

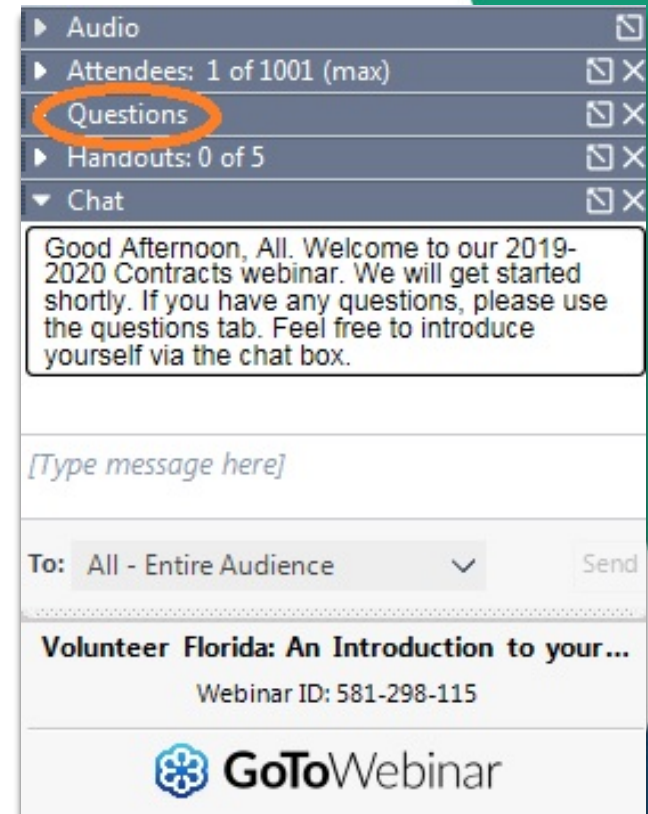
# AmeriCorps Grant Application: Creating Strong Narratives



volunteerflorida

# Tips for Participating

- You are muted
- To ask questions, use the Questions bar on the panel on the right side of your screen
- Recording will be available after the session at <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/ameriacorps-grant-opportunities/>



# AmeriCorps State and National

AmeriCorps State and National engages tens of thousands of individuals in all 50 states, territories and select tribal nations each year at more than 2,000 locations including **nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups** across the country.

AmeriCorps members help communities tackle pressing problems while mobilizing **millions** of volunteers for the organizations they serve.

Provides members an environment that propels personal development, opens diverse career paths, and promotes lifelong civic engagement.



# Examples of AmeriCorps Service

Provide **tutoring** and **mentoring** to students

Provide independent living and **financial literacy** to persons with **disabilities**

Provide **career coaching** and **job skills** training resulting in **employment**

Remove **invasive exotics** from public parks, **restore habitat**, visitor **education**

**Home repair** and housing units made available to disadvantaged individuals

Increase **financial literacy** or **health access** services for individuals

**Disaster preparedness, mitigation** and **recovery**



# Things to Know

1

AmeriCorps programs are funded through federal grants.

2

Organizations apply through a competitive process to support a minimum of the equivalent 10 full time members (i.e. 20 half time members). Volunteer Florida prefers applications with 20 full time members.

3

The host or lead organization fully manages the program at the local level and includes 1 FTE or the equivalent in budget for program management.

4

AmeriCorps members are not staff and can not be placed in an administrative function.



volunteerflorida

# Basic Application Elements

The application should:

- Avoid jargon and define acronyms
- Be free from typos and grammatical errors
- Use concise language and avoid metaphors or flowery language
- Include research, reason and best practices, not make emotional appeals
- Have sections that logically follow from previous sections
- Support all facts. The reader should be able to answer the “How do you know?” question for any assertion made



# Request for Proposal Access

<https://www.volunteerflorida.org/ameri-corps-grant-opportunities/>

**volunteerflorida** NATIONAL SERVICE ▾ VOLUNTEER SERVICES ▾ EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ▾ GRANT OPPORTUNITIES ▾ VOLUNTEER DONATE

**AmeriCorps Grant Opportunities**

**FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding Opportunity**

Volunteer Florida is pleased to announce the availability of grant funding under the 2021-2022 AmeriCorps formula funding cycle.

