

# 2021 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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## A. General/Grant Application

- A1) What is the deadline for competitive continuation, and when can we expect to see guidelines for continuing recipients?
- a. Continuation guidance will be sent to competitive programs in years 1 or 2 of their 3-year grant in early October. Formula programs currently in years 1 or 2 of their 3-year grant will receive continuation guidance in February.
- A2) Our 3-year grant cycle is ending in 2021, should we apply to this funding?
- a. If your current 3-year grant cycle is ending at the end of the 2020 program year, you will need to apply to this opportunity.
- A3) Are we required to request a minimum of 20 MSY?
- a. There is a minimum program size of 20 MSY (full-time equivalent member service terms). Applicants may request a waiver to this requirement and include it with their application.
- A4) When will eGrants become available? We are currently not able to access.
- a. The NOFO has not yet been added to eGrants for California Volunteers to create the prime application to accept your subapplications. CNCS has informed us that the NOFO will be added to eGrants no later than October 1<sup>st</sup>. The prime application will be available shortly after the NOFO is live.
- A5) Is the recommendation to submit the eGrants application 5 days before the deadline to account for possible technical/other issues in eGrants?
- a. Yes, eGrants can be prone to technical issues, so the sooner we identify them the sooner we can resolve them. Even if you are not yet ready to submit your application, going through the process of creating the application in eGrants as soon as possible will help to head off possible issues. If you have any technical issues, please contact [funding@cv.ca.gov](mailto:funding@cv.ca.gov) and also the eGrants Help Desk. We can help troubleshoot but it is important to have a ticket with the Help Desk on file.
- A6) Currently, the Financial Management Survey is not fillable to answer Yes/ No as required. Please advise.
- a. The document originally provided was bugged in some way. That document has been replaced. Please be sure you are downloading the file titled: OFMS-Control-Number-3045\_0102\_FY20.docx and make sure you have enabled editing of the document. If you run into any issues with this document, please notify [funding@cv.ca.gov](mailto:funding@cv.ca.gov).

- A7) Are there templates for Logic Model, Eval Plan, or the SF 424 Face Sheet? I'm not seeing them on the CV website. Since we cannot access eGrants, it would be nice to have a better idea of what is required.
- a. A template/worksheet for the Logic Model has been provided under "Technical Assistance Documents & Resources" on the funding opportunity webpage.  
Guidance for completing an Evaluation Plan (or Data Collection Plan for new applicants) can be found in the *Application Instructions* document under section IV.3. Narratives Instructions, E. Evaluation Summary or Plan (page 14).  
The SF 424 Face Sheet document is generated by eGrants; there is no template for that document.  
For a complete list of the application components, refer to the Application Submission Checklist that can be found in the *Application Instructions* (page 6).
- A8) Will the slides available via email?
- a. Slides with speaker notes will be posted for the Funding Opportunity Overview webinar. All subsequent webinars will be recorded. All will be posted on the funding opportunity [webpage](#).
- A9) According to the Application Instructions, the eGrants application narrative cannot exceed 10 double-spaced pages as printed from eGrants. Can you confirm that this means 10 pages when printed out from the submission portal, and not 10 pages as a Word document? How does "as printed from eGrants" translate to Word pages considering margins?
- a. The conversion of 10 pages in eGrants is not 1:1 in Word. Our advice is to write your narrative in Word, get to 10 pages, then transfer that content to your application in eGrants, print the application and assess how much space you have to work with.
- A10) Does the SF-424 Face Sheet count as one page?
- a. Yes.
- A11) I'm not seeing any mention or need for a Program Diagram in this year's RFA. Is the Program Diagram no longer required?
- a. The Program Diagram is no longer required. Instead, we require that you complete the Proposed Service Site Locations excel document. This is an excel template that you must complete with the following information: the proposed service site name, address, county, and proposed member placement information.
- A12) Is it okay if some of our service site locations are "to be determined"?
- a. If you have not yet identified possible service site locations for members, you may include a "To Be Determined" site that includes all slots without a service site identified. If this is the case, please explain in the narrative how sites will be selected.
- A13) Can you clarify what we would put in the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy narrative field?

- a. Please enter “See budget.” in the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy narrative field.

