

# 2017 AmeriCorps State Funding Opportunity



## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

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### Applications due November 1, 2016

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO APPLICANTS:** The following seven documents are necessary to complete a 2017-18 operating grant application for AmeriCorps funding. All can be found on the CaliforniaVolunteers website, [www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/ameriCorps/](http://www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/ameriCorps/).

- (1) 2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications (RFA),
- (2) 2017 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance
- (3) 2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions,
- (4) 2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms
- (5) Budget Form and Budget Narrative,
- (6) AmeriCorps Program Title Page and Partnership Forms
- (7) National Performance Measures Instructions

**NOTE ON ELIGIBILITY:** This competition is only open to re-competing applicants who have operated an AmeriCorps program in 2016-17 and 2016 AmeriCorps planning grantees who satisfy eligibility requirements stated in the RFA. Please email [funding@cv.ca.gov](mailto:funding@cv.ca.gov) if you have any questions about your eligibility.

**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 at a later time.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

This Request for Applications (RFA) is available on the CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) AmeriCorps funding webpage at [www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/ameri-corps/](http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/ameri-corps/).

CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to providing the most current information available to all applicants. We will rely primarily upon our website to keep applicants abreast of changes. Please check our website frequently for updates and information on technical assistance opportunities.

Please submit questions about this funding opportunity to [Funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov](mailto:Funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov). Responses will be included in a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) that we will update periodically on the CV AmeriCorps funding webpage. Applicants are encouraged to submit their questions well in advance of the application deadline as CV is not obligated to respond to questions that are received 48 hours prior to the application due date.

For questions regarding multi-state or Indian Tribes applications submitted directly to Corporation for National and Community Service, please contact:

Corporation for National and Community Service  
Phone: (202) 606-7508  
TTY: (202) 606-3472  
Email: [americorpsnational@cns.gov](mailto:americorpsnational@cns.gov)

## MESSAGE FROM CALIFORNIA'S CHIEF SERVICE OFFICER

Dear AmeriCorps Grant Applicants,

CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) is pleased to announce the availability of grant funding to support partnerships that will engage individuals as AmeriCorps members to address pressing state and local community challenges through service and volunteer action.

The *2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications (RFA)* is open to re-competing applicants who have operated an AmeriCorps program in 2016-17 and existing planning grantees that satisfy eligibility requirements stated in the RFA. This restriction is due to the limited availability of federal state formula funds for new AmeriCorps programs.

Each year, 80,000 Americans across our nation meet critical community needs through service in AmeriCorps. Over 8,000 AmeriCorps members serve in California each year, dedicating a year of their life to intensive community service in exchange for a living stipend and Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust. The experience often leads to a life enriched by volunteering and in many cases, a career in the nonprofit sector or public service.

AmeriCorps members tackle some of the most critical needs in California communities. For example, during the most recent completed grant year, 2015-16, AmeriCorps members engaged in intense results-driven service activities that range from increasing student academic engagement and proficiency in reading and math to connecting economically disadvantaged individuals to critical services and resources, preventing child abuse and neglect, restoring and improving the ecosystem health of public lands, and strengthening the capacity of nonprofit and public agencies to better address a critical community challenge. In the 2017-18 program year, CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to expanding the impact of our programs in these and other priority areas.

We look forward to learning about your partnerships' proposed community solutions to tackle challenges facing California. If you have questions, please contact us via email at [funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov](mailto:funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov).

With warm regards,  
Karen Baker  
Chief Service Officer

## OVERVIEW

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**State Entity Name:** CaliforniaVolunteers  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** 2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications  
**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement  
**CFDA Number:** 94.006

**Due Date:** The **Complete Application** is due to CV by **5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Tuesday, November 1, 2016.**

**Our Purpose:** CaliforniaVolunteers is excited to issue the *2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications (RFA)* in support of community partnerships that will engage individuals as AmeriCorps members to meet state and local challenges through service and volunteer action. CV is seeking to fund new programs that can address community problems and demonstrate impact through an evidence-informed<sup>1</sup> or evidence-based<sup>2</sup> approach.

CaliforniaVolunteers, Office of the Governor, addresses state and community challenges by investing in high impact service solutions, while leveraging public, private, and nonprofit partnerships and resources. Each year CV invests over \$30 million in grant funds to support community partnerships in engaging thousands of AmeriCorps members in intense impact-oriented service. These members dedicate millions of hours of service in communities across the state, including:

- Educating vulnerable populations in disaster preparedness
- Rebuilding trails and combating invasive species
- Connecting distressed parents, veterans, and homeless individuals to critical resources
- Teaching financial and employment skills to unemployed opportunity youth, veterans, refugees, and homeless individuals
- Tutoring children who are struggling to succeed academically
- Mentoring children and youth not engaged in school
- Helping returning veterans and their families reintegrate into civilian life

CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to providing the most current information available to all applicants. We will rely primarily upon our website, <http://www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/ameri-corps/>, to keep applicants up to date. Please check our website frequently. Additionally, our website will also provide information on available technical assistance opportunities. If you have questions, please contact us via email at [funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov](mailto:funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov).

This *2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications* should be read together with the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR Sections 2520-2550. The following documents are necessary to complete the 2017-18 application for AmeriCorps Funding:

- (1) 2017 AmeriCorps State Request for Applications (RFA),
- (2) 2017 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance
- (3) 2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions,
- (4) 2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms
- (5) Budget Form and Budget Narrative,
- (6) AmeriCorps Program Title Page and Partnership Forms
- (7) National Performance Measures Instructions

**Note for Continuation Programs:** If you are currently funded by CV and need to apply for year two or three continuation funding, this RFA does not apply. Instructions will be e-mailed directly to you by CV for both competitive and formula continuation programs at a later time.

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<sup>1</sup> An evidence informed program uses the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation but does not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the program itself and is not replicating an evidence-based program.