**Deadline:** March 8, 2021

Each year, approximately 65,000 Americans meet critical community needs through service in AmeriCorps. With funding from AmeriCorps that is administered by Volunteer Florida, AmeriCorps members dedicate a year of their life to intensive community service in exchange for a small living stipend and education award. The experience often leads to a life enriched by volunteering and in many cases, a career in the nonprofit sector or public service.

AmeriCorps programs address critical community needs including education, disaster services, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, healthy futures and veterans and military families. Sample activities include tutoring and mentoring youth, response to local disasters, restoring natural habitats and job training/placement. AmeriCorps members also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations where they serve.

For helpful technical assistance including an introduction to AmeriCorps, please [click here](#).

Please refer to dates, deadlines and priorities in the Volunteer Florida FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding opportunity below:

**FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding Opportunity** - (Right-click and choose "Save link as" to download PDF.)

- [Provider Assessment Questionnaire](#)
- [Operating Capital Certification](#)
- [Sample Budget](#)
- [Grant Proposal and Financial Management System \(GPMS\)](#) (Please submit the GPMS as Word document)

**volunteerflorida**



# Key Areas of Application

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Program Design</b>	<b>50</b>
Theory of Change and Logic Model	24
Evidence Tier	12
Evidence Quality	8
Notice Priority	0
Member Experience	6
<b>Organizational Capacity</b>	<b>25</b>
Organizational Background and Staffing	9
Compliance and Accountability	8
Culture That Values Learning	4
Member Supervision	4
<b>Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy</b>	<b>25</b>



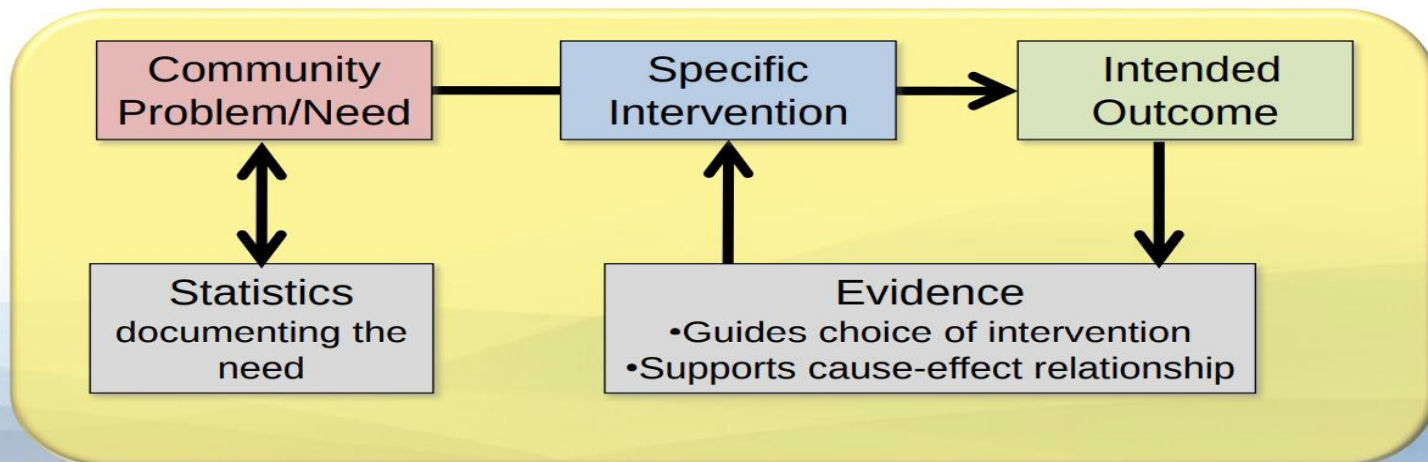
volunteerflorida



# Theory of Change

## The “Why”

- What is required to make your outcomes happen?



# Theory of Change

## Community Need/Problem

- What factors are causing this issue/ problem to happen?
- How do you know? Evidence? Is the evidence current?