A14) We are still figuring out if we are considered a 'new' versus a 'recompeting' applicant. Given our potentially in-between status, should we submit the AmeriCorps Organizational Self-Assessment, which is only required for new applicants?

- a. If you are an existing program that will be submitting an application for the same program that has been funded by CV, you would be considered recompeting.

A15) If we are not a nonprofit organization, is there any pathway towards partnering? Perhaps we can have a 501c3 be the conduit of funds?

- a. Yes, you could partner with a nonprofit or other eligible entity to apply on your behalf. They would be the legal applicant and fully responsible for the grant.

## B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

B1) Is there a distinct Education funding priority for CV?

- a. There is no specific funding priority for education; however, evidence-based interventions on the CNCS Evidence Exchange may include education interventions that would qualify for that priority.

B2) Can you go into more detail about how underserved rural communities are prioritized? What if we have a program that is half-urban and half-rural?

- a. Rural intermediaries is a funding priority for this opportunity. The full definition of this priority can be found in the *Mandatory Supplemental Guidance* (page 7). Please also see the definition of ‘Rural Communities’ in the *Mandatory Supplemental Guidance* (page 6).

B3) What is the California Climate Action Corps and how do we participate? In the application, where would we indicate our interest in participating?

- a. Information on the California Climate Action Corps can be found in Attachment A of the *Request for Applications*. Applicants would indicate their interest in participating through the Funding Priority section of the Narrative. Further information may be requested through the clarification process.

B4) In regard to the Compliance and Accountability section in the eGrants application, should we address both programmatic and fiscal compliance?

- a. Yes, you should address both programmatic and fiscal compliance.

## C. AmeriCorps Members

C1) Can you address the Member health insurance requirement? What is the minimum expected?

- a. From the Budget Instructions in the *Application Instructions*: AmeriCorps programs are required to offer health care benefits to full-time members in accordance with AmeriCorps requirements. Except as stated below you may not pay health care benefits to less-than-full-time members with CNCS funds. You may choose to provide health care benefits to less-

than-full-time members from other sources (i.e., non-federal). Less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (such as a full-time summer project) are eligible for health care benefits. In your budget narrative, indicate the number of members who will receive health care benefits. CNCS will not pay for dependent coverage. If health care is not budgeted for all full-time members, please confirm all full-time members will have access to coverage.

**C2) Do AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance or stipend for their service hours?**

- a. A living allowance must be provided for full-time members within the required ranges. Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members who serve 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. Please refer to Table 3: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance in the RFA.

#### D. Budget/Match Requirements

**D1) Can you provide some examples of Fixed Amount Grants?**

- a. There are four types of Fixed Amount Grants included in this opportunity: Full-Cost, Education Award Program, Professional Corps, and No-Cost Slots. Full-Cost Fixed Amount grants are not available to new applicants and may use any slot type. Education Award Program Fixed Amount grants are limited to \$800 or \$1,000 per MSY. Professional Corps Fixed Amount grants are limited to \$1,000 per MSY, can only include full-time slots, and have other special requirements. No-Cost Slots are available to all applicants and include an award of AmeriCorps member slots but no funds to support them. The program would be responsible for all costs of running the program. More information on Fixed Amount Grants can be found in the *Request for Applications* and the *Application Instructions*.

**D2) Can you compare Cost Reimbursement vs. Full-Cost fixed amount grants and why someone would choose one over the other?**

- a. Please see response to D1 above. An applicant may choose a fixed amount grant if their program is more aligned with the goals of those grants. An applicant may choose a Full-Cost Fixed Amount grant over a Traditional Cost Reimbursement grant if they have the capacity to administer a program without any enrollment or retention issues, as the availability of funds for a fixed amount grant is linked to the enrollment and retention of awarded MSYs.

**D3) For the amount of funding we can request, is it just the cost per member x the number of members requested? Or do we request additional funding for program operating expenses?**

- a. Applicants may request a budget that includes all operational expenses of the program. When completing your budget, ensure the Cost Per MSY that is calculated does not exceed the maximum stated in the *Request For*

*Applications.* The Cost Per MSY is not the same as the Living Allowance—your member costs will likely exceed the maximum cost per MSY. The expectation is that the federal funds requested when combined with the grantee share of the budget (grantee match funding) will fully fund the program’s operations.

