

FY 2019 Targeted Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

January 23, 2020

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
A. General/Grant Application.....	1
B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria	5
C. AmeriCorps Members.....	5
D. Budget/Match Requirements	7
E. Performance Measures/Logic Model.....	11

A. General/Grant Application

- A1) Who is eligible to apply for this funding opportunity?
CV Response: Eligibility requirements are as follows:
(1) Applicant programs must address one of the following priority areas: Economic Opportunity, Education, Disaster Services, or Healthy Futures.
(2) Current grantees who seek to expand their programs to serve a new geographic region or provide new interventions are eligible to apply.
(3) Current planning grant recipients are eligible.
(4) Non-federal entities that have not received funding from CV and that are registered in the System for Award Management (SAM).
- A2) Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?
CV Response: The total funds available for this opportunity is \$2.5 million. Keeping this in mind, there is no specific limit on the amount of grant funds that you may request if it falls within the cost per MSY requirements. However, your level of requested funding should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization. Please note that the grant request is directly tied to the number of full-time equivalent AmeriCorps service positions (or Member Service Years (MSYs)) being requested. The scale of the program really determines the funding level. Please keep in mind that this funding opportunity provides the option of two grant funding options (State Leveraged Match or Federal Formula) which does affect the total grant size. See *RFA page 7 for more information.*
- A3) The application references Grant Funding Option 1 and Grant Funding Option 2, what are the differences/advantages of each?
CV Response: Grant Funding Option 1 (State Leveraged Match) pairs a \$7,920 grant from CNCS with a \$20,000 grant from the state, for a combined total of \$27,920 per MSY. CNCS grants typically have a 24% match requirement from grantees and this Grant Funding Option leverages the state grant as a match, thus reducing match requirements to just 15%. The primary benefit of this option is the additional \$7,920; however, all state grant funds need to be spent by



March 30, 2021. This option also requires you to manage two separate grants concurrently and stringently track expenses to be charged for each grant. Grant Funding Option 2 allows you to request a maximum of \$20,000 per MSY with a single federal grant. The grantee match requirement for this grant is 24%, but there is only one grant to manage and funds can be spent until June 30, 2021.

- A4) Is the legal applicant responsible for identifying other public and/or private organizations to host and support the AmeriCorps members as they perform service?

CV Response: Yes, the legal applicant is responsible for identifying organizations in the community to host and supervise the work of the AmeriCorps members.

- A5) 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 must 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.

- A6) Is an applicant locked into the proposed service locations/members placement sites or can they change later in the process?

CV Response: Applicants requesting funding for an implementation grant must submit a Program Diagram that identifies the proposed service locations/member placements sites. The proposed service locations or member placements may be updated during the planning period but must be finalized prior to receiving a fully executed contract from CV.

- A7) Is the Executive Summary considered a part of the Program Narrative, and does it count towards the page limit?

CV Response: Yes.

- A8) 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 approved for funding, you will later need to convert any charts into narrative in order to submit your application in eGrants to be awarded.

- A9) 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: Reviewers will not view links in an application. The applicant must 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.



A10) Can you provide examples of other grantees' Member Development performance measures? It would be helpful to know how other programs have approached these measures successfully.

CV Response: Successful applications from previous years may be requested as part of a Public Records Act request. However, the Member Development performance measures are common measures across all programs that follow a standard format. Choose the activities and trainings that are most appropriate for your program design and that most effectively prepares and supports members in their service and in connecting them with their community.

A11) Per Page 20, it states the Planning Grant Narrative may not exceed 7 pages (in addition to the 14 pages limit for program narrative). And though not stated in the RFA, it would seem logical that we would submit 2 separate budgets, one for planning and one for operating.

CV Response: This is correct, two separate program narratives and budgets are required for submission. Please refer to application instructions for further information.

A12) Regarding "Please provide a justification if you will be requesting less than 20 MSYs" - does that justification go in the program narrative, the budget, a separate attached document?

