

# 2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

November 21, 2014

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## A. General/Grant Application

- A1) Is there any way some of the funding announced for AmeriCorps can go to Senior Corps programs?

**CV Response:** AmeriCorps and Senior Corps are two separate programs. CV does not administer the Senior Corps program; that is handled by the Corporation for National and Community Service. More information on Senior Corps programs can be found here:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>.

- A2) Would an applicant seeking funding for a program which received funding in the past, but not in the most recent grant year (i.e., funding ended in the 2012-13 program year), be categorized as recompeting?

**CV Response:** An applicant in this case would be categorized as a Previously Funded Applicant.

- A3) If an applicant is a previously funded applicant, does it affect the maximum Cost per MSY that can be requested or the percentage of match that must be provided?

**CV Response:** Yes. For this grant competition, both match and Cost per MSY are tied to the number of years the same program has been funded through CV. Previously funded applicants whose last AmeriCorps grant was received more than five years ago are considered “new” per AmeriCorps regulations for the purpose of determining match level required, and are required to match at least

24% of the project's total Operating Costs (Budget Section I, II, and III combined). Previously funded applicants proposing the same program design as their AmeriCorps program that was funded less than five years ago are required to match at the level established for the number of years the proposed program has received AmeriCorps funding. Previously funded applicants proposing the same program must abide by the Cost per MSY set for their grant cycle number or the number of years the proposed program has received funding from CV.

- A4) What is the Cost per MSY limit for a re-competing applicant that is submitting a new application for a new program?

**CV Response:** Given that the Cost per MSY is tied to the program age, the Cost per MSY limit for the new program is \$16,000, if selected for formula funding. That said, CV will look at the Cost per MSY of other programs administered by the legal applicant to determine if the requested Cost per MSY is reasonable based on their history and economy of scale.

- A5) How would a current AmeriCorps grantee applying as the legal applicant for another program that is new to the agency be categorized for this application?

**CV Response:** This grantee would be considered a re-competing applicant, even if the proposed program is a different program model from the one currently being funded. See FAQ # A6 for implication on Cost per MSY limit.

- A6) If a legal applicant is applying to implement a portion of a previously funded program, would this meet the definition of "same project" or would it be considered a different project? If so, would the applicant have to include the information on "past performance?" Would the applicant be submitting a re-competing application in this case, or are they considered a previously funded applicant?

**CV Response:** If the portion of the previously funded program satisfies the definition of "same" project then it would be considered the same project, and therefore, the applicant should include information on "past performance." The applicant would be considered a re-competing applicant if the applicant has completed a three-year cycle (in most instances) or is entering the final year of their grant period (i.e. programs entering year 3 of the grant period, or programs that received a one-year operating grant from CV).

- A7) Is an applicant locked into the proposed operating sites or can they change them later in the process?

**CV Response:** We anticipate that applicants have a well thought out plan for their project implementation and have identified operating sites based on the demonstrated community needs. We expect the sites proposed at the time of application to align with those involved in project implementation. However, if necessary, an applicant can modify their list of operating sites during the clarification process or prior to contracting.

- A8) Should programs use links to research in the narrative? Is it realistic to think that peer/staff reviewers will use a link to read additional information?

**CV Response:** We do not specify whether to use links. However, reviewers are advised not to view links in an application so you may assume if a link is provided it will not be viewed. The applicant has to provide sufficient information in the application narrative to describe the evidence that is being used to describe the community need or to support the program intervention. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments. Please refer to the RFA for guidance for submitting such documents.

- A9) Does an applicant need to already be a grantee of CaliforniaVolunteers to receive a Capacity Building AmeriCorps grant?

**CV Response:** Any applicant may apply for a Capacity Building AmeriCorps grant.

- A10) Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?

**CV Response:** There is no pre-determined limit on the amount of grant funds that you may request for an implementation grant. However, your level of requested funding should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization. Additionally, you should keep in mind the total amount of funds available and the maximum Cost per MSY allowable.

- A11) How can an applicant with without previous AmeriCorps experience be competitive?