## Intervention

- Specific set of activities in which members will be engaged that will bring about the change
- Well thought out plan on how AmeriCorps members will deliver the intervention

## Demonstrate Success

- Outputs = counts, quantitative, number of people served
- Outcomes = demonstrated changes in knowledge/skills, attitude, behavior or condition
- Have systems in place to collect that information and can verify

# Theory of Change

## Plausible

- If you do these things, will you get the results you expect?

## Feasible

- Do you have the resources to implement the intervention?

## Meaningful

- Are your intended outcomes important?
- Is the magnitude of change you expect worth the effort?

# Theory of Change: Metropolitan Ministries

Goal: Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness in Hillsborough and Pasco counties

## Community Need

- In 2020, there were 1,795 homeless individuals identified in Hillsborough and 1,356 individuals identified in Pasco during the Point in Time counts.
- In Hillsborough, over 40% of the population has a disabling condition. Social Security Disability benefits are a critical bridge to housing and stability goals for homeless individuals living with disabilities. However, only 20 percent of homeless adults are approved on initial application.
- In Hillsborough, only 33% of unsheltered individuals have health insurance. They utilize expensive emergency services at a very high rate, are highly vulnerable, and have long histories of living on the street.
- People cannot access services due to location or barriers
- Feedback from partners and clients reveals that services and providers are not streamlined, individuals who receive services are not properly prioritized, resources provided by 211 and others are not always accurate leading to frustration, and there is a duplication of services.

# Theory of Change: Metropolitan Ministries

Goal: Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness in Hillsborough and Pasco counties

## Intervention

- AmeriCorps Members will provide street outreach services through Hot Spot/Hub model to meet people where they are in the community (reach people who typically don't access services with 15+ partnerships and going into woods, etc. with sheriff's office)
- Provide evidence-based services and use best practices to help people attain shelter/housing (SOAR model, Coordinated Entry, HMIS, warm referrals for housing, healthcare, food, and employment)
- Work with other agencies to streamline services/increase coordination and collaboration among service providers, including local officials (code enforcement, city and county homeless services, police department/sheriff's office) and other providers (mental health, veterans, substance abuse, homelessness, etc.)
- Maintain street outreach hotline in both counties
- Information collected in Homeless Management Information System and shared with all service providers in county
- 1<sup>st</sup> coordinated street outreach efforts in each county

# Theory of Change: Metropolitan Ministries

Goal: Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness in Hillsborough and Pasco counties

## Outcomes

- 300 individuals will enter emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing
- 607 Individuals will have improved knowledge of housing resources and programs
- 607 individuals will have improved knowledge of resources, services, and supports for food security
- 25 individuals will have improved access to medical care



# Theory of Change: What to Include

- Intervention is responsive to the community problem
  - Clearly articulated including: design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members
  - Likely to lead to outcomes identified in theory of change
- Proposed outcomes in the narrative and logic model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community need
- Rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver interventions is reasonable
- AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the problem





# Logic Model

## The “How”

- How is the program going to reach outputs and outcomes?

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	Outcomes		
			Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
What we invest	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions	Changes in behavior or action that result from participants' new knowledge	Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life
Funding	Make trails accessible for people with physical disabilities	Installed ramps and hand rails on X miles of trail.	Increase in trail access by individuals with physical disabilities	Increase in trail use and enjoyment of public lands by people with physical disabilities	Enhancement and conservation of healthy, productive, sustainable ecosystems for the benefit of wildlife
Staff	Conduct habitat development projects	Planted native trees and other native species on X sites.	Increase in food and clean water supply for native wildlife	Increase in native wildlife population sizes	
200 AmeriCorps members	Conduct invasive species removal	Removed invasive plant species on X sites	Increase in available shelter for native wildlife	Increase in biodiversity	
200 non-AmeriCorps volunteers					
Member Training					
Research					

# Logic Model

## Community Problem

Summary of community problem

## Inputs

RESOURCES needed to deliver the intervention.  
Including: location sites, AmeriCorps members, etc.