CV Response: The justification should be on a separate attached document and does not count towards the program narrative page limit.

A13) Which application requirements are you waiving?

CV Response: The following are items we typically require at the time of application that we're waiving:

- AmeriCorps Organizational Self-Assessment

These items are waived at the time of application and will need to be completed during the planning period:

- Member Training Plan
- Data Collection Plan
- Labor Organization Certification

A14) This funding opportunity is for one year of programming. Will I need to do a separate submission for the year 2 and 3 funding under AmeriCorps?

CV Response: That's correct, year 2 and 3 are subject to future state and federal appropriations. Depending upon the availability of funds, we may be in position to continue the program in year 2 and 3 without going through a full reapplication process.

A15) Can applying for the planning grant be disentangled from applying for the operations grant?



CV Response: No, not currently. If needed, the planning grant can span longer, and we can work with you to determine the implementation period. However, one important thing to note is that State Funds will need to be spent by March 30, 2021. Following that, you would only be able to access Federal grant dollars.

A16) Is the intent that everyone submits applications for both planning and implementation grant?

CV Response: No. Only request for a planning grant if you feel additional resource is needed to adequately prepare and strength your organization's operations to launch the AmeriCorps program successfully within the required timeline. Applicants that have not operated any AmeriCorps program before are strongly encouraged to apply for a planning grant. Current planning grant recipients are eligible to apply for an implementation grant but are not eligible to apply for a second planning grant through this opportunity for the same program.

A17) If we have 24 full-time equivalent or MSYs, would we hypothetically receive \$27,920 per member for a total of \$670,080?

CV Response: This calculation is for funding under option 1 – State Leveraged Match: $(\$20,000 \text{ state dollars per MSY} \times 24 \text{ MSY}) + (\$7,920 \text{ federal dollars per MSY} \times 24 \text{ MSY}) = \$670,080$ (\$480,000 in state funds + \$190,080 in federal funds). If you intend to only apply for federal funds under grant funding option 2 – Federal Formula, then the following calculation would be true $(\$20,000 \text{ federal dollars per MSY} \times 24 \text{ MSY} = \$480,000$.

A18) Is “living allowance” the term used for the member funding above the education award?

CV Response: No, the living allowance is the term referring to any financial resource that the members receive to support living expenses while performing service and does not include the education award. Note that the education award is provided by CNCS and CV directly to the members and, therefore, should not be included in the budget.

A19) Our organization conducted a pilot program that we seek to expand with this program. Results from the pilot found statistical significance through research on the intervention. However, the research was not based a national study. Is that adequate evidence?

CV Response: Yes, the evidence provided should be consistent with your program's developmental stage. Evaluation data from a pilot program is an acceptable form of evidence.

A20) Can you explain MSY?

CV Response: 1 MSY (Member service year) = 1 FTE = 1,700 minimum service hours; Third Quarter Time = .70 MSY = 1,200 minimum service hours. Please see page 9 of the RFA for more information.



- A21) Do we need our Performance Measurements figured out in advance of the planning period?
CV Response: Yes, performance measures need to be identified at the time of submission, but they can be fine tuned during the planning period.
- A22) We need help understanding how to budget for Living Allowance and Educational Award.
CV Response: You do not need to budget for the education award as that will be provided directly to members outside of the grant. See page 26 of the *Application Instructions* for guidelines on minimum and maximum living allowance.
- A23) Can the planning period be used to develop program design (p.15 of Request for Applications)?
CV Response: The planning period can be used to tighten and strengthen the program design but cannot be used to create it from scratch. The overall program design must be developed and a full application with associated documents must be submitted for funding consideration.
- A24) Can we use our planning period to develop our Program Operational Readiness Deliverables (p. 23 of RFA)?
CV Response: Yes, that is what the planning grant is intended for.
- A25) Will funding still be considered for requests less than the required 20 MSY?
CV Response: Yes, as long as a Request to Waive Minimum Program Size Waiver is submitted with the application (see page 43 of Application Instructions for further information). As a general rule, California Volunteers has not funded requests below 10 MSYs.
- A26) Will staff working on the planning grant need to get background checks?
CV Response: Yes, staff working on the planning grant will need a background check.