**CV Response:** Applicant responses to selection criteria are what CV uses to assess application quality. Applicants who successfully demonstrate that they can fully address the selection criteria will be scored accordingly. Past program performance is a factor in the review process, but previous experience with AmeriCorps is not a requirement. CV encourages new applicants to apply for

AmeriCorps grants. To help to level the competition among experienced and new applicants/programs, new applicants may receive up to an additional 10% of the total possible score at each review stage. Applicants that have received a planning grant and technical assistance support from CV are not eligible for the additional 10% point consideration.

- A12) What applicants will need to submit an Evaluation Plan or an Evaluation Report in their applications?

**CV Response:** All recompeting applicants (formula and competitive) are required to submit an evaluation plan. Recompeting applicants that currently receive a “competitive” grant and are competing for their **third** three-year grant will also need to submit a completed evaluation report in addition to a new evaluation plan with their application. Please see the table on page 36 of the Application Instructions to determine if your application will need to include an Evaluation Plan or **both** an Evaluation Plan and an Evaluation Report. Recompeting formula programs are not required to submit an Evaluation Report.

- A13) Do Tribal organizations or National Direct applications apply through CaliforniaVolunteers or through the Corporation for National and Community Service?

**CV Response:** Tribal organizations and National Direct applicants that are proposing a program that will operate in multiple states apply directly through the Corporation for National and Community Service. Applicants proposing programs that will operate solely in California will apply through CaliforniaVolunteers. .

- A14) Are there any opportunities for Planning Grants in this RFA?

**CV Response:** There are no planning grants included in this RFA. Planning grants are very rare, and we do not anticipate offering them in the near future.

- A15) How will the applicants invited for in-person interviews be determined?

**CV Response:** The in-person interviews, referenced on page 20 of the RFA, will allow new applicants or applicants proposing a new program design the opportunity to clarify pieces of their application in person with CV staff. Not all new applicants may be requested for an in-person interview. The staff review panel will determine if an in-person interview is the best vehicle for an applicant

to clarify their application. Should an interview be requested and held, all costs for travel are assumed to be the responsibility of the applicant.

- A16) If an applicant has received funding for other CNCS programs, such as VISTA, in the past, would they be considered previously funded?

**CV Response:** An applicant who has only received funding for VISTA, Senior Corps, or any other CNCS program would not be considered a previously funded applicant for this RFA. They would be considered a new applicant for this RFA.

- A17) Will applicants that are unable to identify a public entity for the requirement community partnerships be disqualified?

**CV Response:** Not necessarily. We want to see public and private partners as an indication of the community involvement or commitment to the program. However, there may be situations where it is difficult or otherwise not possible to obtain the support of a public partner. In this case, submit partnership forms for the private partners you have and, in the narrative in the Organizational Capability section, speak to the situation the program faces and why public partners were not identified.

- A18) Can payroll be administered by a third party?

**CV Response:** Yes, if needed.

- A19) Can federal work-study be used as match funds?

**CV Response:** Federal work-study or other federal funds may be used as match funds as long as a program has received approval from the other federal agency to use their funds for match on an AmeriCorps grant.

- A20) Is more than one placement site a requirement or can all members be hosted at one site?

**CV Response:** There's no requirement on the number of member placement sites that a program has to have. The number of members at each site and the number of sites where members will be placed to serve should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization and partners.

- A21) If the lead applicant is a private non-profit and will partner with multiple private non-profit partners, is this sufficient to meet the partnership requirement? What is an example of a public partner?

**CV Response:** No. In this example, the applicant still needs to have a public partner to satisfy the partnership requirement. As stated in the RFA, all applicants are required to develop a partnership that includes at least one public and one private partner. For examples, a public partner could be a school district or the county's Department of Health and Human Services.

- A22) If an agency is applying for a capacity building grant, should the evidence base section contain evidence supporting the capacity building approach to be used? Or should it show evidence for the direct services provided by the volunteers?

**CV Response:** The evidence-based section should contain evidence supporting the program intervention to be delivered or implemented by AmeriCorps members that will address the community need(s) identified and lead to the desired outcome(s).

- A23) If the AmeriCorps members will be building capacity for a number of different agencies to recruit and manage volunteers who will be providing a range of direct services, should we provide evidence supporting each of the direct service models in the evidence base section?

**CV Response:** See FAQ #A22. In general, you should provide evidence that support your program's theory of change.

- A24) Are Previously Funded applicants expected to submit an evaluation plan?

