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2021 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity



MANDATORY SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE

Applications due October 27, 2020

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO APPLICANTS: The following documents are necessary to complete a 2021-22 operating grant application for AmeriCorps funding. All can be found on the California Volunteers website, <https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/grants/ameriCorps/>.

- (1) 2021 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity Request for Applications (RFA)
- (2) 2021 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity Mandatory Supplemental Guidance
- (3) 2021 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity Application Instructions
- (4) 2021 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms
- (5) 2021 CNCS National Performance Measures Instructions

NOTE FOR CONTINUATION PROGRAMS: If you are currently funded by CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) and need to apply for year two or three of continuation funding, this RFA does not apply to you. Instructions will be e-mailed directly to you by CV.

The 2021 AmeriCorps State Mandatory Supplemental Guidance is intended to provide applicants with additional information for the preparation of their applications under the 2021 AmeriCorps State Grant Request for Applications (RFA). The Supplemental Guidance provides both detailed definitions of certain terms included but may have not been defined in the RFA. This Supplemental Guidance is incorporated by reference in the RFA, and applicants must comply with any requirements stated in this Supplemental Guidance.

Capacity Building: A set of activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations served by CNCS-supported organizations (i.e., AmeriCorps programs). As a general rule, CNCS considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CNCS-supported organizations to provide more, better, and sustained *direct services*. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Capacity building activities must:

- 1) Be intended to support or enhance the program delivery model;
- 2) Respond to the program's goal of increasing, expanding, or enhancing services in order to address the most pressing needs identified in the community; and
- 3) Enable the program to provide a sustained level of more or better direct services after the capacity building services end.

Cost Reimbursement Grants: These grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances, with flexibility to use all of the funds for allowable costs regardless of whether or not the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a budget and financial reports.

Enrollment Rate: Enrollment rate is calculated as slots filled, plus refill slots filled, divided by slots awarded.

Evidence based: Evidence-based programs have been rigorously evaluated and have demonstrated positive results for at least one key desired outcome. Rigorous evaluation means at least one Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) or Quasi-Experimental Design (QED) evaluation of the same intervention described in the application.

Evidence-based interventions on the CNCS Evidence Exchange: interventions supported by positive results from rigorous evaluations that are documented at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange>. Include but are not limited to the following:

- Economic Opportunity:
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/CNCS_Economic_Opportunity_Evidence_Brief_2019_508.pdf
- Education:
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/CNCS_Education_Evidence_Brief_112318_508.pdf
- Healthy Futures:
https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/HF_Evidence_Brief_FINAL_v2_508.pdf

Evidence informed: Programs in this category use the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but do not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the intervention described in the application.

Applicants may be evidence-informed if they have incorporated research from other evidence-based programs into their program designs and/or have collected performance measurement data on the intervention described in the application.



Evidence Tiers

Pre-preliminary evidence means the applicant has not submitted an outcome or impact evaluation of the same intervention described in the application, although the applicant may have collected some performance data on the intervention (e.g., data on intervention outputs and/or outcomes). Applicants in this tier must describe in the Evidence Base section of the application how their program design is evidence-informed (see definition above). Applicants may also cite prior performance measure data if applicable.

Preliminary evidence means the applicant has submitted up to two outcome evaluation reports (non-experimental) that evaluated the same intervention described in the application and yielded positive results on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. The outcome evaluations may either have been conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant. The study design must include pre and post-assessments without a statistically-matched comparison group or a post-assessment comparison between intervention and comparison groups. In some cases a retrospective pre-post assessment may be considered, but its use must be justified in the text of the evaluation report.

CNCS grantees recompeting for their third competitive grant cycle are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report may count towards one of the two reports allowed for the Preliminary evidence tier or may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three evaluation reports will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program, then more than two reports will not be considered.

Moderate evidence means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented evaluation reports that evaluated the same intervention described in the 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 evaluations were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

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

If the applicant is not required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program, then more than two reports will not be considered.