B. Funding Priorities and Selection Criteria

- B1) What do the listed funding priorities mean for funding distribution?
CV Response: There are no pre-determined funding distribution for the priorities listed. Only applications for programs addressing one of the identified priorities will be considered. See *page 6 and 7 of the RFA*.

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 activities described in pages 3-4 of the *Mandatory Supplemental Guidance* ([45 CFR § 2520.65](#)).
- 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 not required to be offered healthcare benefits, but may be provided healthcare benefits at the discretion of the legal applicant. A member is considered to be serving in a full-time capacity when their regular term of service will involve performing service on a normal full-time schedule for a period of six weeks or more.
- C4) Who is responsible to recruit the AmeriCorps members?
CV Response: It is the legal applicant's responsibility to ensure sufficient members are recruited to fully enroll all awarded members slots. Grant recipients must develop their own selection process and ensure that members meet the minimum federal eligibility requirements. CV highly encourages that this done in in partnership with organizations that will be hosting the AmeriCorps members.
- C5) Do AmeriCorps members need to be placed at different sites out in the community or can they be stationed at the grantee's office?
CV Response: AmeriCorps members can be placed at partner sites in the community or be centrally located with the grantee; it all depends on the program design and the legal applicant's capacity to manage members. Applicants can propose the design that best suits their program needs and justify it in the Program Narrative.
- C6) Can we conduct students' criminal background checks prior to the start of the service period?
CV Response: Criminal background checks can and should be conducted prior to the start of the service period since the members are required to have cleared their background checks before they can serve or accrue any service hours. Costs of background checks are included in the grant so programs are be able to conduct checks as soon as they have pre-approved match expenses and/or an executed operating grant contract from CV.
- C7) Given the modest size of our nonprofit partners and their capacity, our program can only support one person per location. Will this pose a problem?
CV Response: In keeping with the spirit of AmeriCorps and fostering a inclusive support environment for members, it is highly encouraged to place at least two members per site. However, we understand that certain circumstances my not



permit this so it is fine to submit an application with a "Request to Waive Minimum Number of Members per Service Site" (please see page 43 of the Application Instructions).

- C8) If members are not full-time, are they eligible to receive a California for All Education Award? According to Table 4 on page 13 it looks like they are not.
CV Response: Members serving in a service term that is less than 1700 hours are not eligible for the California for All Education Award; however, they still may receive the federal Segal AmeriCorps Education Award if they successfully complete the minimum required number of service hours.
- C9) If we do not provide a living allowance, the members would receive no additional funding?
CV Response: Correct, members would only receive the educational award.
- C10) Are retention requirements based on members completing the entire term of service?
CV Response: Yes.
- C11) Can members be permanent residents?
CV Response: Yes, an individual must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien at the time of enrollment in order to become an AmeriCorps member. It is not sufficient that the individual's application for citizenship status is pending at the time of enrollment. If a member's lawful permanent resident alien status expires during the member's term of service, you must obtain proof of renewal from the member.
- C12) How can recently graduated students use the education award? For example, can they pay off loans or pay for graduate school?
CV Response: Education awards can be used at accredited institutions to pay for higher education expenses or apply toward qualified student loans.
- C13) Can you explain (p. 10 of Request for Applications) "members may not begin service prior to the conclusion of the contracting process"?
CV Response: Members may not begin their term of service prior to the legal applicant having a fully executed contract with CV.

D. Budget/Match Requirements

- D1) How do we determine our budget? How much of the grantee match must be cash? What is the match requirement for living allowance?
CV Response: The budget should be determined 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.



