

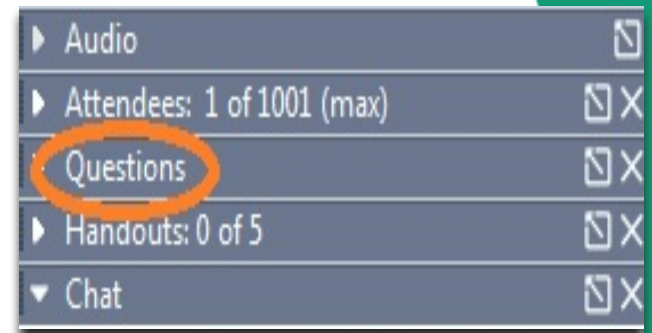
AmeriCorps Grant Application: Creating Strong Narratives



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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/>



Agenda

- I. Application Organization
- II. Scoring Criteria
- III. Breakthrough Miami
 - A. Theory of Change
 - B. Logic Model
 - C. Performance Measures



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.



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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/>

The screenshot shows the Volunteer Florida website with the URL <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/ameri-corps-grant-opportunities/> highlighted in the browser's address bar. The page features a navigation bar with links to National Service, Volunteer Services, Emergency Management, Grant Opportunities, Volunteer, and Donate. The main content area is titled "FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding Opportunity" and includes a deadline of March 8, 2021. A right-click context menu is open over the URL, displaying options such as "Open link in new tab", "Open link in new window", "Open link in incognito window", "Save link as...", "Copy link address", and "Inspect".

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 Budget and Financial Management System \(GBFMS\)](#) (Please submit the GBFMS as Word document)

Application Organization & Scoring (Page 21 of NOFO)

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

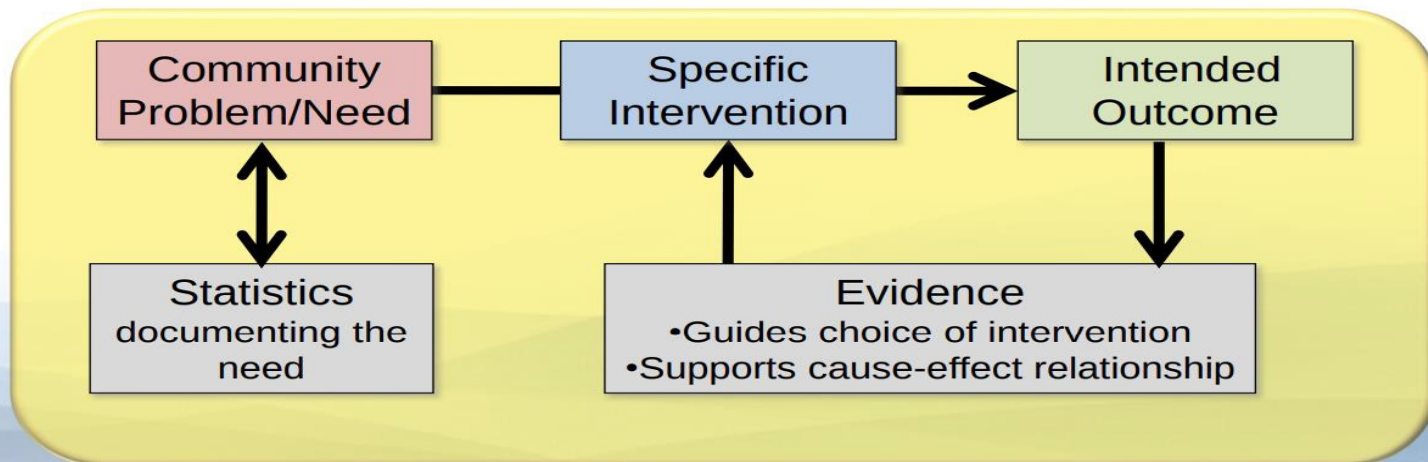


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Theory of Change

The “Why”

- What is required to make your outcomes happen?
- 24 points (w/Logic Model)



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: Breakthrough Miami

Goal: Reduce summer learning loss and increase educational opportunities for students in Miami-Dade County.

