

FY 2017 Formula AmeriCorps Funding Application:

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Is there fatal criteria?

Organizations will not be considered for funding without the submission of the most recent audit report including the management letter and the schedule of findings and questioned costs.

2) Do members have to serve on the same schedule at service sites?

AmeriCorps members must serve in a minimum of pairs at all service locations. Generally, AmeriCorps members should have a similar schedule.

3) What is the preferred source of grantee match?

Per application guidance, the preferred source of grantee match is funding other than State of Florida appropriations. If the grantee intends to use State of Florida funding to meet all or part of the match requirement, Volunteer Florida may require additional documentation during the clarification period.

4) What is the 24% Match?

A first-time successful applicant is required to match at 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60. The 24% match can be a combination of cash/in kind. See sample budget posted at: <http://www.volunteerflorida.org/grants/available-grants/>

5) What staff positions can be included in the 24% match?

Staff positions can be included in the match are those that are related to the overall fiscal and programmatic management of the grant.

- 6) Clarify what it means to use “one full” set of National Performance Measures.

Applicants are required to select at least one set of aligned National Performance Measures. Aligned refers to one output and one associated outcome. The outcome is a subset of the output. An example of an output may be ‘beneficiaries served.’ The outcome would define the result of that service (i.e. change in knowledge, attitude, behavior or condition). See CNCS Performance Measure AmeriCorps Guidance at: <https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/ac>.

- 7) Who is it referring to when it states National Service Participants?

National Service Participants are AmeriCorps members.

- 8) Is there a limit to applicant determined performance measures?

Performance Measures should focus on core activities for AmeriCorps member service and should not exceed 2-3 aligned sets of measures. AmeriCorps State applicants should focus on direct service and not Capacity Building Performance Measures as primary measures. Applicants should be familiar with CNCS definitions for each Performance Measure output and outcome including defining the target population, how data is collected, dosage of intervention and rationale for proposed outcome resulting from the intervention.

- 9) Whose chooses the start dates for the program, Volunteer Florida or the applicant?

Volunteer Florida offers one start date for applicants: August 1, 2017.

Applicants must select this start date in the completion of their eGrants application.

- 10) Are organizations required to pay for worker’s compensation coverage

of AmeriCorps members?

Adequate liability and worker's compensation coverage are required.

11) How does the living allowance affect SSI?

Receiving the AmeriCorps living allowance should not affect an individual's SSI benefit. However, please review resources at the following link to learn more about how AmeriCorps benefits interact with many types of federal benefits: <http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=ssaresources>.

(On June 17, 2008, President Bush signed into law H.R. 6081, the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 ("the HEART Act"), making AmeriCorps more accessible to people with disabilities).

12) Is the living allowance considered as income under the Affordable Health Care Act guidelines?

See CNCS healthcare overview and FAQs: www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/FAQ_AmeriCorps_State_and_National_Member_Health_Care_3614.pdf
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/current-members/health-care-options>

13) Are there healthcare plans/companies specifically for AmeriCorps members?

The Corporation for National and Community Service or Volunteer Florida does not endorse any healthcare providers. As an AmeriCorps grant recipient, your organization must decide the best option based upon the needs of their AmeriCorps Members and their approved budget. One option that we are aware of is The Corps Network:

The Corps Network

NASCC Corps Member Health Insurance Plan, www.nascc.org,

www.corpsnetwork.org. For Health Plan Questions & Enrollment Materials Contact: Chris Rooney, Phone: (800) 456-1415, chris.rooney@willis.com or for Membership Questions & Forms contact: Leslie Wilkoff, Phone: (202) 737-6272, lwilkoff@corpsnetwork.org

14) Is the 24% match for the overall budget or just for the CNCS share?

- Grantees are required to meet an overall matching rate that increases over time. You have the flexibility to meet the overall match requirements in any of the three budget areas, as long as the minimum match of 24% for the first three years, and the increasing minimums in years thereafter, are maintained. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.35–2521.90 for the specific regulations.
- If you are applying for the first time, you must match with cash or in-kind contributions at least 24% of the project's **total** Operating Costs (Section I) plus Member Costs (Section II) plus Administrative Costs (Section III). If you are re-competing, please see 45 CFR §§ 2521.40-2521.95 for the match schedule.
- An example would be if you have designed a program that will cost you \$500,000 to administer then your portion, if you are a first year program, is at least 24% or \$120,000. This would make the federal portion of your request \$380,000.
- The acceptable sources of matching funds are federal, state, local, private sector, and/or other funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements
- Note: The CNCS legislation permits the use of non-CNCS federal funds as match for the grantee share of the budget. Please discuss your intention of using federal funds to match an AmeriCorps grant with the other agency prior to submitting your application. Section 121(e)(5) of the National Community Service Act requires that grantees that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to CNCS. If you use other federal funds as match, you must ensure you can meet the requirements and purpose of both grants.