- D2) Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?
CV Response: No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to implementing the proposed project, not 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.
- D3) How will living allowance costs be covered if it exceeds our program's proposed Cost per MSY?
CV Response: In some 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 the 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 state and federal shares, as long as the required match percentage for each cost share is met.
- D4) Can federal work-study be used as match funds?
CV Response: Federal work-study 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.
- D5) Can other state or federal grants be used as match funds?
CV Response: State grant funds may be used as match for an AmeriCorps State grant. In order to use federal grant funds as match, you must demonstrate that the administering agency has approved those funds to be used as match for an AmeriCorps State grant.
- D6) Does the required full-time AmeriCorps-dedicated staff person need to be reflected 100% in Section 1 A of the budget?
CV Response: Yes. The full-time staff member whose time is fully dedicated to the AmeriCorps grant must be reflected 100% in Section 1 A of the budget.
- D7) Can payroll be administered by a third party?
CV Response: Yes, if needed.
- D8) What is the difference between a member's living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?
CV Response: Both the employee salary/wage and the living allowance are 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. Note, AmeriCorps members are not recognized as



employees under federal law (42 U.S.C. 12511(30) (B)) or California state law (Labor Code § 1171)

- D9) Are the members on our payroll (with taxes and other deductions) or on CV/CNCS payroll?
CV Response: Grantees are responsible for distributing members living allowance on their payroll. The grantee must pay FICA for any members 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 Fellow 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 page 26 of the *Application Instructions* for Budget Narrative Instructions.
- D10) 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.
- D11) Do the Corporation Fixed Amount and CV Share come off the top of the federal funding amount requested?
CV Response: The Corporation Fixed Amount is for indirect administrative costs the organization incurs in administering the program. 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.
- D12) Where are descriptions included in the Budget Narrative?
CV Response: For items in the budget, include descriptions in the "Item" and "Purpose" columns for each line item. For the sources of match, include descriptions (including whether the match is "proposed" or "secured") in the "Intended Purpose" column of the Sources and Types of Match Contributions table.
- D13) How likely is it that the State funds will be renewed for 2021-22?
CV Response: In the event that State funds are not renewed, continuing programs awarded under this funding opportunity will have the option to apply for formula federal funds at a higher cost per member to continue the program.
- D14) Please explain how the following works: "No more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on Americorps grants, of which up to two percent may be allocated to cover CV share of indirect costs." Does that



mean we are allowed to allocate up to 3% of overall operating funds toward our indirect costs?

CV Response: For the federal grant, you're allowed to allocate up to 3% of the overall operating federal funds toward indirect costs and 10% of all direct expenditures in grantee share indirect costs. For the state grant, you're allowed to allocate up to 5% of the overall operating state funds toward indirect costs. It is important to note that the state grant is applied to the grantee share of indirect costs so the total grantee share including other match sources still needs to be within the 10% of all direct expenditures in grantee share indirect costs. If you have a federally approved indirect cost rate plan you may use that rate.

D15) Can we apply our federally negotiated indirect rate toward the state operating funds, or just the federal operating funds?

CV Response: Since the state operating funds are considered part of the match needed for the federal grant, you cannot apply the federally negotiated indirect rate separately to the state operating funds.

D16) Does the person managing the grant have to spend 100% of their time on the program?

CV Response: Grantees are, in general, most successful when they assign a full-time staff member to the grant 100% of the time. While we highly encourage one staff member to be dedicated to the planning grant, we understand staffing can be challenging due to the collapsed timeline of this funding opportunity. We are open to alternate staffing patterns with multiple staff, as long as one person is spending a majority of their time overseeing the planning activities. However, during the program implementation period, at least one full-time staff member is required to dedicate 100% of their time to the grant. To ensure an optimal experience for your partners, student members, and the program staff, this requirement is not flexible.

D17) Can we pass funding onto partner nonprofit organizations? For example, can we provide small stipends to the staff working on the project at partner sites, or capacity building support in order to manage members?

CV Response: Yes, if your institution would like to financially support nonprofit partner please build it into the "contractual and consultant services" section of the budget.