<sup>2</sup> A program that is evidence based uses a program model that has been rigorously evaluated and has demonstrated positive results. Rigorous evaluation means at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation, either of the program itself or of another program that the applicant is proposing to replicate.

## APPLICATION TIMELINE

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This timeline is subject to change due to CNCS announcements and other events.

<b>November 1, 2016</b>	<b>Applications due to CV by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time</b>
November 2-18, 2016	CV conducts application review and Clarification*
November 21, 2016	Applicants recommended for national competition notified
December 2, 2016	Clarification response due*
December 5-16, 2016	Final application feedback/revisions
January 6, 2017	Approved Applications submitted electronically in eGrants <sup>3**</sup>
January 9-13, 2017	eGrants Application Review/Final Edits**
May 15, 2017	CNCS announces national competition results
August-October 2017	Contracting process and program launch

\* Applicants and their partnership representatives must be available during this timeframe to respond to CVs' clarification requests.

\*\*During this period, applicants must have appropriate staff available to enter and submit application into eGrants.

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<sup>3</sup> eGrants is an online system designed to automate the entire grants and project management process from application to closeout. For more information, please visit [www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants](http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants).

## I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

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### A. Funding Program Description

#### CaliforniaVolunteers

CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) is the State Service Commission for California. CaliforniaVolunteers addresses community and state challenges by investing in high impact service solutions, while leveraging public, private, and nonprofit partnerships and resources. Through AmeriCorps, Disaster Volunteering, and Community Partnerships, CaliforniaVolunteers transforms small investments into big community impact. Karen Baker, State of California Chief Service Officer, leads the organization in consultation with a 25-member Commission appointed by the Governor. The Commission develops and adopts policies that guide the State's AmeriCorps grantmaking process.

CaliforniaVolunteers receives federal funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to invest in AmeriCorps programs. CNCS's mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund, CNCS has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting local community, state, and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

#### Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

AmeriCorps is a national service program that provides opportunities for Americans each year to deliver intensive results-driven service. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who meets the eligibility requirements and engages in community service through an approved national service position. AmeriCorps members are recruited, trained, supervised, and managed by the funded organization, and may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust. Members must be: U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals or Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States, at least 17 years of age – no upper age limit, high school graduates or GED recipients (or working towards this goal), and are subject to criminal history checks. AmeriCorps Programs may add program-specific requirements. For member eligibility requirements, please visit: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/ready/eligibility.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/ready/eligibility.asp).

AmeriCorps grants support the efforts of national and community-based nonprofit organizations to recruit, train and deploy AmeriCorps members to tackle state and local community challenges. AmeriCorps grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible organizations that engage members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects and programs. Grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses. AmeriCorps members or grant funds can help meet unmet needs or can expand an organization's ability to better address community needs, but cannot be used to duplicate, displace or supplant resources that already exist in a community.

#### CaliforniaVolunteers AmeriCorps Values

As home to the largest and most diverse population in the country, California faces many challenges that need our attention. CaliforniaVolunteers is seeking to invest AmeriCorps resources in programs that are:

**Targeted at solving a critical challenge facing California.** While there are a large number of issues that are identified as "challenges," CV is most interested in those that have been publicly labeled as concerns for California's long-term quality of life by state government leaders as well as key civic and research institutions. While CV will generally view programs and initiatives addressing statewide challenges as more compelling, CV will also give consideration to those that are designed to tackle problems faced by a particular locality or region of the state. Issues that have been addressed in the past include low academic achievement, unemployment, child welfare, and many others.

**Using national service as an appropriate strategy.** CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to continuing to demonstrate that service is a powerful strategy to address community challenges. Successful program designs clearly identify those directly impacted by the challenges, identify an

intervention proven to address the need, and clearly articulate why the efforts of AmeriCorps members are an appropriate strategy to deliver the intervention. This includes demonstrating that the proposed intervention will lead to the desired outcomes, and providing strong evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the target population and community challenge identified.

**Applying an evidence-based approach.** CaliforniaVolunteers expects those seeking an investment from AmeriCorps to demonstrate that their proposed intervention is guided by the best available research evidence that supports its effectiveness. CV is particularly interested in programs that directly involve leading experts from the relevant subject area in the design and/or evaluation of the program. CV values programs that can demonstrate the intervention is implemented with fidelity across sites and that apply performance data and evaluation findings to continuously strengthen their model.

**Based on a well-aligned logic model and focused on measurable outcomes.**

CaliforniaVolunteers values strong program designs built to address community needs by logically connecting all program components and services back to these needs. Programs funded through AmeriCorps are expected to achieve results that can be quantifiably measured and reported on program impacts annually. (See *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms; California Performance Measurement Worksheets*)

**Dedicated to quality.** CaliforniaVolunteers seeks to invest in programs that are committed to making a difference and incorporate quality management practices to oversee the program and ensure appropriate investment of public funds. CaliforniaVolunteers values programs that can successfully implement the program design by assuring that the systems and processes necessary for managing and assessing the effectiveness of the program model are in place prior to operation. This includes adequate oversight in the management of each component to assure that the program design and systems are implemented and assessed, the capacity to collect data and report on program effectiveness, and that stakeholder feedback leads to continuous improvement.

## **B. National Service Focus Areas**

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended by the Serve America Act, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. In order to carry out Congress's intent and to maximize the impact of the investment in national service, CV has the following focus areas:

1. **Disaster Services**— Grants 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.
2. **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 (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance), 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.
3. **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.
4. **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.

5. **Healthy Futures**— Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities; 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.
6. **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; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps programs.