15) What qualifies an application as a strong application?

The Assessment Criteria published on pg. 14 in the AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY 2017 NOFO defines critical criteria for how an application will be reviewed.

16) Would an organization be purchasing healthcare policies for members as individuals or as organizations?

See CNCS Healthcare FAQs:

- www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/page/FAQ_AmeriCorps_State_and_National_Member_Health_Care_3614.pdf
- <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/current-members/health-care-options>

17) Does the organization have to reimburse members for insurance premiums they pay?

Please see question 12 and the associated CNCS Healthcare FAQs.

18) If an organization is submitting a Continuation application (within 3 years of funding cycle) and the organization is changing how they evaluate a National Performance Measure (NPM) but not changing the actual NPM, do they have to update the logic model?

An organization does not have to update its AmeriCorps Program Logic Model unless there is a change to National Performance Measures or changes to key elements of program design. An organization should update the Performance Measures section of eGrants to include any changes related to the dosage, duration, frequency of an intervention and the associated data collection.

19) Explain the 2% cost difference.

- A commission may elect to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available to programs for administrative costs, that decision is identified

within each sub grantee's budget. Per CNCS, commissions may require sub grantees to allocate up to two (2%) percent of the five (5%) to cover commission-level administrative costs. Administrative funds retained by the commission will be used solely in support of the AmeriCorps programs from which they have been retained.

- The allocation between commission and sub grantee shares would be calculated as follows:
 - a. $[(\text{CNCS Section I}] + [\text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (.40) = \text{Commission Share}$
 - b. $[(\text{CNCS Section I}] + [\text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (.60) = \text{Sub grantee Share}$

20) Will the organization still be responsible for lodging and travel cost when attending VF required trainings as well as paying the \$50 registration fee?

Yes, the organization will still be responsible for lodging and travel costs when attending VF required trainings in addition to the \$50 registration fee.

21) What is the minimum match requirement?

The proposed budget for a new AmeriCorps program must include a minimum of 24% match funding. The 24% match can include cash or in-kind sources. In the fourth year of receiving CNCS funds, the match increases incrementally to a maximum of 50% beginning in the tenth year.

Please note that CNCS' match requirements are a percentage of the total program budget, not a percentage of the CNCS funding.

22) What types of match can be used?

Cash

- Contributions received by cash, check, electronic funds transfer, credit card, or payroll deduction

- Donations, foundation grants, corporate contributions, leases, sale of goods/services

In Kind Resources

- Non-cash contributions provided by third-parties
- May be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies and services
- Labor, training, equipment, supplies
- Directly benefitting and specifically identifiable to the project or program

You may use other federal funds as match on this grant but you must have approval from that other federal agency to do so. You CAN NOT use AmeriCorps funds as match on other grants.

You must treat the CNCS share and Grantee share the same:

- Documentation
- Allowability
- Up to Amounts (ex. living allowance, travel to CNCS or Commission events)

23) How does the organization recruit members?

The organization can recruit locally through typical means of volunteer recruitment and/or use www.americorps.gov to post service opportunities for your specific program.

24) How does the organization pay the members (do they pay them out of the organization's payroll then get reimbursed)?

This is at the discretion of the organization. Most organizations pay their members through the organization's payroll system.

25) How often are members paid: twice a year, monthly, bi-weekly?

This is at the discretion of the organization. Volunteer Florida recommends that organizations pay members on a bi-weekly basis and according to their

organization's payroll schedule.

26) How do members get access to the Education Award?

After successfully completing a term of service, AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. This education award can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, to pay for educational training, and to repay qualified student loans. Since 1995, AmeriCorps members have earned \$2.43 billion in award funds. The education award is held in Trust and is available for seven years. Members access the education award through their My AmeriCorps account after completion of service.

27) If a member serves full-time can they still work outside of the program?

A full time AmeriCorps member serves 1700 hours over the course of the service term. It is not recommended and not realistic for the AmeriCorps member to have significant employment in addition to full time service.

28) How realistic is it to expect to get members to service full-time without working another job considering the low living allowance earned?

Organizations must make clear the expectations, requirements and opportunities of national service to potential AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps is a national service experience, not employment and the associated benefits should be made clear to potential members.

29) Are most full-time members students?

AmeriCorps members are a diverse group of Americans committing to a year of service to address a critical community need.

30) Does the person who recruits, trains, and manages the members get paid out

of the grant or does that have to be claimed as match?