D18) Are we able to be reimbursed for funds we've spent before we're granted them? Page 15 of the RFA indicates project start date may not occur prior to a grantee's contract execution date with CV.

CV Response: Programs are not able to be reimbursed for planning grant activities prior to the contract execution. CV recognizes the tight timeframe and will contract grants as soon as possible. California Volunteers expects the contracting process to begin in February.



- D19) What work has to be finished by the March 31, 2021 California Volunteers grant deadline? Will we need to spend CA Volunteer funds first and then Americorps?
CV Response: Cost reimbursements for the State grant need to be submitted to California Volunteers by March 31st. The program can continue until June 31, 2021 utilizing Federal grant dollars. Therefore, it is highly encouraged to spend State grant funds first and then draw down on the Federal funds.
- D20) Which staff will require a background search?
CV Response: All staff with salaries listed on the both the planning and operating budget are required to meet all AmeriCorps background check requirements.
- D21) Can we use planning grant funds for faculty stipends for professional development? Can we use it for training to better understand the Performance Measurement expectations?
CV Response: Budgeting for staff training is permitted if it is directly tied to program needs. Budgeting for staff training that is needed to train members to perform service is also permitted.
- D22) What types of things can we fund through the implementation grant vs. the planning grant? Can you provide examples?
CV Response: Details are provided in the Application Instructions (for implementation costs see page 22-28; for planning costs see pages 39-42) and the RFA (for page 10-14 for implementation and page 15 for planning).
- D23) What training and technical assistance sessions do you anticipate CV providing and how should we budget for them?
CV Response: CV will offer a variety of training and technical assistance via phone or webinar as well as a couple of in-person trainings. CV offers a one to two day Program Readiness Bootcamp for new programs in the spring, summer and fall. Bootcamp requires planning grant staff to travel to Sacramento overnight. This expense should be listed in the planning grant budget. CV also hosts an annual conference for all grantees in the summer. This one-day conference will require staff travel to Sacramento overnight and this expense should be listed both in the operating and planning grant budgets. There may also be a potential opportunity to attend a regional conference in Albuquerque, NM in Spring 2020. While not required, this regional conference can be budgeted in the planning grant budget.

E. Performance Measures/Logic Model

- E1) Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in California Performance Measurement Worksheets?
CV Response: Yes, all members service activities must be accounted for in the California Performance Measurement Worksheets. 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.

- E2) Do all Fellows 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.
- E3) Can I count the same people in more than one Performance Measure output?
CV Response: 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 Performance Measure.
- E4) 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.
- 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) 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. In any case, performance measure targets are determined by the applicant.
- E7) Are National Performance Measures required?
CV Response: The use of National Performance Measures is not required but highly encouraged where there is alignment with your program's theory of change and service activities.



- E8) 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 advocates their selection. The *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.
- E9) What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?
CV Response: Performance reporting requirements are the same for all grantees, regardless of performance measures.
- E10) If our program will have more than one focus area, do we need to have separate PMWs for each focus area?
CV Response: If members are providing distinct interventions in different focus areas, you would need to include a separate PMW to cover those needs and services.
- E11) We are applying for a planning grant and an implementation grant. Does our logic model need to be fully flushed out at the time of our application submission?
CV Response: Since the implementation grant application is to be submitted with a planning grant application, the logic model submitted with the application can change. It is imperative that all aspects of the application be completed to the best of your knowledge, but the logic model certainly something that can be further refined during the planning grant period,
- E12) How do I get more help understanding Performance Measures?
CV Response: The Performance Measure worksheet may look daunting at first, but we assure the document is very approachable. Remember, the PMW is an expanded version of the Logic Model; and the Logic Model is a visual representation of your Program Narrative (Program Narrative -> Logic Model -> Performance Measure Worksheet). For more information on Performance Measures, please see (1) [CNCS Website: Best Practices in Performance Measure Design](#); (2) [High Quality Performance measurement \(eCourse\)](#); (3) [How to Use the CNCS National Performance Measure Instructions \(eCourse\)](#)