## Activities

Core activities that define the intervention  
Duration, dosage, frequency, and target population

# Logic Model

## Outputs

Counts, number of people served, services delivered, projects complete

## Short-Term Outcome

Changes in knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes

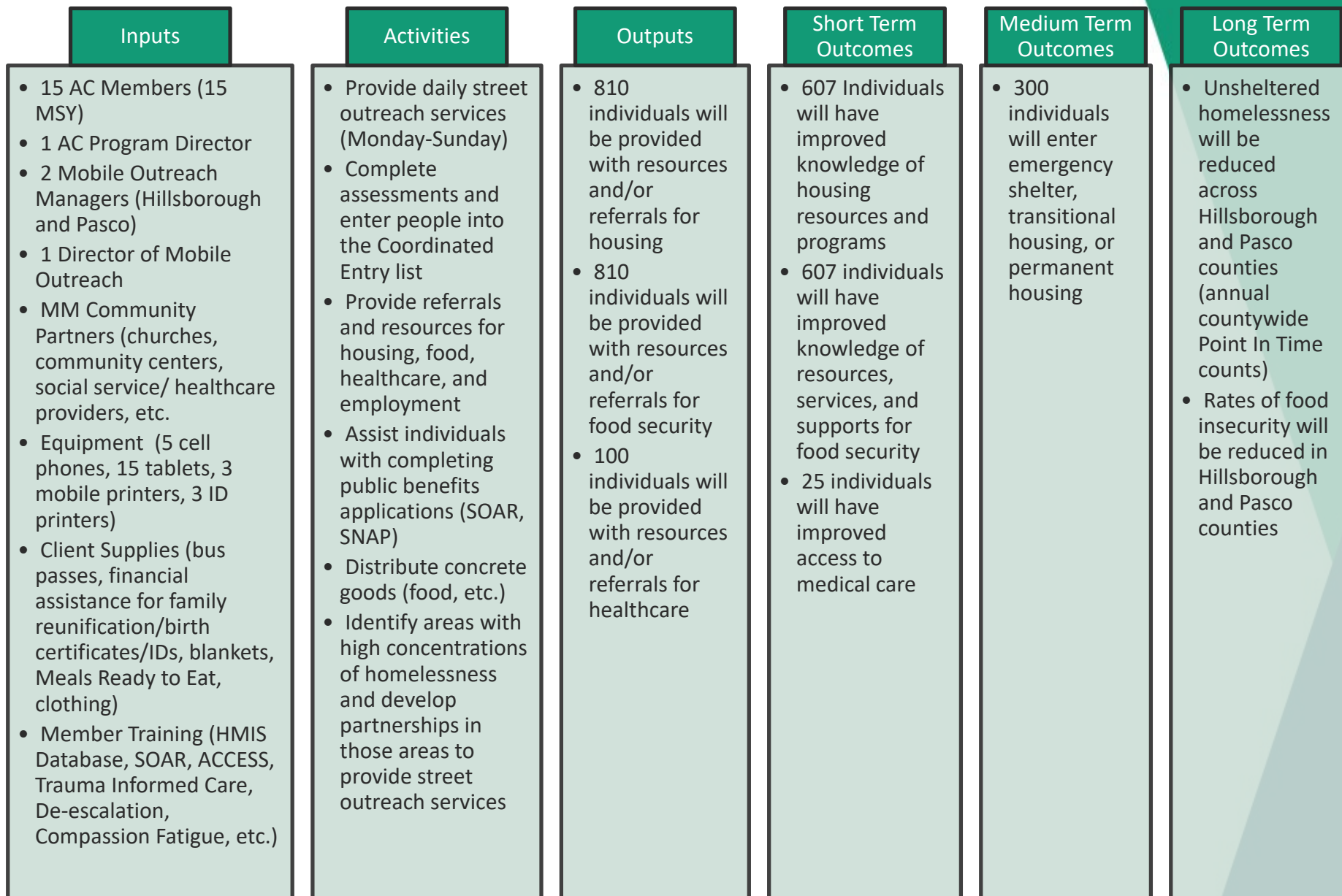
## Medium-Term Outcomes

Changes in behavior or action

## Long-Term Outcomes

Changes in condition or status in life

# Logic Model: Metropolitan Ministries



# Logic Model: Common Problems

Go over 3 page limit

Uses state or national data instead of local data

Turns into “data dump” with too many indirect or unrelated statistics

Community needs, interventions, statistics, etc are not clearly defined

Details are not consistent with the application narrative and performance measures