Community Need

- Miami-Dade County is a community of dramatic economic inequality, where a majority of residents are foreign born and more than half of all children live in households with family income 150% below the poverty level.
- A significant number of children lack opportunities, resources and support systems necessary for achieving academic excellence.
- The five-year trend graduation rate for Miami-Dade County Public Schools shows an upward trend. However, nearly 20% of Black students, 15% of Hispanic students and 15% of low-income students still fail to graduate from high school. Similarly, national data continues to show gaps of over 45% in degree attainment between students from the highest and lowest income families.
- The income gap between families with and without resources has widened during the last few decades. The incomes of families in the top 20 percent of income distribution rose by more than one third over this period and the average income of families in the top five percent of the distribution rose by 50 percent.
- Low-income students and first-generation students are less likely to be equipped with non-academic and social skills and to enroll in and finish a college degree. Regardless of ability, only 52% of low-income high school graduates enroll in college and only 11% of low-income college students complete a college degree.
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools reports summer slide is the single most important factor in the achievement gap.

Theory of Change: Breakthrough Miami

Goal: Reduce summer learning loss and increase academic opportunities for students in Miami-Dade County

Intervention

- School Year Program
 - AmeriCorps members (24 RHT) will manage an assigned portfolio of approximately 30 students to whom they will provide direct advising services.
 - Provide approximately 12 hours per week of 1:1 advising.
 - Dedicate 8 hours per week developing and delivering group advising sessions differentiated by grade level, and out-of-school academic support sessions, including leading an advisory class on 14 BTM Saturdays.
 - Conduct a minimum of 8 touchpoints with each student in their portfolio during the school year supporting students in setting academic and personal goals, creating academic plans and pursuing external academic support and acceleration support.

Theory of Change: Breakthrough Miami

Goal: Reduce summer learning loss and increase academic opportunities for students in Miami-Dade County

Intervention

- Summer Learning
 - AmeriCorps members (130 MT) will create and teach developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive core academic courses daily over six-week Summer Institute.
 - Develop and teach daily elective courses to cultivate students' interests and talents.
 - Deliver daily instruction on social/emotional learning.
 - Plan and lead collaborative projects and special events, such as multicultural days, family night, and Summer Celebration.
 - Participate in student evaluation process, including writing narrative reports for each student to be shared with students and families.

Theory of Change: Breakthrough Miami

Goal: Reduce summer learning loss and increase academic opportunities for students in Miami-Dade County

Outcomes

- School Year Academic Gains
 - 420 students will demonstrate improved academic performance
- Summer Learning Gains
 - 595 student will demonstrate improved academic performance

Theory of Change: What to Include

- The problem is prevalent and severe in communities where the program plans to serve and has been documented with relevant data.
- The proposed intervention is responsive to the identified community problem.
- The applicant's proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant's intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's Theory of Change.
- The expected outcomes articulated in the application narrative and logic model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem identified by the applicant.
- The rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver the intervention(s) is reasonable.
- The service role of AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated 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