**CV Response:** Previously Funded applicants that have been funded for at least one three-year cycle for the same program model being proposed are also required to submit an evaluation plan. This is true regardless of whether you were previously funded in formula or competitive. We apologize this guidance was not initially made clear in the RFA.

- A24) What is the correct page limit for the Logic Model? And does the Logic Model count towards the 18 page limit for the Program Narrative?

**CV Response:** The correct page limit for the Logic Model is three pages. The Application Checklist has been corrected to show three pages as the correct page limit—the Application Instructions and the Logic Model Form already stated this. The Logic Model does not count towards the 18 page limit for the Program Narrative.

- A25) As a new applicant, would it benefit our application to include an evaluation report with our application even though we are not required to?

**CV Response:** The answer depends on the type of evaluation design study used, whether the evaluation was conducted on the program proposed, and its findings. Any applicant may choose to include an evaluation report conducted on the proposed program but only those applicants that classify their evidence as “Moderate” or “Strong” are required to submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in the Evidence Base section as separate attachments.

- A26) In order to be considered at the national level we have completed a budget using \$13,730 per MSY. If we don't make it to the national competition, can we revise our budget to reflect \$16,000 per MSY? Or would you recommend we budget at the \$16K per MSY first and if we are considered at the national level we can revise it to \$13,730?

**CV Response:** After ensuring that your cost per MSY does not exceed the cost per MSY limit allowable based on your program age, your budget should be based on a cost per MSY level that will provide sufficient resources to operate your program. CV generally doesn't award an increased cost per MSY if an applicant has already demonstrated that it can operate efficiently at a reduced level. That said, applicants selected to compete in the national competition that proposed a cost per MSY at or above \$13,730 will be given the opportunity to consider if they can operate the program effectively at a reduced level that meet CNCS cost per MSY limit.

- A27) For the 2015 RFA, are there any specific elements you would like the Executive Summary to include?

**CV Response:** Please provide an Executive Summary using this template.

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.

A28) Even though the Logic Model is listed as a separate item on the Application Checklist, do we still need to include it also within the Program Narrative?

**CV Response:** No, you do not need to include a copy of the Logic Model as part of the Program Narrative.

A29) The link provided on the website for both the AmeriCorps Program Title Page and Partnership Forms only takes us to the AmeriCorps Program Title Page. How do we access the Partnership Forms?

**CV Response:** To access the Partnership Forms, you'll first need to complete the AmeriCorps Program Title Page Form. Once you've successfully submitted the title page form, you'll be provided with the link and log in information to access the partnership forms.

A30) The AmeriCorps Program Title Page asks whether our program has emergency response resources and provides safety and emergency training to members. How is this relevant to a program that is not focused on disaster services?

**CV Response:** California is prone to a wide variety of natural disasters (most notably, fires, earthquakes, and floods). As the lead state agency for coordinating volunteers in times of disaster, CV believes that AmeriCorps members are valuable resources who are well-suited to assist communities in times of natural disasters and state emergencies. Therefore, we strongly support the preparation of AmeriCorps members in areas of emergency response (e.g. Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), local disaster awareness training, and if possible, at a minimum, provide staff and AmeriCorps members with CPR and standard first aid training. The questions on the Program Title Page are intended to survey potential emergency response resources among successful programs and have no bearing on the evaluation of an application for funding consideration.

A31) If we are applying under more than one focus areas (e.g. Education, Economic Opportunity, and Healthy Futures, etc.), are we eligible for the 21 page limit for the Program Narrative?

**CV Response:** Not necessarily. Having a program that addresses multiple focus areas does not exclusively qualify an applicant for the 21 page limit. To be eligible for the 21 page limit, the applicant would need to serve as an "Intermediary" and meet the priority consideration described on page 7 of the RFA. Also see FAQ #A34.

A32) How does CV define "Intermediary"? Can CV elaborate on the information that an applicant must include in the application to be eligible for consideration under the Intermediaries Priority?

**CV Response:** CV defines "Intermediary" as a legal applicant organization that



provides the mechanism by which a number of community organizations, including faith-based, may access AmeriCorps grant resources. Intermediaries serve as the legal applicant for funding and agree to provide technical and financial support to assist organizations that do not have the capacity to perform these functions. They may place members at neighborhood sites, community or faith-based organizations, and assume responsibility for monitoring the progress of the sites.