Not plausible and realistic relationships between program components



volunteerflorida





## **Evidence Base**

- 20 points
- Includes Evidence Tier
- Includes Evidence Quality

## Evidence Tier

12 points

- Tiers on pg. 3 of Mandatory Supplemental Guidance

## Pre Preliminary

- No outcome or impact evaluation of the intervention proposed in the application
- Must describe how they are “evidence informed” – use the best available knowledge, research and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but do not have evaluation of intervention described in applications

## Preliminary

- Has up to 2 outcome evaluation reports that have evaluated the same intervention
- Outcome evaluations have to 1) be conducted internally or 2) by an entity external to the application
- Must include pre and post-assessments without a comparison group or a post-assessment comparison between intervention and comparison group



# Evidence Tier

## Moderate

- Submitted up to 2 well-designed studies of their own program that evaluated the same intervention described in the application and identified evidence of effectiveness
- Must use experimental design evaluations or quasi experimental design evaluations with statistically matched comparison and treatment groups

## Strong

- Applicant has submitted up to two evaluation reports testing the same intervention nationally, regional or at the state level using a well implemented experimental design evaluation or quasi experimental design evaluation with statistically matched comparison and treatment groups
- Independent entity external to the organization

# Evidence Tier: Metropolitan Ministries

**Pre-Preliminary Tier: MM's Program began as a pilot program.**

Best practices and evidenced-based interventions for street outreach informed the program design.

Sanctuary Model of Trauma Informed Care is an evidence-supported practice by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and a promising practice according to the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse. MM became accredited in November 2016 as a Certified Sanctuary Trauma Informed Care agency.

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is a national evidence-supported program designed used by SAMSHA to increase access to disability income benefit programs.

SOAR applicants approved at nearly twice the rate of all homeless applicants (50% percent vs. 28%) (Jacqueline F. Kauff, Elizabeth Clary, Kristin Sue Lupfer, and Pamela J. Fischer, "An Evaluation of SOAR: Implementation and Outcomes of an Effort to Improve Access to SSI and SSDI," Psychiatric Services 67, no. 10 (October 2016))

Coordinated Entry is a proven, effective and efficient best practice model used to move homeless individuals and families from homelessness to permanent housing.

Motivational Interviewing is an evidence based conversational approach that supports behavior change. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse rates this program a "1 - Well-Supported by Research Evidence" on the Scientific Rating Scale based on the published, peer-reviewed research available.

The VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) is an evidence-informed survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization. The tool was found to be reliable and have validity by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

# Evidence Quality

8 points

- Quality of the applicant's evidence and the extent to which it supports the program design (Pre-Preliminary)

Relevant evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies to inform program design

Reports submitted describe recent evaluations, preferably within the last 6 years

Evidence described indicates a meaningful positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome area.

# Evidence Quality

8 points

- Preliminary,  
Moderate,  
Strong

Reports submitted are of satisfactory methodological quality and rigor for the type of evaluation conducted.

Reports submitted describe recent evaluations, preferably within the last 6 years

Reports show a meaningful and significant positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest

# Member Experience

## AmeriCorps Members

- 6 points

AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of training and service which will be valued by future employers

Recruit AmeriCorps members from geographic or demographic communities in which the program operates

Foster an inclusive service culture, where different backgrounds, talents, and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and service

# Member Experience



The diagram consists of five vertical, parallelogram-shaped blocks arranged in a row. Each block is a different shade of green. The first, third, and fifth blocks are a darker teal green, while the second, fourth, and sixth blocks are a lighter lime green. Each block contains white text centered within it. The blocks are separated by small gaps.

