers *with recurring access to vulnerable populations* (i.e., children age 17 or younger, individuals age 60 or older, or individuals with disabilities) must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based check of the [NSOPW](#); *and*
2. *Both*

- A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person's state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work; *and*
- A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

See 45 C.F.R. § 2540.200–§ 2540.207 and <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check> for complete information and FAQs. Vendor checks (checks performed by commercial vendors) are often noncompliant with these requirements. Inability of a grantee to demonstrate that they have conducted an NSOPW and other required criminal history checks, as specified in CNCS's regulations, may result in disallowance of all or part of the costs associated with noncompliance.

### **Use of Material**

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

### **3. Reporting**

Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, semi-annual financial reports, and an internal or external evaluation report as required by the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§2522.500-2522.540 and §§2522.700-2522.740.

Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports and an internal or external evaluation report. All grantees, including Fixed Amount grantees, submit quarterly financial reports to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Payment Management System.

If you receive an award directly from CNCS, you will be required to report at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for your organization and for your subgrantees. You must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 CFR. Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

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

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

### **Progress Report Data**

In addition to semi-annual reporting of progress toward the grant's approved performance measure outputs and outcomes, additional demographic and narrative data must be reported annually (as applicable).

### **Re-Focusing of Funding**

CNCS reserves the right to re-focus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

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

This *Notice* is available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>. The TTY number is 202–606-3472. For further information or for a printed copy of this *Notice*, call (202) 606-7508. For questions regarding multi-state or Indian Tribes applications submitted

directly to CNCS, please call (202) 606-7508 or send an e-mail to [americorpsgrants@cns.gov](mailto:americorpsgrants@cns.gov). Questions about single state applications in Louisiana should be addressed to the Volunteer Louisiana. A list of all other state Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. Volunteer Louisiana's mailing address is:

Volunteer Louisiana  
Attn: AmeriCorps  
Post Office Box 44243  
Baton Rouge, LA 708046

#### **H. OTHER INFORMATION**

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