

**Volunteer Florida
Frequently Asked Questions
FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula NOFO**

MEMBERS

- 1) What is the minimum and maximum living allowance for AmeriCorps members?

\$15,100 is the minimum living allowance for a full-time member. \$30,200 is the maximum living allowance for a full-time member.

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

National Service Participants are AmeriCorps members.

- 4) How does the organization recruit members?

The organization can recruit locally through typical means of volunteer recruitment and/or use Volunteer Florida's network page at: <https://serviceyear.org/volunteerflorida/> and www.americorps.gov to post service opportunities for your specific program.

- 5) 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.

- 6) 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.

- 7) 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.

8) 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.

9) Do AmeriCorps members have to provide tasks that are different from staff activities?

AmeriCorps members must provide direct service and cannot displace or supplant staff or volunteers.

FINANCIAL

10) Explain the 5% Indirect Cost option and explain the calculation.

A. CNCS-Fixed Percentage Method Five/Ten Percent Fixed Administrative Costs Option

The CNCS-fixed percentage rate method allows you to charge administrative costs up to a cap without a federally approved indirect cost rate and without documentation supporting the allocation. If you choose the CNCS-fixed percentage rate method (Section IIIA in eGrants), you may charge, for administrative costs, a fixed 5% of the total of the CNCS funds expended. In order to charge this fixed 5%, the grantee match for administrative costs may not exceed 10% of all direct cost expenditures.

If a Commission elects to retain a share of the 5% of federal funds available to programs for administrative costs up to 2%, that decision is identified within each sub-grantees budget. A State Commission can take up to 2% in administrative funds.

Since the commission elects to retain 2% of the administrative costs allowable, you will calculate these as fractional shares, within Section III of the sub-grantees budget as noted below.

1. To determine the maximum CNCS share for Section III, you will take three-fifths (60%) of the Federal dollars budgeted for administrative costs. The Program share would be calculated as follows: $([\text{Section I}] + [\text{Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (0.60)$. You will enter this amount in the CNCS share portion of Section III A. Corporation Fixed Percentage.

2. To determine the maximum Grantee share for Section III, you will multiply the total (both CNCS and Grantee share) of Sections I and II by 10% (0.10). You will enter this amount in the Grantee share portion of Section III A. Corporation Fixed Percentage.

3. To determine the Commission's CNCS share for Section III, you will take two-fifths (40%) of the federal dollars budgeted for administrative costs. The Commission's share would be calculated as follows: $([\text{Section I}] + [\text{Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (0.40)$. You will enter this amount in the CNCS share portion of Section III A. Commission Fixed Percentage. There will be no Grantee share portion for this line item.

B. 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. You will enter this amount in Total Column of the budget in Section III B. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate.
- 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. You will enter this amount in the CNCS Share of Section III B. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate. Please note the Commission does elect to retain 2% of this total of administrative costs allowable, so you will note the calculation and the amount in the text that will be allocated to the Program and the Commission. There is no separate line item to show this calculation. The Program share of the total 5% is calculated by taking the total x .60 and the Commission's share of the total 5% is calculated by taking the total x .40.
- 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.

11) 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 Application Instructions related to Member Support Costs.

12) How does the \$18,000 cost per MSY (or \$16,300 State/Territory Commission Average 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. 11 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.

13) Do we update service site changes in the application or wait for clarification?

If services sites are known at the time of submission, please include that update in the Continuation Changes section (for Continuation applicants).

14) What is the preferred source of grantee match? (Match waived for FY21)

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.

15) What is the 24% Match? (Match waived for FY21)

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/>

16) What staff positions can be included in the 24% match? (Match waived for FY21)

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

17) Are organizations required to pay for worker’s compensation coverage of AmeriCorps members?

Adequate liability and worker’s compensation coverage are required.

18) 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).

19) Is the 24% match for the overall budget or just for the CNCS share? (Match waived for FY21)

Cost Reimbursement including Professional Corps, States and Territories without Commissions, Indian Tribes	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 any year thereafter.
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- 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.

20) 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. $([\text{CNCS Section I}] + [\text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (.40) =$
Commission Share
 - b. $([\text{CNCS Section I}] + [\text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526) \times (.60) =$ Sub grantee Share

21) What is the minimum match requirement? (Match waived for FY21)

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? (Match waived for FY21)

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 CANNOT use AmeriCorps funds as match on other grants.

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

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 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.

24) 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.

25) If an applicant plans to use state appropriations as match, what additional documentation will be required? (Match waived for FY21)

This statement refers to applicants who receive direct appropriations from the State of Florida and does not refer to standard entities receiving state funds such as school districts, education foundations, state agencies or municipalities. Volunteer Florida will provide that information in the clarification stage of the application process, if applicable.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

26) 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. Volunteer Florida recommends selecting a primary focus area.

