



AmeriCorps State **Competitive FFY2019** **Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

This *Notice* outlines the process for applying for an AmeriCorps State grant, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), administered and overseen by the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS aka ServeMontana). The level and timing of grant funding is subject to availability of annual appropriations. OCS reserves the right to modify any component of this RFP, at any time.

This *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*

This *Notice* is the first in a multistep process that an applicant must complete to apply for and receive AmeriCorps State Competitive funding. ServeMontana's role is to solicit, screen and rank applications. This process is only for ranking; no funding will be awarded from this solicitation. All applications cleared through screening will be ranked and submitted to compete nationally for funding. A description of the process used by CNCS is contained in this *Notice*. This *Notice* should be read together with AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R.2520–2550, Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, Application Instructions, and Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. It is recommended that applicants review federal regulations at www.ecfr.gov and grant management materials on [CNCS's website](#).

ServeMontana

Montana's Commission on Community Service was established in 1993 to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Under the Montana Commission on Community Service, ServeMontana administers funds to AmeriCorps State programs, encourages citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service, involves youth in the life and work of communities, and strengthens volunteerism for all Montanans.

Expectations ServeMontana expects all respondents to display the following features,

- ✓ Inclusive in design and delivery, making the program accessible to individuals with disabilities
- ✓ Address rural, underserved or areas of poverty not currently served by AmeriCorps programs
- ✓ Clearly connect proposed activities to the needs and priorities in the Montana State Service Plan
- ✓ Collaborative approach to planning, design, and the delivery of the program

Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in service through an approved National Service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving but are not employees. Upon successful completion of service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust. Commonly referred to as the 'Ed Award', members receive a voucher that can be used to pay higher education expenses or for qualified student loans, for up to seven years. Members age 55+ may be able to transfer their Education Award.

Who Should Apply To This *Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*?

Organizations that are continuing a competitively funded program or who propose an AmeriCorps State program that operates only in Montana must apply to this competition. The Governor's Office of Community Service will engage a Grant Review Work Group to review and score grants through a selection process, described in this RFP, and select applicants for recommended funding. Funding recommendations are presented to the full Montana Commission of Community Service for approval. Applicants that receive funding for AmeriCorps programs through this *Notice* are overseen by ServeMontana in all areas of grant management. *If your organization has never had AmeriCorps grant or it has been more than 2 years since having an AmeriCorps grant, please consider our springtime opportunity, referred to as 'Formula' grants.*

Applying to this Notice is required for AmeriCorps programs that propose to serve primarily in the state of Montana. Tribes and Tribal organizations may apply through this *Notice* or may choose to apply directly to CNCS. CNCS may award a Cost Reimbursement or an Education Award Program grant to any successful applicant, but a Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants.

Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps National programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to CNCS and are required to consult State Service Commissions. Visit serve.mt.gov and see the National Direct Consultation under AmeriCorps to complete the consultation process, as required. Failure to consult will likely result in a 'do not support' recommendation to CNCS.

Montana AmeriCorps State Process

To be eligible for consideration, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in the *Notice*. ServeMontana will determine whether the applicant's submitted materials comply with the requirements. Applicants will be reviewed to ensure they meet the standards of responsibility in accordance with ARM 2.5.407. Such a determination may be made at any time during the process if information surfaces that would result in the determination of non-responsibility. Applicant responses that do not meet the full intent of all requirements listed in this RFP may be deemed unresponsive and will not be considered.

Dual Points of Contact

From the date this Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued until an applicant(s) is selected and announced by OCS, *applicants shall only communicate with designated state staff listed below, regarding this Notice.* Any unauthorized contact may disqualify the application from further consideration.

Sarah Sadowski, OCS Grants Manager
ph: 406.444.5547
ssadowski@mt.gov

Sheree Isola, OCS Financial Manager
ph: 406.444.1809
ShIsola@mt.gov

Costs/Ownership of Materials

The applicant is solely responsible for all costs it incurs prior to contract execution. The State shall own all materials submitted in response to this RFP.