**Capacity Building:** In addition to the above core focus areas, grants can also provide support for capacity building activities provided by AmeriCorps members. As a rule, CV considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CV-supported organizations to provide stronger, expanded, and sustained *direct services* in the six focus areas. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Examples of capacity building activities include:

- Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers.
- Implementing effective volunteer management practices.
- Completing community assessment that identifies goals and recommendations.
- Developing new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

### C. Available Funds

The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of fiscal year 2017 federal appropriations. CV receives AmeriCorps grant funding from CNCS through two federal pots of money: **formula** and **competitive** funds. CaliforniaVolunteers receives formula funds from CNCS through a population-based allocation. Competitive funds are awarded to CV to support a select number of programs that have competed successfully at the state grant competition administered by CV and the national grant competition administered by CNCS. All applicants first apply for funding through CV and then CV will select which applications are submitted to the national competition for competitive funding consideration. Applications submitted to the national competition are not guaranteed AmeriCorps funding at any level. CNCS will make final award decisions for competitive funds and those applicants approved for competitive grant awards will be considered grantees of CV. Typically, unsuccessful applicants submitted to the CNCS national grant competition will return to a rank-order list for consideration of formula funds based on results from the CV state grant review process..

CV anticipates that 2017 AmeriCorps grantmaking will be highly competitive due to limited projected funds available. To assure the highest possibility of getting applicants funded, CV expects that all applicants receiving a favorable score during the CV grant review process will be recommended to participate in the national grant competition.

CaliforniaVolunteers expects to award recompeting and continuation AmeriCorps grants for fiscal year 2017. In awarding funds, continuation grants are considered first, followed by new and recompeting grants. CaliforniaVolunteers anticipates announcing final funding decisions for both competitive and formula funding in June 2017.

### D. Funding Priorities

Funding priorities for CV are informed by federal funding priorities established by CNCS and the interests and priorities of the Governor's appointed Commission. In order to receive priority consideration and additional points for submitting an application within a RFA priority(ies), 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. Applications that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority



consideration are not guaranteed funding. All compliant applications will be considered for funding, regardless of focus and/or priority areas.

**State Funding Priorities:** At the state level, CV is particularly interested in reaching high-need communities that are currently not leveraging AmeriCorps resources. In addition, CV is interested in service models that address unmet needs for veterans and military families and promote economic opportunities. In the 2017 AmeriCorps grant competition, CV will give priority consideration to programs that address the following state priorities during its grant review:

- Unmet needs in the disaster services focus area, specifically activities relating to drought relief efforts such as:
  - Services to improve water efficiency
  - Services to mitigate drought-related economic hardships
  - Services to educate Californians on water conservation and the drought
- Unmet needs in the bottom five California neighborhood clusters with the lowest American Human Development Index for California<sup>4</sup>:
  - Tulare County: Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville
  - Los Angeles County: Huntington Park, Florence-Graham and Walnut Park
  - Kern County: Bakersfield
  - Los Angeles County: Los Angeles City (Southeast/East Vermont)
  - Los Angeles County: South Central/Watts
- Unmet needs for veterans, including wounded warriors and military families
- Unmet needs in the economic opportunity focus area
- Unmet needs in counties that currently have no AmeriCorps state presence<sup>5</sup>:
  - Merced, Stanislaus, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, San Joaquin, Sutter, and Ventura

Given the capacity required to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, CV recognizes that most of the geographic areas listed above are severely under-resourced communities that may have limited application 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 applicants that individually do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program independently. CV strongly encourages current AmeriCorps grantees that are re-competing to consider adding service locations and member placement sites listed in the priority geographic areas above.

**Federal Funding Priorities:** As stated in the section above, applications that receive a favorable score from CV may be recommended to participate in the national grant competition administered by CNCS. In the national competitive grant competition, 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 by engaging opportunity youth, either as the population served and/or as AmeriCorps members
- Education - improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics (STEM)
- Environment - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Service Corps
- Healthy Futures – Reducing and/or Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse
- Veterans and Military Families -- positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength

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<sup>4</sup> The American Human Development Index for California measures three fundamental human development dimensions: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. The index combines, health, education, and income indicators into a composite measure expressed on a scale of 0 to 10. The identified neighborhood clusters have HDI scores less than 3. Source: [Lewis, K. Burd-Sharps, S. \(2014\). The Measure of America Series: A Portrait of California 2014-2015.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Counties with no AmeriCorps presence based on partnership information reported by programs funded in 2014-15.

- Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities
- Safer communities
- Encore Programs

Please see the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for additional information on federal priorities listed.

## **E. Performance Measurement Requirements**

Applicants are required to develop a set of performance measures using the California Performance Measurement Worksheets (PMWs) that addresses requirements described in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*. Each applicant will need to complete at least three PMWs, titled as follows:

- *Primary Needs and Service Performance Measurement Worksheet*—Applicants must have at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary program intervention. Applicants proposing program service activities beyond the primary intervention are required to include additional aligned performance measures to correspond to those secondary activities proposed.
- *Common Member Development Worksheet*—Applicants must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the knowledge and skills members will gain through the program.
- *Common Strengthening Communities Worksheet*—Applicants must track the number of volunteers recruited by AmeriCorps members and service hours contributed by those volunteers to expand the impact and reach of the program in the communities served.

All three PMWs combined must account for all member service hours requested. See *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions* for specific requirements for each required performance measurement area.

### **National Performance Measures**

National Performance Measures are developed by CNCS for each focus area. Applicants whose program activities are aligned with National Performance Measures are strongly encouraged to use them. The National Performance Measures can be found in CNCS's *2017 National Performance Measures Instructions*. This document provides definitions, requirements, and guidelines that will help applicants determine which measures best apply to their program. Applicants selecting National Performance Measures must include all information requested in the National Performance Measures Instructions 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 instructions are met. Providing performance measures information elsewhere in the narrative cannot be in lieu of providing full information in the PMWs. Successful applicants will be required to report on the measures they select.

## **F. Authority**

These funds are available under authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990, as amended, (NCSA) (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.)

## II. ELIGIBILITY

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### A. Eligible Applicants

This RFA is open only to recompeting AmeriCorps programs and planning grantees that meet the following criteria:

- Recompeting AmeriCorps programs must be operating their third and final year of the grant cycle in 2016-17.
- Current AmeriCorps planning grantees that will have satisfactorily complete required planning grant deliverables by the CNCS January 18, 2017 competitive submission deadline.