Specific  
Duties

Ethic of  
Service

Professional  
Selves

Community  
Engagement

Personal  
Selves

# Organizational Capacity

## 4 sections

- 25 points

Organizational Background and Staffing

Compliance and Accountability

Culture that Values Learning

Member Supervision



# Organizational Background and Staffing – 9 points

## Organizational Background and Staffing

- Organizational details the roles, responsibilities and structure of the staff that will be implementing program as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program

# Compliance and Accountability– 8 points

## Compliance

- The organization has a monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect non-compliance and enforce compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities and criminal history checks at the grantee, subgrantee (if applicable), and service site locations.

## Evaluation

- The AmeriCorps-required evaluation report meets AmeriCorps requirements (if applicable).
- The AmeriCorps-required evaluation report is of satisfactory quality (if applicable).

## Culture that Values Learning– 4 points

### Culture that Values Learning

- The applicant's board, management and staff collect and use information, including performance data, for learning and decision making



# Member Supervision– 4 points

## Member Supervision

- Members will receive sufficient guidance and support from supervisor to provide effective service
- Supervisors will be adequately trained/ prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations



## Performance Measures

# Outputs and outcomes

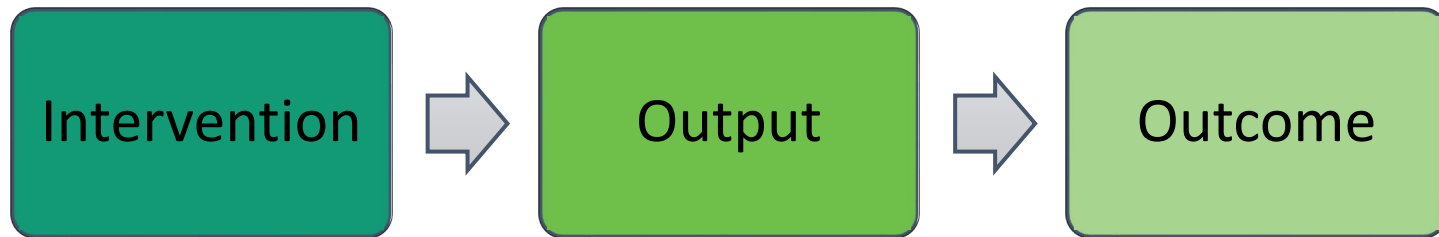
- Aligned performance measure (output paired with outcome)
- Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries





# Performance Measures

- Outputs tell the story of the organization's activities.
- Outcomes are the level of performance of achievement that occurred BECAUSE OF THE OUTPUT.

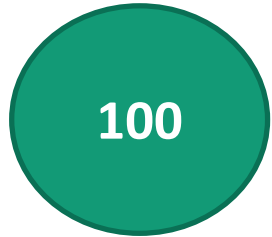


Focus Area	Output	Outcome
Education	Number of students served (ED1A)	Number of students demonstrating improved academic performance (ED5A)

Two photographs illustrating education. The left photo shows a teacher in a red shirt interacting with a young student. The right photo shows a group of diverse students standing in front of a chalkboard with math problems.