Montana State Service Plan

The 2016-2018 Montana State Service Plan outlines the community needs, goals and objectives of the Governor's Office on Community Service. To read the plan visit <http://serve.mt.gov/About/State-Service-Plan>.

Governor's Initiatives Applicants are encouraged to engage in the Montana Governor's initiatives.

- American Indian Affairs- The Governor's initiative aims to engage Tribal members into service with Montana's AmeriCorps programs and to foster programs that make real impacts in addressing the diverse needs facing Montana's Tribal Nations, with cultural competency.
- Childhood Hunger - The Governor and First Lady's initiative to fight childhood hunger in Montana through innovative, evidence based strategies in schools and communities not currently served by AmeriCorps.
- Early Childhood Education - Governor Bullock's initiative to ensure every Montana child arrives at kindergarten ready to learn. Children who receive quality early learning are more likely to read at grade level, graduate from high school, and earn more money as adults.
- Forests in Focus – The Governor's initiative seeks to engage coalitions of stakeholders to create the brightest possible future for our forests; promote stewardship of lands to meet a variety of objectives; and focuses on land management activities that restore forests and watersheds, drought resiliency, wildfire risk reduction, and improve habitat and water quality.
- SMART Schools – “SMART” refers to a school's ability to “**S**ave **M**oney **A**nd **R**esources **T**oday” by implementing behavioral and operational changes to promote energy efficiency and health. The initiative encourages schools to become more energy efficient, reduce waste, promote health, and to implement sustainable practices.
- Suicide Prevention – The suicide prevention initiative aims to increase awareness and access peer mentoring, mental health services, youth engagement, help schools develop protocols, train teachers and community members, and other innovative evidence based strategies.

Screening

To be eligible for consideration under this *Notice*, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in this packet. ServeMontana staff will determine whether the applicant's proposal complies with the requirements. If responses do not meet the full intent of all requirements listed in this *Notice*, the application may be deemed unresponsive and/or incomplete and will be removed from the review process.

Timeline

Sept 26 Official posting of the *Notice*

Oct 10 - 22 Technical assistance period* Submit questions via email to serve@mt.gov.

Oct 15 All applicants, due to serve@mt.gov by 5pm

- Letter of Intent
- Pdf of current SAM & CCR registration, <https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1>
- Documentation of Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate, *if applicable*.

New and recomplete applicants must also submit the following to serve@mt.gov

- CNCS Financial Management Survey (FMS) and supporting documents

Oct 15 Last day to submit an Alternative Match Request

Nov 9 All applicants: Application Due Date 5pm Mountain Time

- Complete Application, submitted in eGrants <http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/>
- Additional Documents, submitted via email to serve@mt.gov

Nov 27 Grant Review Work Group Meeting, in Helena, MT

A representative of the Applicant *must* be present for the day. Reasonable accommodations available.

Dec 12 Commission on Community Service Meeting in Helena, MT

- vote on the Work Group funding recommendation

Dec 19- Jan 11 Applicant clarification period – All recommended applicants

Jan 11, 2019 Clarified applications must be resubmitted in eGrants *no later* than 5pm

March 2019 CNCS clarification period

April 2019 Applicants notified of funding determination

***Technical Assistance** Applicants are encouraged to use this opportunity to ask clarifying questions, obtain a better understanding of the RFP process, the project, and to notify the State of any ambiguities, inconsistencies, or errors discovered upon examination of this RFP. All questions and written responses will be posted publically on the ServeMontana website at <http://serve.mt.gov/AmeriCorps/american-corps-grants>. Participation in the technical assistance period is optional, however; participation is encouraged.

CNCS Focus Areas

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, amended by the 2009 Serve America Act, emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focuses on a core set of issue areas. To carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in National Service, CNCS maintains six primary Focus Areas:

Disaster Services Grants provide support to increase the personal preparedness of individuals for disasters; improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters; help individuals recover from disasters; and/or help communities mitigate disasters.

Economic Opportunity Grants provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help those people have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education Grants provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved education outcomes for economically disadvantaged students; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students prepare for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

Environmental Stewardship Grants support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive life events: programs that conserve natural habitats; protect clean air and water; maintain public lands; support wildland fire mitigation; cultivate individual and community self-sufficiency and provide reforestation services after floods or fires.