Typically, the following non-federal entities (as defined in 2 C.F.R. §200.69) who have DUNS numbers and are registered in System for Award Management (SAM) are eligible to apply for AmeriCorps funding through CaliforniaVolunteers:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Institutions of higher education
- Local government/public agencies
- State government agencies
- Federally-recognized Indian Tribes within the state of California

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 service 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.

Under section 132A(b) of the National & Community Service Act, organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime may not receive assistance described in this RFA.

Note that under section 745 of Title VII, Division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, if CNCS is aware that any corporation has any unpaid Federal tax liability which—

- Has been assessed
- For which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and
- That is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, that corporation is not eligible for an award under this RFA<sup>6</sup>. A similar restriction may be enacted with the appropriation which will fund awards under this RFA.

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, any 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, serve as a host site for member placements, or act in any type of supervisory role in the program.

### B. Community Partnerships Requirements

In order to maximize community involvement in AmeriCorps that goes beyond AmeriCorps member placement sites and the grantee, all applicants are required to develop a program partnership. Applicants must have a partnership of at least three independent entities that include *one public and one private* partner (nonprofit or for-profit entity). CaliforniaVolunteers considers 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to be private entities. CaliforniaVolunteers prefers partners to have a significant role in planning, operating, and sustaining the program (e.g. match contribution, training resources, continuous improvement assessment, etc.). All primary partners and placement sites where members will be performing service are required to be identified on the *Partnership Form* submitted on-line as part of the application.

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<sup>6</sup> However, this exclusion will not apply to a corporation which a Federal agency has considered for suspension or debarment and has made a determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Federal Government.

### **C. Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management System (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: [DUNS Request Service](#). CNCS recommends registering at least 30 days before the application due date.

After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants **must** register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete and, if a grant is awarded, throughout the life of the award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. CV suggests finalizing a new registration or renewing an existing one at least two weeks before the application deadline to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and address on all grant applications to CV.

Applicants that do not comply with these requirements may become ineligible to receive an award. See the [SAM Quick Guide for Grantees](#).

### **D. How to Apply**

Applicants that propose to operate an AmeriCorps program only in California must apply through CaliforniaVolunteers. Follow the attached *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions* to complete and submit a hardcopy application packaged by the deadline. Incomplete or late applications may be disqualified.

NOTE: Federally-recognized Indian Tribes and organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one State or Territory must apply directly to CNCS.

### III. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

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#### A. Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

Applicants request for the number and types of AmeriCorps member positions that are needed to address the community need stated in their application. A 1700-hour (full-time) AmeriCorps member position is equivalent to one Member Service Year (MSY). The MSY is similar to a Full Time Equivalent (FTE), measuring positions as a fraction of full-time, so a full-time member is 1 MSY and a half-time member is .5 MSY. An AmeriCorps grant is determined based on the number of MSYs that a grantee will support.

An applicant's cost per MSY is determined by dividing the total federal share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. For example, an applicant requesting \$325,000 to support 25 MSYs would have a cost per MSY of \$13,000 ( $\$325,000 \div 25 \text{ MSY}$ ). The cost per MSY does not include child care or the value of the education award a member may earn, which are covered directly by CNCS outside of the grant award. The average cost per MSY for CVs' 2015-16 AmeriCorps programs is \$12,216.

CaliforniaVolunteers considers the cost per MSY a competitive factor in making funding decisions. New applicants that submit a budget with a low cost per MSY and re-competing applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher priority for funding.

The maximum cost per MSY that a new applicant may request for is \$16,000. Other applicants must follow the guidelines appropriate to the number of previous funding years the proposed program has received AmeriCorps funding as set forth in Table 1 below. Successful applicants are required to maintain their awarded cost per MSY throughout the grant period. The cost per MSY is augmented by match funding secured by the legal applicant to supplement the costs of the program including member living allowance, staff salaries, and other program expenses.

**Table 1: CaliforniaVolunteers Cost per Member Service Year Limit**

Grant Cycle	Grant Years	Maximum Cost Per MSY
1	1, 2, 3	\$16,000
2	4, 5, 6	\$15,000
3	7, 8, 9	\$14,000
4	10, 11, 12	\$13,000
5	13, 14, 15	\$12,000

**NOTE:** CNCS requires programs submitted for competitive funds to use a maximum Cost per MSY that is lower than the limit for CaliforniaVolunteers. **The CNCS cost per MSY limit for 2017-18 competitive funding is \$13,830.**

CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to adjust or waive the established cost per MSY schedule to align with changes in requirements or due to extenuating circumstances.

#### B. Types of Grants

AmeriCorps grants can be awarded on a cost reimbursement or fixed amount basis. CV will not provide both types of grants for the same program in one fiscal year. Applicants will need to select and indicate which type of grant they are applying for in their application. The following types of AmeriCorps grants are offered through this funding opportunity:

##### **Cost Reimbursement Grants**

These grants fund a portion 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 retains all AmeriCorps members. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a financial budget and financial report. The following two types of cost reimbursement grants are available through this funding opportunity:

### **1. Traditional:**

In a traditional AmeriCorps operating grant, all program expenses are based on an approved budget as part of the grant award and are reimbursed through the submission of expense reports to CV. Grant funds can only be spent on costs in the approved budget. A cost-reimbursement grant provides funding to pay for program costs such as member support, operational costs, and administrative costs associated with the implementation of an AmeriCorps program. An applicant that applies for a cost-reimbursement grant must provide and include in the budget cash and/or in-kind match to support its overall program costs. The minimum match level required varies for applicants depending on the number of years an applicant has received AmeriCorps funding. (See Table 3 on page 16 for information on match requirements.)