The AmeriCorps Program Director can be compensated out of CNCS funds or match funds. See sample budget posted at: <http://www.volunteerflorida.org/grants/available-grants/>

31) What are the required background checks to include for members and staff?

CNCS requires a three part National Criminal History Check that involves: Nationwide US Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website Check (NSOPW) (www.NSOPW.gov), a fingerprint based national FBI check, a State of Florida (FDLE) criminal history check and an official state criminal background checks from the states from which the members applied (if not Florida). **Please note any hours worked by a staff or member before their proper background check is completed will be disallowed.**

32) Is the Program Director required to be exclusively dedicated to working on the program?

Yes, Volunteer Florida requires the equivalent of one (1) Full Time Equivalent (FTE) be assigned to the AmeriCorps grant. The applicant may provide a compelling case to explain why they require less than one (1) FTE. This justification should include how the Program Director will be engaged and how the Program Director's time and effort would be allocated. This may or may not be approved via the funding process.

33) Explain the 5% Indirect Cost option and explain the calculation?

If you have a federally approved indirect cost rate, the rate will constitute documentation of your administrative costs, not to exceed the 5% maximum payable by CNCS. Specify the Cost Type for which your organization has current documentation on file, i.e., Provisional, Predetermined, Fixed, or Final indirect cost rate. Supply your approved IDC rate (percentage) and the base

upon which this rate is calculated (direct salaries, salaries and fringe benefits, etc.). It is at your discretion whether or not to claim your entire IDC rate to calculate administrative costs.

If you choose to claim a lower rate, please include this rate in the Rate Claimed field.

- Determine the base amount of direct costs to which you will apply the IDC rate, including both the CNCS and Grantee shares, as prescribed by your established rate agreement (i.e., based on salaries and benefits, total direct costs, or other). Then multiply the appropriate direct costs by the rate being claimed. This will determine the total amount of indirect costs allowable under the grant.
- To determine the CNCS share: Multiply the sum of the CNCS funding share in Sections I and II by 0.0526. This is the maximum amount you can claim as the CNCS share of indirect costs. If a commission elects to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available, please note the percentage or amount in the text. There is no separate line item to show this calculation.
- To determine the Grantee share: Subtract the amount calculated in step b (the CNCS administrative share) from the amount calculated in step a (the Indirect Cost total). This is the amount the applicant can claim as grantee share for administrative costs.

34) Where does the applicant include the 'lessons learned' response in the application?

Continuation or recompetite applicants should follow the guidance in the Application Instructions to fully respond to prompts. For continuation applicants, response should be included in the continuation section of the

application. For recomplete applicants, response should be included per Application Instructions.

35) How does an applicant submit an evaluation plan?

Applicants should follow the Application Instructions on pg. 13 of the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity and pg. 6, of the Application Instructions, C. Evaluation Summary or Plan for submission.

36) Does an applicant need to budget for FICA in Member Support Costs?

Yes. Unless exempted by the IRS, all projects must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance, See pg. 30 of Application Instructions related to Member Support Costs.

37) How does the \$13,830 cost per MSY relate to less than full-time members?

AmeriCorps member can serve in full time or less than full time capacities. See Table: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance on pg. 9 of the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity for minimum and maximum living allowance. Living allowance amount must be included in the proposed budget for all types of member positions. The CNCS cost per MSY is determined by dividing the CNCS share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. It does not include child care or the value of the education award a member may earn.

38) What is the email address for submitting questions and contact phone number?

Please send any questions to americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org or contact Volunteer Florida at 850.414.7400.

39) Is there a sample available of an AmeriCorps application that received

funding?

Please visit the CNCS Open Government Initiative, Result of Grants Competitions at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>

Individuals can review a data base of submitted applications per grant competition.

40) Does an organization submit two different applications to the Commission (Volunteer Florida) and to the Corporation for National and Community Service?

No, organizations submit a single application to the Commission for this AmeriCorps competition.

41) If you are applying for 20 members are they allowed to focus on more than one performance measurement focus area?

Yes, however the focus areas must be fully articulated in the applicant's theory of change, logic model, performance measurement section and evidence level, as applicable.

42) Are AmeriCorps members required to attend the trainings referenced in the budget at \$50 per person for two required trainings?

No, training participants are the AmeriCorps staff representing each funded application.

43) Are the evaluation reports submitted for a new application supposed to represent the agency applying or outside sources?

The applicant should review level of evidence section of the NOFO and submit documents that support the level of evidence of the proposed AmeriCorps intervention.

44) Is Provider Questionnaire documentation submitted outside of the application?

Yes, the Provider Questionnaire is submitted by due date to americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org.