Given the capacity required to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, CV recognizes that severely under-resourced communities may have limited applicant options, either based on the size of the non-profits or the lack of available matching funds. Thus it may be necessary to engage an eligible applicant or Intermediary that will develop an application and oversee the implementation of an AmeriCorps program that engages multiple grassroots non-profits/eligible entities that individually do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program independently. Given the desire to address community needs holistically, the non-profits/eligible entities that make up the consortium may have different focus areas and thus the non-profit/eligible applicant intermediary will be multi-focused.

As stated in the RFA, applications seeking consideration under this priority must demonstrate that they will be serving in severely under-resourced communities, and how the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs. The applicant must demonstrate that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortia.

The nonprofit/eligible applicant intermediary should submit one application which describes:

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

If selected to compete in the national competition, **applicants will be required to email memoranda of understanding or signed letters of commitment from all members of the consortia to CV prior to January 16, 2015.**

A33) Can we include charts in the Program Narrative? Can they be single-spaced?

**CV Response:** Yes. Charts are acceptable in the Program Narrative and may be single-spaced. However, if your application is selected for the national grant competition or for funding, you will later need to convert any charts into narrative in order to submit your application in eGrants to be awarded.

A34) May we hand-delivered our application by the deadline?

**CV Response:** Yes.

A35) Does the A-133 or audited financial documents need to have an original signature?

**CV Response:** No, original signatures are not required on financial documents, including A-133.

A36) Is the Executive Summary considered a part of the Program Narrative and does it count towards the page limit?

**CV Response:** Yes.

A37) In the Fixed-amount Grant Budget Worksheet, what does the number of members “w/o Allowance” means? Does this mean that members under a fixed-amount grant cannot receive a living allowance?

**CV Response:** The “w/o Allowance” means “without CNCS-funded living allowance.” Fixed-amount grant applicants are asked to identify the number of members supported under “w/o allowance” for technical reasons. If selected for funding, they are not required to adhere to a detailed budget as they will have minimal financial tracking requirements. Members supported under a Full-Time or Less than Full-Time Serving in a Full-Time Capacity fixed-amount grant are eligible for a living allowance just like those under a traditional cost-reimbursement grant.

A38) On the AmeriCorps Program Title Page (<https://govnews.ca.gov/cvrfa1/>), at the bottom of the page, it asks for an uploaded copy of the application containing Application Checklist Items 1-13 in PDF format. In the Application Instructions, it states this is not applicable for this RFA. Which guidance should applicants follow?

**CV Response:** Applicants should follow the guidance in the Application Instructions. Electronic copies of applications are not required for this RFA.

A39) What should be done if there are errors submitting the online AmeriCorps Program Title Page or the AmeriCorps Partnership Form?

**CV Response:** If an applicant runs into technical issues in submitting either the AmeriCorps Program Title Page or the AmeriCorps Partnership Forms online before the application due date, please submit an explanation and screenshot of the error before the application deadline to Funding@cv.ca.gov. CV will work with the applicant to fix the issue in submitting these forms. If the error comes from trying to upload an electronic copy of the application, remember that an electronic copy is not required for this RFA.

## B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

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

**CV Response:** Neither CV (nor CNCS) uses set asides for priority areas.

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

**CV Response:** No additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure.

B3) Does the second bullet under “Notice Priority” in the Application Fields of the Program Narrative (page 24 of the RFA) mean the applicant should speak to their meeting the requirements of the entire RFA.

**CV Response:** No. The purpose of this section is to explain which priority areas the proposed program will address. The second bullet is the criteria that the applicant shows it meets the minimum guidelines for the priority area as described in the RFA.

B4) Is section 3. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (identified on page 19 of the 2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions) supposed to be part of the 18 page double-spaced program narrative, or is this really the Budget Narrative section and separate from the Program Narrative?

**CV Response:** How well an application addresses the selection criteria for Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy are primarily informed by the Budget Narrative Form, which is a separate attachment not included within the Program Narrative, and any narrative information provided by the applicant in the Program Narrative under the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section.

## C. AmeriCorps Members

C1) Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?

**CV Response:** No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

C2) Are there certain activities in which AmeriCorps members and staff cannot engage?