### **2. Professional Corps:**

A Professional Corps program may request up to \$1,000 per MSY to implement an AmeriCorps program. These grants are awarded to organizations that propose to operate a Professional Corps program that place AmeriCorps members as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities where there is a documented shortage of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of program costs. Professional Corps member salaries must be paid entirely by the organizations where members serve and are not included in the budget.

CV assumes that Professional Corps will cover 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. CV will consider Professional Corps programs' 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 legal applicant financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources.

CV will determine whether a Professional Corps legal applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that they cannot effectively operate an AmeriCorps program without receiving CNCS operating funds on a case-by-case basis, examining all of the circumstances surrounding the application. There are a wide variety of circumstances under which a Professional Corps legal applicant will be able to demonstrate a compelling need for operating funds. However, given the high demand for AmeriCorps funding there are also specific circumstances where CV believes that a Professional Corps legal applicant will be highly unlikely to demonstrate a need for operational funds. For example, where CV's due diligence review of a Professional Corps application shows that the applicant has a historically high level of support from non-CNCS sources, and as a result has levels of unrestricted net assets that are well in excess of the requested level of CNCS funding, it is difficult to see how the Professional Corps would be able to demonstrate that they should receive operational funding (which would inherently reduce the funding available to other high-quality applicants).

### **Fixed Amount Grants**

These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. CV provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must still raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Grantees can access all of the federal funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Successful applicants are not required to enter into contract with a detailed budget, submit financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and applicants are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. An AmeriCorps program that receives a fixed-amount grant must adhere to all AmeriCorps Regulations and Provisions including the administrative and programmatic requirements related to the recruitment, placement, training, and management of members as well as the required documentation.

For program planning and grant review purposes, applicants requesting for fixed-amount grants are required to submit a detailed budget at the time of application in order to demonstrate sufficient planning for all program costs, including match resources needed to support their proposed program design. If funded, a detailed budget will not be used for contracting due to the minimal financial tracking required.

**1. Full-Time Fixed Amount:**

These grants are only available for experienced applicants that propose to enroll full-time members or less than full-time members that are serving in a full time capacity (a less than full-time member serving 35-40+ hours per week). New applicants are NOT eligible to apply for this type of grant. The final grant amount that a fixed-amount grantee may retain under its award is tied to the number of service hours completed by each member. If a member completes their term of service and has earned their education award, the program is entitled to the full amount approved per MSY. If a member did not complete the term of service the program is entitled to the pro-rated approved amount based on the percentage of hours served. Programs can access all of the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Applicants requesting these grants are advised to stay below the maximum cost per MSY established for FY 17 (\$13,430).

Additionally, eligible experienced applicants that apply for a *Full-Time Fixed Amount grant* must ensure that their proposed cost per MSY does not exceed the level established for its program age (see Table 3) and the FY17 full-time fixed-amount grant limit of \$13,430 established by CNCS.

**2. Education Award Program (EAP):**

Applicants apply for a small fixed amount up to \$800 per Member Service Year (MSY), can enroll less than full-time members, and use their own resources to cover all other costs (e.g. majority of member living allowance, staffing, training, etc.). Successful applicants 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. Because of the minimal grant amount received, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. New applicants are eligible to apply for EAP grants.

**3. Fixed Amount Professional Corps:**

These grants are awarded to organizations requesting up to \$1,000 per MSY to support a Professional Corps program for full-time AmeriCorps members only. Applicants must use their own or other resources to pay the members' living allowance and additional member costs. The Professional Corps program model places AmeriCorps members as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities where there is a documented shortage of such professions. New applicants are eligible to apply for this grant.

**C. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Program requirements, including requirements on match, are located in the AmeriCorps regulations and summarized below.

**Table 2: Match Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations**

<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>Match Requirement</b>
Cost Reimbursement Grants (Traditional and Non Fixed Amount Professional Corps)	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by the tenth year of funding and every year thereafter.
Fixed Amount Full-Time	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost per MSY awarded.
Fixed Amount EAP Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over \$800 per MSY awarded.
Fixed Amount Professional Corps Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost per MSY awarded.

**Fixed Amount Grants (EAP, Full-time & Less than Full-time serving in a Full time capacity Fixed Amount, Professional Corps Fixed Amount)**

There is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount Grants. CV 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 (Traditional and Professional Corps Non Fixed Amount)**

A first-time successful applicant is required to provide a single overall match of 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, match gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten. The minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR § 2521.60 is summarized in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Single Match Requirements for Cost Reimbursement Grants**

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1,2,3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Match Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

The legal applicant is the entity responsible for meeting matching funds requirements. The legal applicant may request that partnering organizations provide a share of the match necessary to meet matching funds requirements. Programs may provide their share of operating costs and overall match through cash or in-kind resources, and may use non-CNCS federal funds if specifically allowed by the other federal agency. Matching funds must be verifiable, not be included as match for other federal programs, be necessary and reasonable for the purpose of the proposed program, and be allowable under OMB cost principles. Successful applicants must demonstrate matching funds are secured before CV can issue the grant award.

Successful applicants are awarded a grant dollar amount to support an overall operating budget, which includes the match needed to run the program and achieve the outcomes. As such, grantees will be required to maintain the awarded match and support any new costs not included in the grant award through match or its own or other resources. Grantees must receive prior approval from CV to use program savings to support new costs/increases to the awarded operating budget. Failure to secure matching funds identified in the budget may result in adverse audit findings in addition to negatively affecting future grant applications to CV.

Section 121(e)(5) of the National Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires that programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to CV on the Federal Financial Report. Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year.

The living allowance or salary provided to Cost-Reimbursement Professional Corps AmeriCorps members does not count toward the matching requirement for a cost reimbursement Professional Corps grant.

**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 C.F.R. §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.

**D. Indirect Costs**

Applicants are allowed to include indirect costs in application budgets. Based on qualifying factors, applicants have the option of using a federally approved indirect cost rate, a 10% de minimis rate of modified total direct costs, or may claim certain costs directly as outlined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.413 Direct costs. States, local governments and Indian Tribes may use approved cost allocation plans. All methods must be applied consistently across federal awards. Applicants who hold a federal negotiated indirect cost rate or will be using the 10% de minimis rate must enter that information in the Organization



Capability Section of the program narrative. However, under section 121(d) of the NCSA and CNCS's regulations at 45 C.F.R. 2517.710, no more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps grants.

