

AmeriCorps Grant Application:

Creating Strong Narratives

FY23 AmeriCorps Funding Opportunity



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Agenda

- I. Application Organization**
- II. Scoring Criteria**
- III. Polk Education Foundation**
 - A. Theory of Change**
 - B. Logic Model**
 - C. Evidence Tier**
 - D. Performance Measures**



AmeriCorps



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Things to Know

1

AmeriCorps programs are funded through federal grants.

2

Organizations apply to Volunteer Florida through a competitive process for a grant to support a minimum of the equivalent 10 full time members. Volunteer Florida prefers applications with greater than 10 MSY. Volunteer Florida may consider funding for proposals who commit to increasing to 10 MSY within a three year period.

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 cannot be placed in an administrative function.

Basic Application Elements

- **The application should:**
 - ✓ Avoid jargon and define acronyms
 - ✓ Be free from typos and grammatical errors
 - ✓ Use concise language and avoid metaphors
 - ✓ Include research 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 question “How do you know?” for any assertion made.



Request for Proposal Access

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

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/ameri-corps-grant-opportunities/> in the address bar. The browser's bookmark bar includes links to Apps, Paycor, eGrants, Volunteer Florida W..., SurveyMonkey, and various Zoom links. The website header features the Volunteer Florida logo and navigation links: ABOUT US, NEWS, NEWSLETTER SIGN UP, NATIONAL SERVICE, VOLUNTEER SERVICES, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, GRANT OPPORTUNITIES, VOLUNTEER, and DONATE. The main content area is titled "AmeriCorps grant opportunities" and features a section for the "FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding Opportunity". This section includes a deadline of March 8, 2021, a description of the program, and a list of links for the Provider Assessment Questionnaire, Operating Capital Certification, and Sample Budget. A right-click context menu is open over the "FY 2021 AmeriCorps Formula Funding Opportunity" link, displaying options: "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.

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

- [Provider Assessment Questionnaire](#)
- [Operating Capital Certification](#)
- [Sample Budget](#)

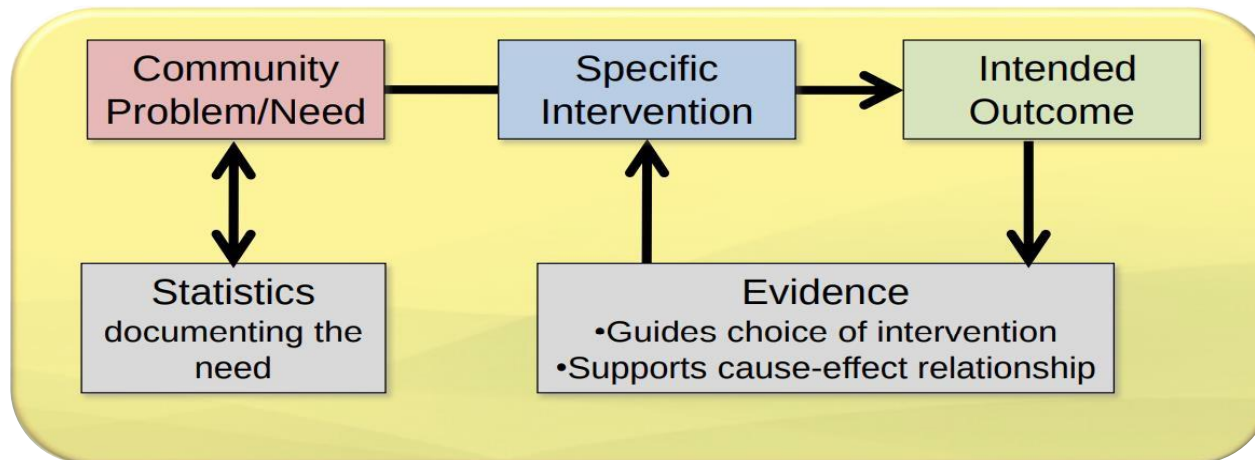
Application Organization & Scoring (Page 20 of NOFO)

Categories/Subcategories	Percentage
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 Capability	25
• Organizational Background and Staffing	13
• Compliance and Accountability	8
• Member Supervision	4
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	25
Notice Priority	3

Theory of Change

The “Why”

- What is required to make outcomes happen?
- 24 points (with Logic Model)



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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 they get the results you expect?