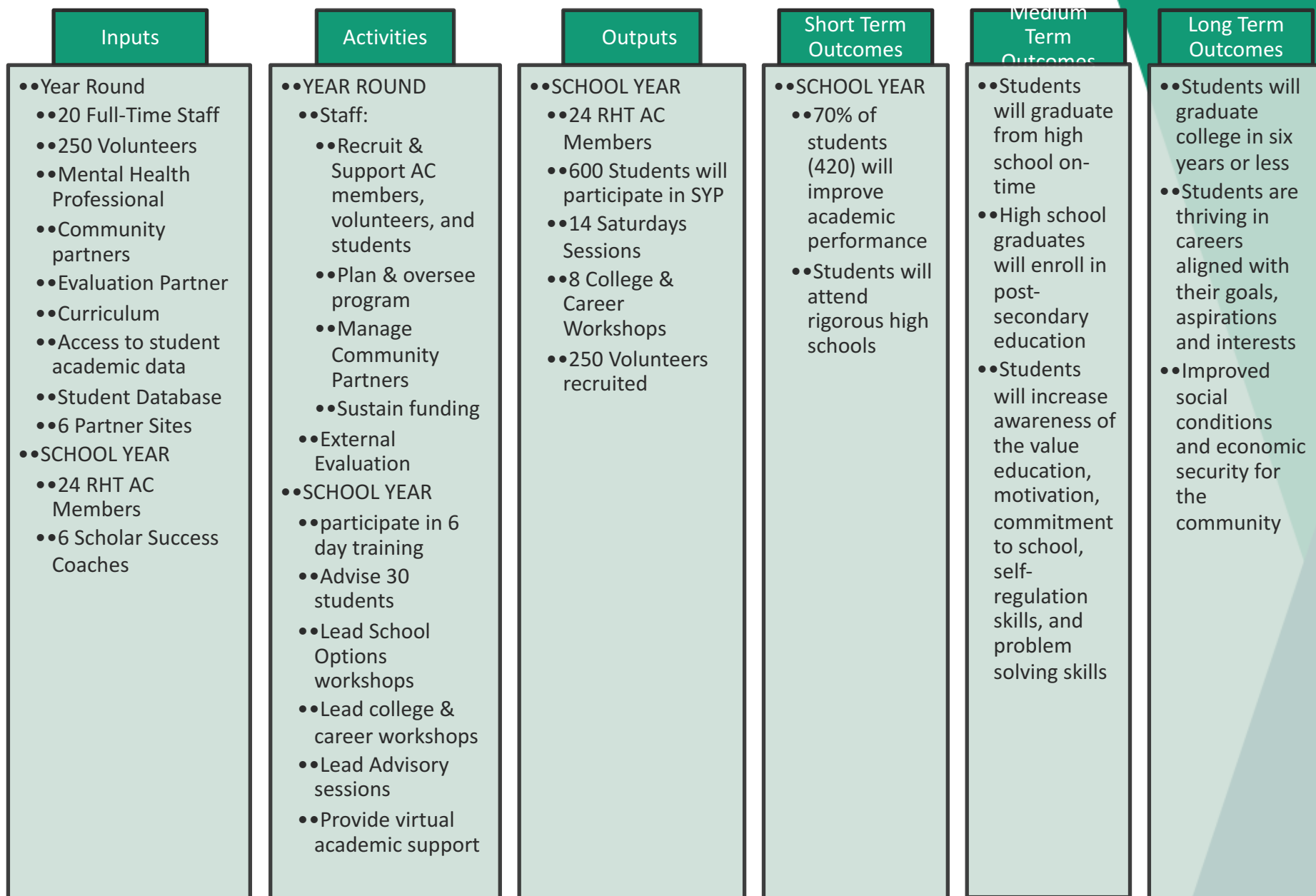
Medium-Term Outcomes

Changes in behavior or action

Long-Term Outcomes

Changes in condition or status in life

Logic Model: Breakthrough Miami



Logic Model: Breakthrough Miami

Inputs

- SUMMER
- 130 MT AC Members
- 19 Instructional Coaches
- 4 Summer Assistant Site Directors
- 6 Summer Site Coordinators

Activities

- SUMMER
- 6 day training
- Create and teach academic, SEL and elective for 6 week summer program
- Participate in student evaluation
- Receive on-going PD

Outputs

- SUMMER
- 130 MT AC Members
- 850 students will be served during the Summer Institute
- 80 hours of core academic courses & 50 hours of electives

Short Term Outcomes

- SUMMER
- 70% of 5th - 9th grade students (595) will improve academic performance