#### **E. Award Amount**

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 – as determined by the scope of the projects.

#### **F. Project and Award Period**

Grants awarded through this selection process will support programming beginning in late summer of 2017. Successful applicants must start member service activities no later than mid-October 2017 and allow up to 12 months for members to complete a term of service. Any exception to this start date deadline must be requested in contracting and receive approval from CV. Additionally, the project start date may not occur prior to a program's AmeriCorps contract execution date with CV, which means AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the program entering into a fully executed contract with CV. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the contract execution date.

Applications for 2017 must include proposed activities and a detailed proposed budget for the first year of operation. CaliforniaVolunteers expects that programmatic activities for the second and third years of operation will build upon, and be similar in scope to those of the first year. Unless otherwise specified, CV follows CNCS's practice of awarding up to three-year grants, which are evaluated annually for continued funding. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage a grant, capability to manage and support AmeriCorps members in their service, compliance with grant requirements, CV priorities, and the availability of appropriation funds. CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to adjust the amount of a grant award for subsequent years, or elect to discontinue funding for subsequent years.

#### **G. Maximum Grant Size**

Programs being considered for competitive funds do not have a maximum limit; however, grants generally do not exceed \$7 million. Applicants who are unsuccessful in securing competitive funding will be considered for formula funding, based on their state ranking. Such programs may be subjected to a reduced budget up to \$850,000. The median grant award for 2016 was \$583,229.

#### **H. Minimum Program Size**

The minimum program size funded by CV for this application is 20 MSYs, or 20 full-time equivalent member positions. CaliforniaVolunteers believes this MSY requirement is necessary to provide members in quantities that make a substantial difference relative to locally identified needs. Applicants requesting less than the minimum required MSY level must include a compelling rationale in the program narrative as part of their application to CV in order for the application to not be disqualified.

#### **I. Minimum Number of Members per Service Site**

To ensure strong program design and to provide members with at least a minimal mutual support network, successful applicants must place a minimum of two AmeriCorps members at each operating or service site as part of their program design. Exceptions to this requirement must be supported by compelling rationale in the program narrative of the application, requested in contracting, and receive approval from CV.

#### **J. Living Allowance**

The proposed budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that are within the required minimum and maximum per member (except as noted below). A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage. Programs are prohibited from comparing the member living allowance to an "hourly wage" in any recruitment materials, member handbooks, etc.

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 in the table below and should follow the guidelines below for minimum limits. For cost-reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either CNCS or grantee share. While Fixed-amount grantees' final grant award does not include a detailed budget, providing a living allowance to members that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements is still required.

**Table 4: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance\***

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Living Allowance
Full-time	1,700	\$12,630	\$24,930
Half-Time	900	n/a	\$13,199
Reduced Half-Time	675	n/a	\$9,899
Quarter-Time	450	n/a	\$6,599
Minimum-Time	300	n/a	\$4,400

In most instances, 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. Because the minimum living allowance may not fully cover the actual living expenses of members, programs may wish to offer living allowances in excess of the minimum requirements.

**Exceptions to Living Allowance Requirements**

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

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

**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.

**K. Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards**

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust. Education awards are granted directly to eligible members by the National Service Trust and are not included in the calculation of an AmeriCorps grant. The amount of the Education Award is based on the Pell Grant award and changes from year to year. A member has up to seven years after the term of service has ended to use the award. The member may use the award to pay for current educational expenses at qualifying institutions of higher education, or to repay qualified student loans. AmeriCorps members who commence service on or after October 1, 2009, who are age 55 or older at the time of commencement, may, upon successful completion of a term of service, transfer the education award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. While members can serve up to 4 years, they may only earn up to two full-time equivalent Education Awards.

**Table 5: Member Term of Service and Education Award**

Term of Service	MSYs	Minimum # of Hours	Education Award
Full Time	1.00	1,700	\$5,815.00
Half Time	.500	900	\$2,907.50
Reduced Half Time	.375	675	\$2,215.24
Quarter Time	.25	450	\$1,538.36
Minimum Time	.167	300	\$1,230.69

## L. Enrollment Requirements

Enrollment rates ultimately effect the total number of AmeriCorps members awarded to California for service in California communities. Grantees are expected to enroll all MSYs awarded in the grant. Grantees may not use unexpended funds resulting from not fully enrolling members for any other purpose in the operating budget. Grantee budgets will be adjusted as needed to maintain awarded/contracted cost per member MSY. Enrollment rates have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in the continuation and recomplete processes. Successful applicants that do not fully enroll may be subject to a reduction in grant award amount and are likely to receive a decrease in funding in subsequent years.

## M. Retention Requirements

Retention rates are an indicator of the grantee's ability to properly design and manage an AmeriCorps program that results in achieving the outcomes contracted. We expect grantees to pursue the highest member retention rate possible. Grantees may not use unexpended funds resulting from not fully retaining members to support other areas of the budget without prior approval from CV. Retention rates will have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in the continuation and recomplete processes. Successful applicants that do not retain members are likely to receive a decrease in funding in subsequent years.

## N. Evaluation Requirements

CaliforniaVolunteers strongly encourages grantees to use evaluation as a tool to continuously improve programs and demonstrate impact and effectiveness. In doing so, programs will have the opportunity to test their program delivery model, adjust services to best meet community needs, and collect trustworthy data to support their work. In turn, these data and program improvements will strengthen the evidence base for the impact of national service as well as inform strong funding and technical assistance decisions.

### New Applicants

There are no evaluation requirements for applicants that are competing for the first time.

### Recompeting Applicants

Recompeting programs (both formula and competitive programs) are required to submit an evaluation plan as part of their application. Evaluation Plans must not exceed 10,000 characters and 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>.