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

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- Providing a direct benefit to:
  - (1) a business organized for profit;
  - (2) a labor union;
  - (3) a partisan political organization;
  - (4) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (participating in partisan political activities or spending funds on lobbying and grassroots efforts in excess of allowable limits); and
  - (5) an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, (unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities);

- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

#### Nonduplication.

CNCS assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless there is nondisplacement, CNCS assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.

#### Nondisplacement.

- (1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving CNCS assistance.
- (2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving CNCS 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 CNCS assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.
- (5) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—
  - (i) Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or
  - (ii) Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.
- (6) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—

- (i) Presently employed worker;
- (ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;
- (iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;
- (iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or
- (v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

C3) Are programs required to provide health benefits to less than full time members serving in a full time capacity?

**CV Response:** Less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (e.g. a full-time summer project) are eligible for healthcare benefits. Programs may provide health insurance to less-than-full-time members serving in a full-time capacity, but they are not required to do so. As stated in the 2014-15 AmeriCorps Grant Provisions, a member is serving in a full-time capacity when his/her regular term of service will involve performing service on a normal full-time schedule for a period of six weeks or more.

## D. Budget/Match Requirements

D1) Does the minimum of 20 MSYs correspond to a minimum living allowance cost of \$250,600 to the organization?

**CV Response:** The minimum program size is 20 MSY. The 20 MSY can be made of multiple slot types (for example, 20 half-time members and 10 full-time members make up 20 MSY). Only full-time members are required to receive a living allowance of \$12,530 minimum and \$25,060 maximum. The living allowance may be supported by the federal share of the budget, by matching funds, or by a combination of both.

D2) How will living allowance costs be covered if it exceeds our program's proposed Cost per MSY?

**CV Response:** As stated in the RFA, in most instances the Cost per MSY or the grant received by an applicant will not cover the full amount of the living allowance provided to members and the applicant must use its own or other resources to supplement member living allowance. It is up to the applicant what costs will be covered by the organization in match and what will be covered by the CNCS share, as long as the necessary percentage of match is met.

D3) What does Cost per MSY mean?

**CV Response:** See RFA, page 8.

D4) Does the Cost per MSY limit (RFA, page 8) apply only to formula applicants?

**CV Response:** The Cost per MSY limits apply to all applicants. To be considered for competitive funding, an applicant must have a Cost per MSY that does not exceed the level established for their program age **and** CNCS maximum of \$13,730.

D5) Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?

**CV Response:** No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project, rather than general organizational expenses. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with grant funds. However, to a limited degree, you may capture indirect administrative costs related to your AmeriCorps program. The application instructions provide guidance on charging administrative costs to the grant.

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

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

D7) Are the members on our payroll (with taxes and other deductions) or on your payroll?

**CV Response:** Grantees are responsible for distributing member living allowance on their payroll. The grantee must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance and must withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from the member's living allowance. The grantee must also withhold Federal personal income taxes from member living allowances, requiring each member to complete a W-4 form at the beginning of the term of service and providing a W-2

form at the close of the tax year. The grantee must comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements. See Budget Narrative Instructions.

- D8) What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?

**CV Response:** The living allowance is paid by the grantee using federal grant funds, matching funds, or a combination of both. Unlike a wage, an AmeriCorps living allowance is paid in regular increments throughout the service term regardless of the number of hours served during a pay period. You also may find the opinion letter from the Department of Labor informative in relation to this question. It can be found on the CNCS Office of General Counsel resource page: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/guidance-from-office-general-counsel>.

- D9) What is the impact on the living allowance for residential programs, or programs that provide housing?

**CV Response:** Residential programs, or programs that otherwise provide housing, should ensure that the living allowance that they are providing, in addition to the value of the housing, does not equal more than the maximum living allowance.

- D10) Do the Corporation Fixed Amount and CV Share come off the top of what is requested?

**CV Response:** The Corporation Fixed Amount is for indirect administrative costs. The CNCS share may be used for indirect administrative costs without documentation supporting the allocation; the grantee share is match for the same. CV Share is the fixed amount that CV withholds for administration expenses.

- D11) If an explanation about specific budget line items are to be part of the budget narrative rather than the proposal, will there be enough space to provide complicated explanations?