Medium Term Outcomes

- Students can identify a wide variety of career options available to them after college
- Member alumni return to lead sessions in BTM annual Teaching Fellow/AmeriCorps Training
- BTM Alumni become AmeriCorps Members and pay forward the interventions that supported them in their own growth and development

Long Term Outcomes

Logic Model: Common Problems

Go over 3 page limit

Does not include AmeriCorps Performance Measures

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



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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: Breakthrough Miami

Preliminary Tier:

Best practices and evidenced-based interventions

- Breakthrough Miami program evaluations conducted by evaluators from the University of Miami - Since 2012 BTM has participated in 4-outcomes-focused external evaluations

- An external impact evaluation conducted with the Breakthrough affiliate in Central Texas, which evaluated students receiving the Breakthrough interventions compared to a group of public school peers who did not receive the intervention, demonstrated significant differences in the following areas: fewer absences, fewer disciplinary referrals, higher grades, more likely to take advanced math, five times more likely to take the SAT, and were more likely to say they would graduate from high school.

- Education research focused on Out-of-School Time Learning and educational attainment: Summer learning programs have the potential to reduce the academic achievement gap; Near-peer mentors with whom mentees can identify with positively impact mentee self-efficacy and academic achievement; the longer students are involved in academic OST programs, the greater their academic improvement

Internal program documentation, compiled by BTM provides ongoing evidence in support of the BTM Model: for the last 10 years of graduating seniors 100% have graduated on-time, 97% enroll in college; 97% of Scholars took the SAT or ACT and 100% completed the FAFSA; 82% of 11th graders took two or more advanced courses, 75% of 10th graders took Algebra had GPAs 3.0 or higher, 65% of 9th graders took Geometry or Algebra II

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 as a result of their service will have opportunities to develop as leaders.

AmeriCorps members will gain skills as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.

The program has a well-defined plan to recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the programs operate

The applicant will foster an inclusive service culture where different backgrounds, talents, and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and effective service delivery.

The applicant's organization and/or program has a diversity, equity, and inclusion council that seeks to diversity its staff and board and create a supportive and safe environment as well ensure that its programming is culturally and community appropriate

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

- The organization details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps program as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program.
- The organization has facilitated, partnered, or participated in educational or workforce development programs (i.e., pre-apprenticeship/registered apprenticeship, work experience and job training programs, etc.).
- The organization has a stated commitment and plan to advance diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) throughout its mission, for example by using a DEI council or strategic plan.

Compliance and Accountability– 8 points

The organization has a monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect noncompliance 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.

The organization has sufficient policies, procedures, and controls in place to prevent, detect, and mitigate the risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, such as appropriate segregation of duties, internal oversight activities, measures to prevent timekeeping fraud, etc.

The organization has an effective mechanism in place to report, without delay, any suspected criminal activity, waste, fraud, and/or abuse to both the AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General and AmeriCorps and a plan for training staff and participants on these reporting protocols

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.
- The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information to determine its programmatic effectiveness in serving in a community with members that are diverse.

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

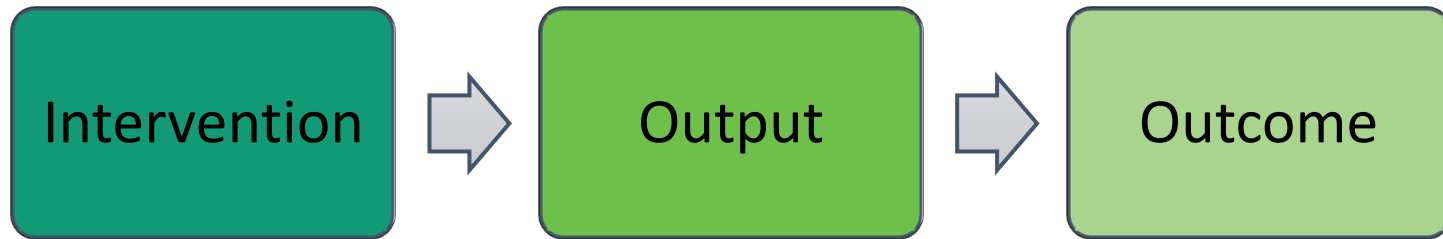
Outputs and outcomes

- 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.