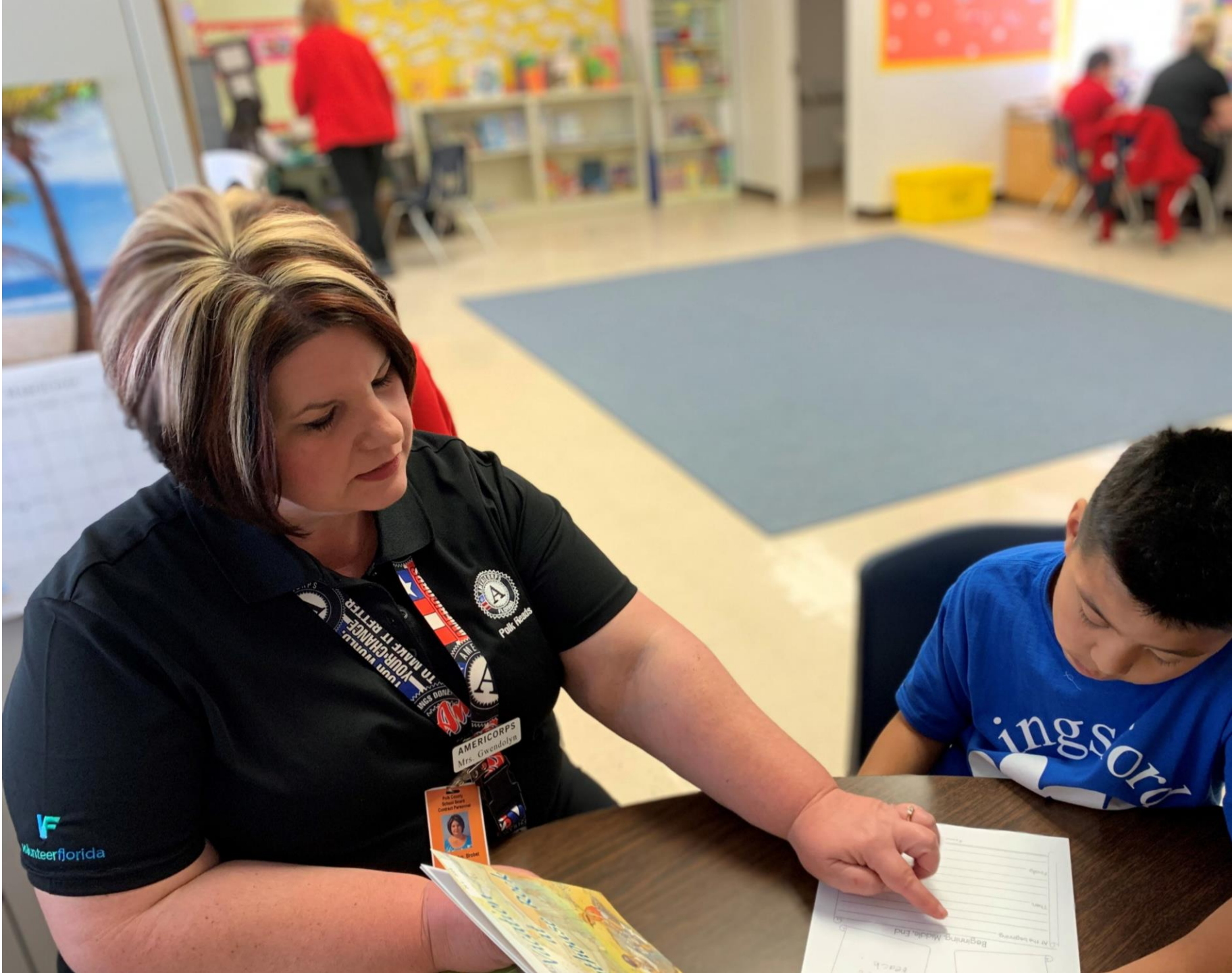
Feasible

- 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?

Polk Education Foundation



Who are we and what do we do?

- Polk Education Foundation – Lead Agency for AmeriCorps Polk Reads program
- Program has operated for around 20 years
- 38 members – 10 Service Sites
- Schools provide a classroom or portable for teams of 3-4 members
- Our Members provide one-on-one reading tutoring to 460+ Kindergarten – 3rd grade students who are behind in reading. Students are seen 3 x a week for 30-minute sessions.
- Members serve 10 months (August – June)



Theory of Change: Polk Education Foundation

Problem we are addressing – Kindergarten – 3rd grade students in our county are behind in reading. 44% of students entering Kindergarten came to school proficient in Language and Literacy readiness (2017 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening)

Our Intervention –

- 38 members (put into teams of 3-4)

- 2 weeks of initial training

- Service Sites - 10 schools

- Rigby Curriculum – tutoring Blocks with 6 assessments throughout the year

- Student seen 3 x a week in 30 min. sessions.