**CV Response:** The character limit in the budget will not change. If you cannot provide enough information to explain a line item, you may include additional explanation in the program narrative as part of the 18 page limit. If you received clarification on an item in a previous funding round, it will likely be clarified again unless you can provide the additional information in the budget narrative.



D12) In the budget narrative under Section 1 A, does the required full-time AmeriCorps-dedicated staff person need to be reflected 100% in the budget?

**CV Response:** Yes. The full-time staff member whose time is fully dedicated to the AmeriCorps grant need to be reflected 100% in the budget.

D13) Budget Section 1, line H: We are doing a large program evaluation with an external entity, but it costs above \$750/day in total and therefore cannot be included in the budget. We mention it in our narrative. Is this OK?

**CV Response:** To clarify, it's allowable to include evaluation costs in the budget that exceeds \$750 per day as long as sufficient justification is provided in the narrative for the higher cost.

## E. Performance Measures/Logic Model

E1) How many performance measures should I propose?

**CV Response:** See page 20 of the *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions*.

E2) Can I count AmeriCorps Members as beneficiaries of service if my program selects National Performance Measures?

**CV Response:** Most of the National Performance Measures are NOT designed to capture the impact the program may have on the AmeriCorps members. There are specific Teacher Corps measures in the Education Focus Area, and certain Measures in the Economic Opportunity and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas where AmeriCorps members are either the sole focus or may be included in the count of people served. Programs may count AmeriCorps members as beneficiaries of the services if the members receive the services as a member of the general public (or target population) rather than as part of their AmeriCorps service or training.

E3) Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in California Performance Measurement Worksheets?

**CV Response:** The measures, including National Performance Measures, selected by an AmeriCorps program should reflect the expected result of the AmeriCorps program activities. The AmeriCorps members do not have to interact directly with the beneficiaries of the service, but they must provide direct support that makes the program's results possible. One exception is when the AmeriCorps members are providing organizations with capacity building services.

- E4) Can I count the same people in more than one National Performance Measure output?

**CV Response:** Read the CNCS Performance Measures Instructions carefully. Unless otherwise specified, the same individuals may be counted more than once across different Measures for different services (interventions) they may be receiving. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once within any one specific National Performance Measure.

- E5) Can two or more outputs have the same outcome?

**CV Response:** It depends on the program model. If the program model represents a continuum of care/services where participating leads from one level of service to another, then it makes sense to create an aligned measure of multiple outputs that lead to a single outcome. If there are two completely different interventions that lead to the same outcome, those should be reported with each output/outcome as their own aligned measure.

- E6) Am I allowed to allocate funds for collecting and analyzing data? If so, how much?

**CV Response:** Costs related to measuring the performance of a program are allowable grant expenses. There is no standard recommended amount. As with all cost reimbursement grants, these costs must be reasonable, allowable for the proposed program, and properly allocated across grant activities.

- E7) Do all members have to work on the exact same activities or can the activities differ slightly, if they are all working toward the same performance measure targets?

**CV Response:** As long as the activities in which the AmeriCorps members engage are consistent with your program's Theory of Change and align with the performance measure instructions for the National Performance Measures you wish to use, the activities do not have to be exactly the same for all members.

- E8) What is a "self-nominated" or "applicant-determined" performance measure?

**CV Response:** A self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and/or outcomes that will be

measured, based on its intervention. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where CNCS pre-determines common outputs and, in some instances, outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

E9) Are National Performance Measures required?

**CV Response:** The use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged but not required.

E10) How do I decide if my program should select National Performance Measures?

**CV Response:** If the National Performance Measures align with your program's activities, then CV strongly encourages your participation. The *2015 National Performance Measures Instructions* provide definitions, requirements, and guidelines that will help you determine which are right for you. These instructions can be found on the RFA webpage.

E11) What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?

**CV Response:** They are the same for program not using National Performance Measures.

E12) How many sources of evidence must be provided in the evidence base section of the Program Narrative?

**CV Response:** Applicants will cite evidence that supports their intervention in the Evidence Base section of the Program Narrative. Applicants classifying their evidence as "Moderate" or "Strong" must submit, up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles that were cited as separate attachments.

E13) Should the Strengthening Communities and Member Development performance measures be included in the logic model?

**CV Response:** It is up to the applicant to determine if the Strengthening Communities and Member Development performance measures are activities that fit into their logic model.