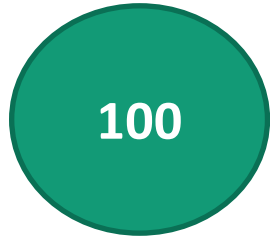


Focus Area	Output	Outcome
Education	Number of students served (ED1A)	Number of students demonstrating improved academic performance (ED5A)

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.

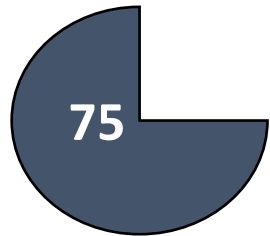
Outputs vs. Outcomes

Outputs



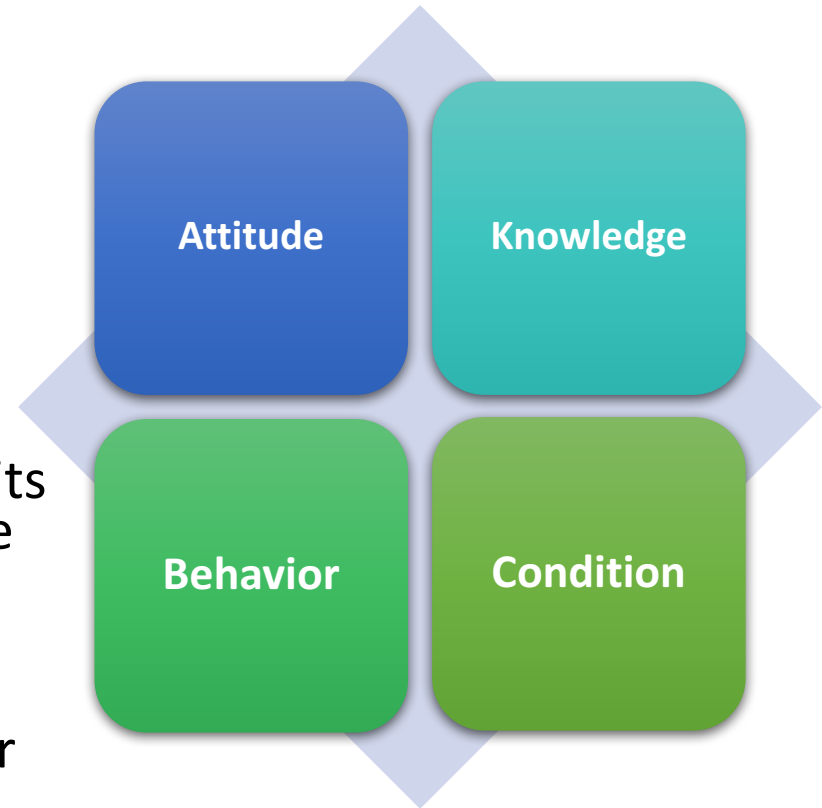
People served through your planned intervention

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: Breakthrough Miami

Focus Area	Output	Outcomes
Education	Number of individuals served (ED1A) - 600	Number of students with improved academic performance – 420
Education	Number of individuals served (ED1A) - 850	Number of students with improved academic performance - 595
• Instruments: Report Cards (School Year) and pre-post tests (Summer Learning)		

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:

FY 2022 AmeriCorps State and National Tribal Grants:
Performance Measures Requirements

March 29, 2022, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

<https://www.americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2022-ameri-corps-state-national-tribal-grants>

Performance Measures Instructions (pg. 100 on NOFO)



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



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Next Steps or Questions?

- Review the full application – released January 24, 2022
- Contact Volunteer Florida with your questions, americorpsrfp@volunteerflorida.org
- AmeriCorps Application due in eGrants – March 7, 2022
- AmeriCorps Application supplemental documents due in Blackbaud System – March 7, 2022