27) 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.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/amicorps>

28) Can you adjust the performance measures? Is there a requirement for volunteers leveraged and hours served by volunteers leveraged?

Performance Measures can be adjusted. Continuation or Re compete applicants can adjust their Performance Measures as is consistent with 2021 Performance Measures Instructions. Once approved, organizations may not typically adjust Performance Measures. There is no requirement for number of volunteers or hours generated by volunteers. For new programs 1:10 ratio (member: volunteers) is a suggestion.

- 29) Is there a limit to applicant determined performance measures? Is there a minimum number of beneficiaries to serve?

Performance Measures should focus on core activities for AmeriCorps member service and should not exceed 1-3 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. The projected number of beneficiaries served should align with your proposed intervention and number of members associate with providing identified service.

- 30) What resource recommendations are available for building out the logic model and performance measures?

See upcoming CNCS webinars available at: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2021/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2021>

Review the How to Develop a Logic Model (PDF) posted at:

https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Logic%20Model%20Slides%20_05.28.14st10.17_0.pdf – also Creating Strong Narratives webinar recorded and posted at <https://www.gotostage.com/channel/ameri-corps-fl>

- 31) 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.

GENERAL

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

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

- 33) 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://americorps.gov/about/agency-overview/results-grant-competitions>

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

Organizations may also contact Volunteer Florida to request a sample of a funded AmeriCorps application.

34) 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 Volunteer Florida for this AmeriCorps competition.

35) Who chooses the start dates for the program, Volunteer Florida or the applicant?

Volunteer Florida offers one start date for applicants: August 1, 2021. Applicants must select this start date in the completion of their eGrants application.

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

See CNCS healthcare overview and FAQs:

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/current-members/health-care-options>

37) 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

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

Please see question 12 and the associated CNCS Healthcare FAQs.

39) Are the evaluation reports submitted for a new application supposed to represent the agency 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.

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

Yes, the Provider Questionnaire is submitted by due date to Blackbaud Grant Management link in RFP.

41) Is this the right funding opportunity for organizations seeking capacity building activities and services?

No, organizations seeking AmeriCorps members to build capacity should explore AmeriCorps VISTA funding opportunities at:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/amicorpsvista/about-amicorps-vista>

- 42) 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/>

- 43) What are the required criminal history 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). Truescreen and Fieldprint are the CNCS approved vendors for staff and member criminal history checks.
Requirements are included at: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check>

- 44) What Evaluation guidance is available for new programs?

See pg. 19 Evidence Base of the NOFO and the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance. CNCS and Volunteer Florida accept applications with all levels of evidence. An Evaluation Plan is required when sub grantees recompile for the first time. See Technical assistance resources at:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>

- 45) Does Volunteer Florida require letters of support from organizational partners?

No.

- 46) 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.

- 47) How will new applications be scored?

The application will be scored according to the criteria associated with each section of the application, pg. 17 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Additional FAQs representing the Technical Assistance Webinars

- 48) Is the CDFI opportunity new or a new priority?

There is a new concept called the Economic Mobility Corps, a new joint initiative with AmeriCorps and the U.S Treasury, Community Development Financial Institutions Fund to place a national service members at Certified Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to enhance their capacity to provide financial literacy, financial planning, budgeting, saving, and other financial counseling activities in distressed and underserved areas.

While these activities have always been allowable and part of the economic opportunity area, this new federal partnership will support 61 full time members. Volunteer Florida encourages organizations to apply and believes this area of impact could be expanded for the future. Per the NOFO, members must be placed at CDFI locations. The applicant does not have to be a CDFI.

50) Can we apply for more than one AmeriCorps grant. For example, NCCC and State/National and VISTA?

Yes, organizations can apply for and receive multiple types of national service funding.

51) Can we provide housing in lieu of living allowance?

Generally, no. Providing a minimum living allowance per member is a primary part of the budget. For Education Award only programs, organizations do not provide a living allowance. Please see Education Award only guidance in the NOFO.

52) If we request 10 full-time members the first year, can we request more members in year two?

Yes, organizations can request expansion in terms of members, funding and slots during a continuation year. An expansion request is reviewed during the application process and is not guaranteed.

53) How does the living allowance factor into the cost per MSY? Is the living allowance a separate cost to the organization hosting the members? Can that count as the match?

The living allowance is a significant portion of the budget and is part of the overall cost per MSY. The cost per MSY is a calculation that is used to determine the overall cost of your program. The funding amount of an AmeriCorps grant is directly related to the number of MSY's an applicant requests. The Member Living Allowance is an individual program budget expense that is required. It can count as match or a portion of the match, providing you have a funding source to pay the living allowances