- D4) What match level are you held to if you have received funding in the past but there has been a lapse?
- a. If your application is for a program that existed previously but has not been funded for some time, you may be held to the match level that the program was previously held to. If your application is substantially different and you have created a new project for it in eGrants, you would be held to 24%. When you create your application in eGrants, after you have selected the appropriate project on the “Applicant Info” section, check the “Review” section for the “Required Match Percentages” section toward the bottom of the page.

## E. Performance Measures/Logic Model

- E1) If you address a focus area, do you need to use the performance measures associated with that area?
- a. CV expects all applicants to account for all member activities in the Performance Measurement Worksheets. As such, any focus area that you are applying to cover would require a completed PMW. However, with regards to the Performance Measure Module in eGrants, only the primary PMW needs to be entered.
- E2) Do you know of any examples of programs who are successfully using Output EN3.2, and how they measure “change of behavior”?
- a. EN3.2 is an outcome measuring the “Number of individuals reporting a change in behavior or the intent to change behavior to better protect the environment.” Data for this measure could be collected using a survey, interview, or other instrument capable of measuring changes in behavior at the individual beneficiary level. We encourage any applicants that are using EN3.2 in their program model to attend the Completing the Performance Measurement Worksheets webinar on Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> where you will have the opportunity to speak to your use of the measure.
- E3) Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to directly provide the service counted in the Performance Measurement Worksheets?
- a. Members must either be directly delivering the service or directly managing/recruiting the volunteers that are delivering the service for those impacts to be counted in the performance measures.
- E4) In the PMW Guidance doc, it says that “Applications may also include National Performance Measure outputs without associated outcome(s) provided that the output measures a significant program activity. These output-only measures do

not fulfill the requirement for an aligned performance measure, but may be selected in addition to the aligned measure(s).”

E5) Would it be possible to clarify in what scenario it is allowed to include non-aligned (output-only) PMWs?

E6) If we have been running an AmeriCorps program for many years, is it advisable to keep most of our theory of change & logic model unchanged from previous submissions?

- a. It would depend on your evidence base. If your evidence base is showing that your theory of change is effective, you should keep doing what your evidence shows as having an impact. If you are seeing issues or areas that need development in your program, you should adjust as needed.

E7) In the PMW, the “instrument” section asks for “the level of participation needed to be counted under this measure”. Can you elaborate as to what this is really asking?

- a. The level of participation needed to be counted under the measure is referring to the amount of intervention the beneficiary receives in order to be counted in the measure.

E8) According to the RFA, applicants proposing program service activities beyond the primary intervention are required to include additional aligned performance measures for those activities. However, in the National Performance Measure Instructions, it says that “Applications may also include National Performance Measure outputs without associated outcome(s) provided that the output measures a significant program activity. These output-only measures do not fulfill the requirement for an aligned performance measure but may be selected in addition to the aligned measure(s).” Can you clarify what scenario can include non-aligned (output-only) PMWs?

- a.

## F. Evaluation

F1) If we are addressing our primary performance measure, can we use data previously collected by our program in the study?

- a. Your Evaluation Plan should meet the requirements described in the *Request for Applications* and *Application Instructions*.

F2) What level of evaluation are most programs are at?

- a. In 2020, the evidence tiers of successful AmeriCorps State and National applicants that were competing were as follows: Strong 26%, Moderate 18%, Preliminary 24%, and Pre-Preliminary 32%.

F3) What is the difference between the Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Report?

- a. Please refer to the Application Instructions for specific guidance and requirements of the Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Report and to determine if they are applicable for you to submit. The Evaluation Plan, required of all Recompeting applicants, details the applicant’s plan to conduct an evaluation within the 3-year grant cycle. The Evaluation Report, required of all competitive applicants recompeting for the second

time or beyond, is a report of the findings from the evaluation conducted in their last grant cycle.

**F4) How is the Evaluation Report scored?**

- a. CNCS has their own team of evaluators that will review and provide feedback on the Evaluation Report separately from the application. The Evaluation Report is not scored as part of CV's review, however it may be used in CV's assessment of the application's evidence base.

**F5) The Application Instructions has differing information on the character limit for the Data Collection/Evaluation Plan. Can you confirm the correct amount?**

- a. The correct limit is 20,000 characters.