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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 proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers.
- The intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the Theory of Change.
- The expected outcomes articulated in the application narrative and logic model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem identified.
- 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	
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



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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

AmeriCorps Polk Reads - Logic Model

Problem – Students behind in reading. 44% of students entering Kindergarten came to school proficient in Language and Literacy readiness (2017 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening)

Inputs – 38 members, serving at 10 elementary schools in teams of 3-4 after completing 2 weeks of training. Using our Rigby curriculum members tutor in 1-1 sessions through out the year with 6 assessments to evaluate student progress. Student interactions recorded with our Blueprints (lesson plans)

Activities – TQT members = 16 students, HT members = 8 students, Each student is tutored 3 times a week for 30 min. during the school day targeting the 5 components of reading.

Outputs/Outcomes:

ED1A – 464 students

ED5A – 371 students will have completed a minimum of 15 weeks in our program and show academic achievement. Progress is measured through 6 assessments throughout the year.

Home Page

Objective

MSY/Members

Performance Measure

Data Collection

Summary

Summary of Performance Measures

Objective	ID	Title	Interventions	Output	Outcome	End Outcome	MSY	Members	Complete	Delete	Edit
K-12 Success	1	Reading Tutoring	Tutoring	ED1A	ED5A		12.00	38	Yes	<a>Delete	<a>Edit
Other	2	Volunteer Generation	Volunteer Recruitment	OUTPT81620	OUTCM81621		11.00	18	Yes	<a>Delete	<a>Edit

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	Resources that are necessary to deliver the program activities (interventions), including the number of locations/sites and number/type of AmeriCorps members.	The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including duration, dosage and target population.	Direct products from program activities.	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions. These outcomes, if applicable to the program design, will almost always be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in behavior or action. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.
In 2017-2018 using the Florida Language Arts Standards Assessment (FSA) which included reading, the Florida Department of Education reported that 515 of Polk County 3rd graders were reading at or above grade level compared to 57% statewide. Polk County is the 4th lowest funded district in the state (out of 67) and is among the 30 largest districts in the U.S. Only 44% of Polk County children entering Kindergarten came	Thirty-eight AmeriCorps members (20 Three Quarter Time and 18 Half Time) will serve at 10 low performing elementary schools in Polk County. Use of classroom space, and some of their equipment/resource s will be an In Kind donation. After two weeks of initial training Corps members will be divided into small teams of 3-4 members at each school. They will use our Rigby curriculum/assessm ents and program materials to tutor	Each Three Quarter Time member will be assigned 16 students and each Half time member 8 students. Students are selected by their classroom teacher and school administration and they should be students who are not participating in other supplemental education programs. Each student will be tutored in a one-on-one setting with the member, three times a week for 30 minutes each session during the school day. These sessions will target the five components of	ED1A - Our AmeriCorps Polk Reads program will provide one-on-one reading tutoring to at least 464 students in grades Kindergarten - third grade. The students will be tutored 3 times a week for 30 minutes each session. Students will gain self confidence that will not only have a positive effect on their reading ability but will also positively impact their self-esteem and total school performance.	ED5A - At least 371 students that have completed a minimum of 15 weeks in our program will demonstrate academic achievement. Through continuous program monitoring, student progress will be measured every 5-6 weeks. Kindergarten student will demonstrate mastery of 3 out of 5 key skills (Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, blends and segmenting, and rhyming) by scoring 80% or	Though not measured, students who are in our program for at least 15 weeks would show signs of increased self confidence by working with their AmeriCorps tutors.	Our long term goal is for Polk Reads students to gain adequate literacy skills so that they can be successful in school therefore having the desire to stay in school and graduate from high school. This would also increase the likely hood that they would continue their schooling or gaining a high wage and helping to break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty that is pervasive in our county.