### Competitive Grantees

The evaluation requirements for competitive grantees (successful applicants funded through the national competition) differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710:

- If a competitive program's 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 §2522.730 of this subpart.
- If a competitive program or an Education Award Program's average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, 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 §2522.730 of this subpart.

Recompeting competitive programs that are applying for their third three-year grant period and beyond will need to submit the report of their evaluation conducted during their current three-year grant period.

### **Alternative Evaluation Approach**

Grantees with an average annual CNCS program grant of \$500,000 or more that are recompeting 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. 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 *RFA*. 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.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/guidance\\_for\\_grantees\\_approval\\_of\\_alternative\\_evaluation\\_approach.pdf](https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.pdf).

## **O. National Service Criminal History Check Requirement**

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, AmeriCorps members, or volunteers) 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.

CaliforniaVolunteers requires that all award-funded staff and AmeriCorps members (supported by CNCS and or grantee match) must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW); *and*
2. 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*
3. A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

In addition, CaliforniaVolunteers requires that grantees comply with the following:

1. Recheck the NSOPW nation-wide search for each program year for all Americorps members, even if there has been no break in service; *and*
2. Ensure all required checks stated above clear prior to a candidate becoming an AmeriCorps member eligible to earn service hours and/or a staff person working with AmeriCorps; *and*
3. Has a written NSCHCs policy and procedure in place.

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 by CV may result in disallowance of all or part of the costs associated with noncompliance.

## IV. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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### A. CaliforniaVolunteers Review and Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed and selected for funding using an intensive multi-stage process that includes CV Staff Review, Clarification and Feedback, and CV Commission approval. The 2017 grantmaking process follows the policies adopted by the Commission, available on the CV website at [www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org](http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org).

CaliforniaVolunteers' review and selection process will occur in several stages:

#### **Compliance Check**

CaliforniaVolunteers staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. Applications that are submitted by eligible organizations, by the deadline, and that meet compliance check requirements stated in the *Application Checklist* and *Packaging Checklist* will advance to Staff Review.

#### **Staff Review**

In Staff Review, reviewers will evaluate each application against a selection matrix based on assessment criteria outlined in this RFA and the accompanying Application Forms and Instructions.

#### **Clarification and Feedback**

The purpose of this stage is to clarify issues identified during the review process. Clarification may take the form of an in-person interview, conference call, or written response. New applicants are more likely to receive a clarification request through an in-person interview. Though rare, should an interview be requested and held, all costs for travel are assumed to be the responsibility of the applicant. Failure to respond to CVs' clarification requests in a timely manner may result in removal from funding consideration.

#### **Selection**

The primary consideration in the selection of AmeriCorps programs is merit. Applicants must meet a minimum score threshold **and** satisfactorily address all clarification issues in order to be considered for funding.

To help achieve a balanced portfolio for the State of California, final selections will be made with consideration of the following:

- CaliforniaVolunteers' Statewide Geographic Distribution Policy, in which the Commission will seek to ensure a minimum of 40 MSYs are placed in the Los Angeles region and 20 MSYs are placed in the remaining eight regions as determined by the California's Economic Strategy Panel. In order to achieve geographic parity, a program in an already represented region may be skipped, and another program may be selected. Under no circumstances will the Commission provide formula funding to an applicant that receives a score that is 10 or more points below the applicant it may displace.
- Ensure a minimum amount of funding for programs led by non-profit and non-state governmental organizations as required by AmeriCorps regulations.
- Ensure CV maintains a statewide cost per member average at or below the established federal limit.

The Commission reserves the right to bypass an applicant's state ranking on a case-by-case basis under the following circumstances:

- An applicant has multiple national service funding opportunities available;
- The Commission has constrained resources; and/or
- The legal applicant presents serious concerns around grant performance and/or fiduciary responsibilities discovered after rankings have been completed.

Results of the grant review process are presented to the Commission, which makes final approval of funding decisions. Funding decisions are final—there is no appeal process.

***CV reserves the right to adjust or make changes to the review process, in the event that unforeseen challenges or exigent circumstances make it impossible, impractical or inefficient to execute the review process as planned. Any such adjustments or changes will not affect the selection criteria that will be used to assess applications submitted to CV in response to this RFA.***

## **B. Assessment Criteria**

Each application must clearly describe a project that will effectively deploy AmeriCorps members to address a significant community need. We urge all applicants to submit a high quality application which carefully follows the guidance in the RFA and in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*. Applications will be assessed based on the quality of the response to criteria described in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*. The following outlines the corresponding weight for each application component:

### **Program Design – 50%**

Fifty percent of the applicant's score will come from their description of the proposed program design addressing all relative application instructions. This includes presenting a well-documented community need, a logical and well-thought out theory of change and logic model supported by evidence, specific activities that AmeriCorps members will perform in the program, and measureable outputs and outcomes as a result of member activities. Applicants will also be assessed on the plans they have in place to supervise, train, and ensure members have a meaningful service experience.

### **Organizational Capacity – 25%**

Twenty-five percent of the applicant's score will come from their description of the legal applicant's organizational capacity addressing all relative application instructions. This includes presenting the organization experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed programs and plans in place to ensure compliance and accountability.

### **Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy – 25%**

Twenty-five percent of the applicant's score will come from their description of the cost effectiveness of their program and the adequacy of their program's budget addressing all relative application instructions. This includes a budget that describes all necessary costs and a description of the program's cost effectiveness compared to other interventions.

Points will be awarded based on an applicant's ability to address each required criterion as described in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*.

## **C. Threshold Issues**

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. For example: If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, the application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals. If an applicant is applying for a 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. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must clearly describe how the program will meet these requirements.

## **D. Risk Assessment Evaluation and Consideration of Integrity and Performance System Information**

Applications submitted to the national grant competition will be subject to a Risk Assessment Evaluation conducted by CNCS. CNCS 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 or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. 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.