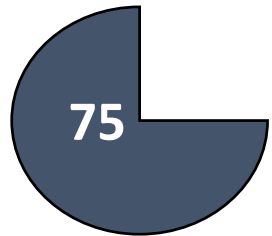
# Outputs vs. Outcomes

## Outputs



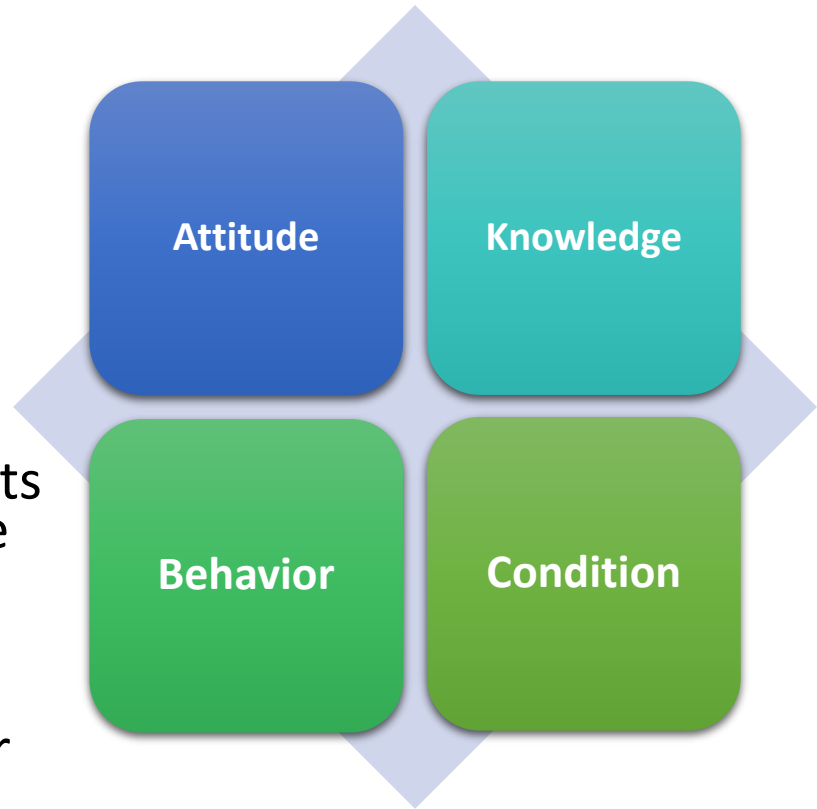
People served through your planned intervention

## Outcomes



Reflect the changes or benefits that occur as the result of the intervention

Address changes in attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/skills, behavior, or conditions



# Performance Measures: Metropolitan Ministries

Focus Area	Output	Outcomes
<b>Economic Opportunity</b>	Number of individuals served (O1A) - 810	Number of individuals with improved knowledge of housing resources and programs (applicant determined) – 607
<b>Economic Opportunity</b>	Number of individuals served (O1A) - 810	Number of individuals transitioned to emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing (applicant determined) - 300
<b>Healthy Futures</b>	Number of individuals served (H4A) - 810	Number of individuals with improved knowledge of resources, services, & supports for food security (applicant determined) - 607
<b>Healthy Futures</b>	Number of individuals served (H4A) - 100	Number of individuals with improved access to medical care (H20) - 25
<b>Volunteer Generation</b>	20 volunteers will be recruited to support the Mobile Outreach Program	100 hours of service will be contributed by volunteers recruited to support the Outreach Program

- Increase in knowledge measured by post surveys
- Client information and demographics, as well as service transactions, stored in Homeless Management Information System to prevent duplication (like electronic medical record)
- Dosage – Members meet with client individually for at least 15 minutes and provide 1+ referral or resource



# Strong Performance Measures

- Quality outcomes should:
  - Be meaningful
  - Be ambitious yet realistic
  - Match the type of change you want to see (attitude, knowledge/skills, behavior, condition)
- Strong performance measures are aligned:
  - Output comes from the intervention
  - Outcome is likely to result from output
  - Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries

## For additional information

- Basic Curriculum/Webinars
  - [https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#PM Basics](https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#PM_Basics)
- Performance Measures Instructions (pg. 100 on NOFO)
  - [https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2020/ameriacorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2020#Performance Measure Instructions](https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2020/ameriacorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2020#Performance_Measure_Instructions)



# Overall Narrative: Common Problems

Outlined interventions are capacity building instead of direct service

Too much time and space is spent on describing the “need”

Intervention and dosage are not clear (ex. 2 hours of tutoring 3 times a week)

Applicant doesn't determine which evidence tier they fall in

Applicant fails to adequately respond to the prompts

Applicant does not include headers on narrative sections



volunteerflorida

# Next Steps or Questions?

- Review the full application – released January 25, 2021
- Contact Volunteer Florida with your questions, [americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org)
- AmeriCorps Application due in eGrants – March 8, 2021
- AmeriCorps Application supplemental documents due in Blackbaud System – March 8, 2021