Logic Model:

Polk Education Foundation

Logic Model: Polk Education Foundation

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
to school proficient in Language and Literacy Readiness. (2017 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening)	their students in a one-on-one session. Student progress will be monitored every 5-6 weeks by using the Rigby assessments. AmeriCorps members will document student lessons using our Blue Prints which are shared weekly with the classroom teachers. Assessment data is turned into the program office after each assessment where it is then entered into our spreadsheets and analyzed.	reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension). Each of the students lessons are designed to meet their reading needs.		higher in each skill during their assessments. Once 3 skills are mastered the member will work to master the other two skills before moving them into the Rigby series. 1st grade students will be expected to increase their reading levels by at least 3 reading levels after completing a minimum of 15 weeks. They will also be able to recognize by sight 80% of their High Frequency words. Second and Third graders will be expected to increase their reading level by at least 4 reading levels after completing at least a minimum of 15 weeks.		

Logic Model: Common Problems

Go over 3 page limit

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



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: Polk Education Foundation

Our Evidence Tier - Pre-preliminary From the NOFO:

Pre-preliminary evidence means the applicant has not submitted an outcome or impact evaluation of the same intervention described in the application, although the applicant may have collected some performance data on the intervention (e.g., data on intervention outputs and/or outcomes). **Applicants in this tier must describe in the Evidence Base section of the application how their program design is evidence-informed.**

Evidence-informed: Programs in this category use the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but do not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the intervention described in the application.



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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.



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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



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Notice Priority – 3 points

(Attachment A, Notice Priority)

- **Environmental Stewardship: Resiliency**
- **Economic Opportunity:
Housing/Homelessness**
- **VF Grant Writing Certification**



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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 program has a well-defined plan to ensure its project engages a diverse and inclusive group of members.

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 as ensure that its programming is culturally and community appropriate

Organizational
Capacity

3 sections

- 25 points

Organizational
Background
and Staffing

Compliance
and
Accountability

Member
Supervision



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Organizational Background and Staffing - 13 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 leadership and staff have the same lived experience as the beneficiary population and/or community being served.
- The organization's definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility demonstrate the organization is engaged in work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This can include the inclusion of diversity on the Board of Directors, agency staff, and leadership and/or volunteers.

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 extent to which 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.

The extent to which the organization has sufficient policies, procedures, and controls in place to prevent, detect, and mitigate the risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, this can include an assessment of appropriate segregation of duties, internal oversight activities, measures to prevent timekeeping fraud, etc.

Member Supervision - 4 points

Member Supervision

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



Performance Measures

Outputs and outcomes

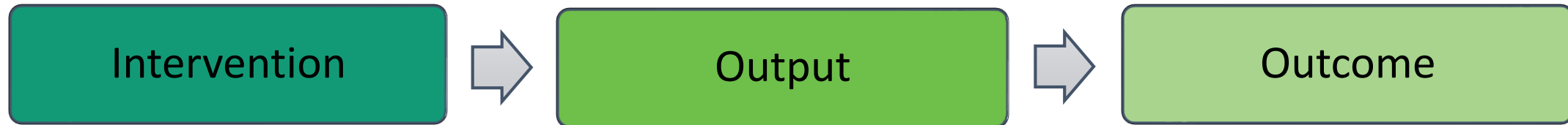
- Aligned performance measure (output paired with outcome)
- Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries





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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)
		

Outputs vs. Outcomes

100

Outputs

People served through your planned intervention

75

Outcomes

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

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



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Performance Measures: Polk Education Foundation

ED1A – 464 students

ED5A – 371 students will have completed a minimum of 15 weeks in our program and show academic achievement. Progress is measured through 6 assessments throughout the year.

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3 Take-aways for achieving program success

- In year 1, you are likely making projections on what you think might happen.
- Take time to develop a solid recruitment and retention strategy.
- Engage and support your members often and in different ways, creating a culture of continued learning (growth mindset) and making them feel valued.

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:

FY23 AmeriCorps State and National NOFOs Best Practices in Developing Performance Measures

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvR0ykuheXA>



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Overall Narrative: Tips for Success

Be sure interventions are direct service instead of capacity building

Limit time and space spent on describing the “need”

Be clear on you intervention and dosage (ex. 2 hours of tutoring 3 times a week)

Be sure to designate which evidence tier you fall in

Be sure to adequately respond to all prompts

Include headers on narrative sections



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Next Steps

- Review the full application – released January 23, 2023
- Contact Volunteer Florida with your questions, americpsrpf@volunteerflorida.org
- AmeriCorps Application due in eGrants – February 27, 2023
- AmeriCorps Application supplemental documents due in Blackbaud System – February 27, 2023
- Sign up for Volunteer Florida communications (www.volunteerflorida.org)



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