Strong evidence means the applicant has submitted up to two evaluation reports demonstrating that the same intervention described in the application has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented experimental design evaluation (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)) or a Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs of the same intervention described in the application in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of evaluation findings must be consistently positive on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. Findings from the RCT



or QED evaluations may be generalized beyond the study context. The evaluations were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

CNCS grantees re-competing for their third competitive grant cycle are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report may count towards one of the two reports allowed for the Strong evidence tier or may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three evaluation reports will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program, then more than two reports will not be considered.

Impact evaluation: An evaluation that provides statistical evidence of how well a program achieves its desired outcomes and what effect it has on service recipients and/or service participants compared to what would have happened in the absence of the program. Impact evaluations must be designed to provide evidence of a causal relationship between program activities and outcomes (45 C.F.R. § 2522.700). Grantees must use an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design (i.e., the evaluation must include a control group or a statistically matched comparison group).

Same intervention described in the application: The intervention evaluated in submitted evaluation reports must match the intervention proposed in the application in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention, including all key components and activities
- The setting in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Submitted reports that do not sufficiently match the intervention proposed by the applicant in all of these areas will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

Fixed Amount Grants: These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. Organizations use their own or other resources to cover the remaining costs. Programs are not required to submit budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. However, CNCS provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Programs can access all of the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Professional Corps programs applying for operational funding through a Fixed Amount Grant must submit a budget in support of their request for operational funds.

- **Full-Cost Fixed amount grants:** Fixed amount grants are available for programs that enroll all types of member slots. Professional Corps may only have full-time members. Programs can access funds under the grant based on enrolling the full complement of members supported under the grant.
- **Education Award Grants (EAP) Fixed amount grant:** Programs apply for a small fixed amount per MSY, can enroll less than full-time members, and use their own resources to cover all other costs. Programs can access funds under the grant based on enrolling the full complement of members supported under the grant. As with full-time fixed amount grants, there are no specific match or financial reporting requirements for EAP fixed amount grants.

State Commissions can withhold up to 2% administrative funds from fixed price grants.



Member Placement Site or Service Location: A member service location is the site at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

Member Service Year (MSY): One Member Service Year (MSY) is equivalent to a full-time AmeriCorps position (at least 1,700 service hours.)

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.

Other Revenue: Funds necessary to operate an AmeriCorps program that are not CNCS funds or grantee share (match) identified in the budget. Total operating budget for an organization is not considered other revenue unless the entire operating budget supports the AmeriCorps program. Programs that have additional revenue sources not included in the matching funds section of the budget should provide the amount of this additional revenue that supports the program. This amount should not include the CNCS or grantee share amounts in the budget. For fixed amount grantees all non-CNCS funds that support the program are considered other revenue.

Professional Corps: A Professional Corps is a program model composed of AmeriCorps members serving as professionals; i.e. teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, attorneys, or other professionals. The programs recruit and place qualified members in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals.

Professional Corps members' salaries/compensation, including childcare, are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget request to CNCS. The living allowance or salary provided to AmeriCorps members in Professional Corps programs does not count toward the matching requirement. CNCS requires Professional Corps programs to cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS resources. CNCS will only consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate significant organizational financial need based on the materials reviewed by the Office of Grant Management/Grant Administration. These grants are fixed price grants.

Applicants may propose any authorized program type. In the case that a proposed program fits more than one program type (e.g., a program could be either a professional corps or a traditional program). CNCS staff will make a determination as to program type that will be considered for funding. The determination will be based on data provided within the application and supplemental materials submitted with the application. The determination may be different from the program type proposed by the applicant.