Prior to making any award that exceeds \$150,000, CNCS is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

Any applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM;

CNCS will consider any comments by any applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing its review of risk posed by the applicant under this section.

**E. Potential Change to RFA Guidelines and Supplemental Guidance**

This *Request for Applications* was created in good faith and based on the most recent federal guidance available. The amount of funds available for AmeriCorps, as well as new grant limits and requirements, are contingent on final federal appropriations and CNCS's final allocation of formula funds. These and other factors may require changes to the guidance and to this RFA. As necessary, CV will issue all updates and supplemental materials at the earliest possible date. All supplemental materials and updates will be available on the CV website at [www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org](http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org). **Applicants are advised to check the website at least weekly.**

This RFA provides a broad overview of AmeriCorps guidance, highlighting many basic components and rules to provide a general understanding of the complexities and intricacies of AmeriCorps programming and requirements.

The full AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2520-2550, are available online at [www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr). Successful applicants will be required to comply with these regulations, AmeriCorps provisions, and federal and state policies. Federal funds provided under this grant are identified by the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 94.006.

The AmeriCorps regulations include federal criteria used to select applicants for funding and other pertinent information (Table 6).

**Table 6: Program Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations**

<b>Requirements and Selection</b>	<b>Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations</b>
Member Service Activities	§2520.20 - §2520.55
Prohibited Activities	§2520.65
Tutoring Programs	§2522.900-2522.950
Matching Funds	§2521.35-2521.90
Member Benefits	§2522.240-2522.250
Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	§2522.485
Performance Measures	§2522.500-2522.650
Evaluation	§2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740
Selection Criteria and Selection Process	§2522.400-2522.475



## V. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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### A. Submission to CaliforniaVolunteers

Applicants must submit a hardcopy application package and related electronic submission requirements to CaliforniaVolunteers by the application deadline. To complete the application, please:

1. Download the following documents from the CV website at <http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/>:
  - a. *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Request for Applications (RFA)*,
  - b. *2017 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance*
  - c. *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*,
  - d. *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms*,
  - e. *2017 Budget Narrative & Budget Form*, and
  - f. *2017 National Performance Measures Instructions*
2. Follow the instructions included in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions* document in completing and submitting an application. The *Application Instructions* document also contains directions for completing the required Electronic Submission.
3. A complete **Paper Application** must include one original containing items #1-19 (as applicable) and five copies containing items #1-9, as listed on the AmeriCorps State Grant Application Checklist. See *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Forms*.
4. An **Electronic Submission** of the AmeriCorps Program Title Page (electronic submission of any other pieces of the application will not be reviewed). This form will be submitted online using the link provided in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*.

#### Page Limits

**The Program Narrative may not exceed 18 double spaced, single-sided, pages in portrait orientation (including the Executive Summary Page).** This limit does not include the budget, logic model, performance measures, evaluation plan, program diagram, or required supplementary materials (e.g. letters of concurrence, financial documents, etc.) *Do not submit supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, or any other items not requested in these application instructions.* CaliforniaVolunteers will not review or return them.

### B. Application Submission Deadline

Applications (both the full Paper Application and Electronic Submission items) must arrive at CaliforniaVolunteers by **Tuesday, November 1, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time** in order to be considered.

Please send Paper Application to:

CaliforniaVolunteers  
ATTN: AmeriCorps 2017  
1400 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Electronic Submissions will be completed online. Please refer to the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions*.

Applications that do not meet the *Application Checklist* and packaging requirements included in the *2017 AmeriCorps State Grant Application Instructions* will be disqualified.

CV will not consider applications received after the deadline, except when noted below. CV reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted.



**Late Applications**

CV may, at its discretion, consider an application received after the deadline, but only if the applicant submits a letter to [funding@cv.ca.gov](mailto:funding@cv.ca.gov) explaining the extenuating circumstance that caused the delay. Communication with CV staff, including 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. CV determines whether or not to accept a late application for review on a case-by-case basis.

**C. Submission to CNCS**

Once selected for AmeriCorps funding, applicants will be required to submit their applications electronically into CNCS's web-based application system, eGrants. Please ensure staff availability to enter the application into eGrants as well as respond to CVs' requests for clarification. CaliforniaVolunteers will provide instructions for submitting applications into eGrants at a later date.

## **VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

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### **A. Governing Documents**

A grantee's fully executed AmeriCorps contract incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant as well as the AmeriCorps regulations (45 CFR Sections 2520-2550), grant terms and conditions, and CaliforniaVolunteers policies and requirements.

### **B. Reporting Requirements**

Successful applicants are required to submit programmatic and/or financial reports as designated by CaliforniaVolunteers. In addition to required programmatic and financial reports, successful applicants will be required to collect and report certain demographic information on AmeriCorps members, volunteers recruited and/or managed by members, and beneficiaries served by members.

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 CV with high quality performance measure 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.

### **C. Re-focusing of Funding**

CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to re-focus program dollars in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

### **D. Use of Material**

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, CV and 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

### **E. Uniform Guidance**

This Request for Applications incorporates the approved application as part of the binding commitments under the grant award, as well as the requirements of applicable sections of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and other applicable statutes. Awards will also be subject to the specific terms and conditions established for AmeriCorps grants and/or defined in the Terms and Conditions or Special Conditions attached to the award.

### **F. Requests for Improper Payment Information**

CNCS may, from time to time, request documentation from recipients in order to monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, as amended. Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on temporary manual hold, reimbursement only, or other remedies as appropriate. In addition, CNCS may, in appropriate circumstances, consider in its funding decisions any previous failures to make timely responses.

### **G. CNCS Terms and Conditions**

Grants under this program are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), now consolidated in 2 C.F.R. Parts 200 and 2205. This final guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122 (the former Cost Principles), A-110 and A-102 (the former Administrative Requirements), A-133 and A-50 (the former Audits and Audit Follow up), and A-89 (the former Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information).