CV reserves the right to determine whether an applicant (whether or not the applicant has applied as a Professional Corps) has sufficiently demonstrated that they cannot effectively operate an AmeriCorps program without receiving CNCS operating funds. There may be specific circumstances where CV determines that a legal applicant has not demonstrated the need for operational grant funds due to other funding resources. Where CV's due diligence review of an application shows that the applicant has a historically high level of support from non-CNCS sources, and as a result has levels of unrestricted funding that is in excess of the requested level of funding, CV may choose to not provide operational grant funding.

Prohibited Activities: While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CV/CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):



1. Attempting to influence legislation;
2. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
3. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
4. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
5. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
6. 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;
7. 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;
8. Providing a direct benefit to— a. a business organized for profit; b. a labor union; c. a partisan political organization; d. a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and e. an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph C. 7. above, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
9. Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
10. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
11. Such other activities as CNCS may prohibit.

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.

Reducing and/or Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse: Program models that seek to address the prescription drug and opioid abuse crisis in America.

Retention Rate: Retention rate is calculated as the number of members exited with education award (full or partial award) divided by the number of members enrolled.

Rural Communities: CNCS uses rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes to classify program addresses as either rural or urban for analytic purposes. RUCA codes classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting. Census tracts with an urban cluster population less than 50,000 are considered rural (RUCA codes 4 – 10). Applicants are encouraged to designate themselves as serving rural communities if some or all service locations are in rural areas as defined by RUCA codes or if the program can provide other compelling evidence that the program is rural in the narrative portion of the application. This self-designation will be considered in grant-making decisions.

For more information about RUCA codes, please visit the USDA website found here:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes.aspx>

The Office of Grants Management uses Beale Codes when assessing alternative match requirements as the statute (45 CFR 2521.60(c)) requires it.



Rural Intermediaries: CV recognizes that severely under-resourced communities may have limited capacity to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, due to the size and organizational capacity of eligible applicant/host site organizations or the lack of available matching funds in these communities. Thus it may be effective for a single eligible applicant (intermediary) to develop an application and oversee the implementation of an AmeriCorps program that engages multiple grassroots non-profits/eligible applicants (referred to as a consortium) that, individually, do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program. Given the desire to address community needs holistically, the nonprofits/eligible applicants that make up the consortium may have, but are not required to have, different focus areas (including the non-focus area capacity building) and thus the non-profit/eligible applicant intermediary will be multi-focused.

Applicants seeking consideration under this priority must demonstrate that they will be serving in rural severely under-resourced communities; that their application represents a consortium, that the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs; and that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortium. Applicants seeking consideration under this priority may submit a narrative that does not exceed 18 pages.

The eligible applicant (intermediary) should submit one application which describes:

- How the partnership/consortium will be organized and AmeriCorps resources will be allocated between the partnering entities (intermediary and consortium members).
- The proposed theory(ies) of change and program model(s).
- How the intermediary will utilize an identified consortium of nonprofits/eligible applicants who are well positioned to achieve outcomes identified in the theory of change.

If recommended by CV for competitive funding consideration, the applicant must submit letters of support from all members of the consortium to be included in the competitive grant application submission due in January 2018.

Same Project: Two projects will be considered the same if they: Address the same issue areas, address the same priorities, address the same objectives, serve the same target communities and population, and utilize the same sites.

Programs must get approval CV to be considered a new project. CV 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. (45 CFR § 2522.340)

Requests for approval to be considered a new project should include information about how the new project differs from the previous project in the characteristics noted above. The request should also include the proposed name of the new project. CV staff will review the request to determine if the proposed project does represent a meaningful difference from the previous project or if the proposed project is an example of natural program evolution over time.

If it is determined that the project is new, CV staff will coordinate with CNCS to create a new project in eGrants. Applicants must request new projects significantly in advance of the application deadline.

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. CaliforniaVolunteers is the State Commission for California.

A single state application submitted directly to CNCS by the applicant rather than the State Commission will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed.



Unallowable Activities: In addition to the *Prohibited Activities*, the following restrictions also apply to the service of AmeriCorps members:

Non-duplication.

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

Non-displacement.

- (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.