Healthy Futures Grants provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition with the purpose of reducing obesity.

Veterans and Military Families Grants positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength, and increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their families benefiting from service with AmeriCorps.

Capacity Building Grants provide support for capacity building activities provided by AmeriCorps members. As a general rule, capacity building activities are *indirect services* that enable organizations to provide more, better, and sustained *direct services* in the above six focus areas. Capacity building *cannot* be solely intended to support the administration/operations of the organization. Examples include recruiting and/or managing community volunteers, implementing effective volunteer management practices, conducting community assessments that identify goals and recommendations, developing new systems and processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.), or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

AmeriCorps Funding Priorities, (See Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of National Service resources in:

- Economic Opportunity - increasing economic opportunities for communities by engaging opportunity youth to prepare them for the workforce.
- Education - selection of one of the evidence-based interventions in three categories: School Readiness (three evidence-based interventions), K-12 success (nine evidence-based interventions), and Post-Secondary Support (one evidence-based intervention). In order to qualify for this priority, the applicants must be assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence by the reviewers.
- Healthy Futures - reducing and/or preventing prescription drug and opioid abuse.
- Veterans and Military Families - positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength.
- Rural intermediaries - organizations that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve rural communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.
- Safer Communities - programs that focus on public safety, and/or partnerships between law enforcement and the community.
- Faith-based organizations.

To receive priority consideration for applying within a *Notice* priority (ies), applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high-quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.

Performance Measures

All applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary intervention. This may be a National Performance Measure or an applicant-determined measure. CNCS does not expect applicants to select performance measures to correspond to each and every potential member activity or community impact. CNCS values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures.

CNCS expects applicants to use National Performance Measures as part of their comprehensive performance measurement strategy if the National Performance Measures are part of the applicant's theory of change. Applicants should use both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve their goals.

Refer to the CNCS Performance Measure Instructions for detailed information on performance measure statements and data collection expectations.

Federal Award Information

Available Funds OCS expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps grant selection process. The actual level of funding is subject to the availability of annual appropriations.

Estimated Award Amount

Grant awards have two components: operating funds and AmeriCorps member positions with corresponding Education Award amounts. Grant award amounts vary – both in the level of operating funds and in the type and amount of AmeriCorps member positions – as determined by the scope of the project.

Type of Award

AmeriCorps Operating Grants: CNCS may award a Cost Reimbursement or a Fixed Amount grant to any successful applicant, the availability of a Full Time Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants. Professional Corps are not eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement grants. CNCS will not provide both types of grants for the same project in one fiscal year. More info under *Eligible Applicants* section and the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

| Grant Types | Cost Reimbursement | Fixed Amount | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Note that while Montana’s member retention expectation is 90%, that under current CNCS policy, in order to receive the full amount of the fixed grant award, the program must achieve 100% member retention rate. | | | |
| Available Subtypes | Traditional | Full-time | Education Award Program (EAP) | Professional Corps | No Cost Slots |
| Maximum Cost per MSY | \$15,190 | \$15,190 | \$800 | \$1,000* | \$0 |
| Type of Slots in the National Service Trust | Full-time, Three Quarter-time, Half-time, Reduced half-time, Quarter-time, Minimum Time | Full-time or Less than Full-time serving in a full- time capacity | Full-time, Three Quarter-time, Half-time, Reduced half-time, Quarter-time, Minimum Time | Full-time only | Full-time, Three Quarter-time, Half-time, Reduced half-time, Quarter-time, Minimum Time |
| Budget Submission Required | Yes | No | | Yes, if requesting operating funds | No |
| Availability of Funds linked to enrollment & retention of awarded MSYs | No | Yes | | | No |
| Special Requirements | N/A | N/A | | Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Member salaries and benefits must be paid entirely by organization where member serves and not included in budget. | N/A |
| Financial Reporting Requirements | Yes | No | | | |
| Available to new Applicants | Yes | No | Yes | | |

Project and Award Period

The project period is generally one year with a start date proposed by the applicant. The grant award covers a three-year project period unless otherwise specified. In most cases, the application is submitted with a one-year budget. Continuation funding for subsequent years is not guaranteed and shall be dependent upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

The project start date may not occur prior to the date CNCS awards the grant. AmeriCorps members may not enroll prior to the start date of the award. AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period. The earliest suggested start date is September 1, 2019, understanding that some applicants may choose to operate on the calendar year.

Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

The following non-Federal entities (as defined in 2 C.F.R. §200.69) who have DUNS numbers and are registered in System for Award Management (SAM) are eligible to apply:

- Indian Tribes (2 C.F.R. §200.54): In addition to being eligible to apply under this *Notice*, federally recognized Indian Tribes are also eligible to apply under a separate *Notice* of Federal Funding Opportunity for Indian Tribes for operating or planning grants.
- Institutions of higher education (2 C. F.R. §200.54)
- Local governments (2 C.F.R. §200.64)
- Nonprofit organizations (2 C.F.R. §200.70)
- States (2 C.F.R. §200.90)

Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS) Number & System for Award Management (SAM)

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number (EIN). The DUNS number does not replace an EIN. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: [DUNS Request Service](#). After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants must register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete and, if a grant is awarded, throughout the life of the Award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. OCS suggests finalizing a new registration or renewing an existing one at least two weeks before the application deadline to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. Applicants must use their SAM-registered legal name and address on all grant applications. Applicants that do not comply with these requirements are ineligible to receive an award.

New Applicants

OCS encourages organizations that have received prior funding from CNCS to apply to this Notice. The general practice is to award at least 20 member positions and no more than 50 member positions (slots) to organizations.

Organizations that have never received AmeriCorps funding are encouraged to consider ServeMontana's formula grant opportunity. New applicants who have received AmeriCorps funding in the last three years are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants but are not eligible to apply for Full-Time Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement grantees who can demonstrate a successful history and current capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants. *See Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for more information.*

Types of Applicants

State and Territory Service Commissions (for Single-State Applicants)

Organizations that propose to operate in only one state must apply through the Governor-appointed State Service Commission. Each state and territory commission administer its own selection process and submits the applications it selects to compete for funding directly to CNCS. A Single-State application from a State or Territory with a Commission that is submitted directly to CNCS by the applicant rather than the Commission will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed. See the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for descriptions of National Direct and Single-State applicants

National Direct Applicants¹

Multi-State: Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one State or Territory apply directly to CNCS. While National Direct applicants do not apply to State Service Commissions, there are clear requirements to coordinate with the Commissions for states in which National Service programs will operate. ServeMontana expects National Direct applicants to comply with CNCS's consultation requirements.

National Direct Consultation: Coordination among State Commissions and National Direct Applicants

In alignment with CNCS, ServeMontana expects to engage with National Direct applicants to consult and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131 of the NCSA (42 U.S.C. § 12583). This consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination.

National Direct applicants, except federally-recognized Indian Tribes, must:

Before application submission:

- Consult with the Commission of each state and/or territory in which the organization plans to operate and describe this consultation in their applications. Contact the Commissions for details about the consultation process. Provide information that connects the proposed activities to the current State/Territory Service plan and/or State logic model.

After Award:

- Provide the Commission with contact information for National Direct programs in the state and/or territory and update the information on an annual basis.
- Participate in the Commissions' periodic needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of its state/territory service plan, as well as appropriate training and other events.
- Include the Commission on the National Direct's mailing/email distribution lists and invite it to appropriate training and other events.

State/Territory Commissions must:

Before application submission:

- Consult in a timely manner with the National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, that contact them prior to application submission.

¹ Although National Direct applicants do not have to apply to Commissions, there are substantial requirements to coordinate with the Commissions for states in which national service programs will operate. See the *Coordination among State Commission & National Direct Applicants* section for information on these important requirements.

After Award:

- Consider the schedules and needs of National Direct applicants, including Indian Tribes, operating in their states when planning annual events and technical assistance activities.
- Include National Direct programs, including Indian Tribes, in their annual needs assessment and training plan development activities, and in the development of their state/territory service plan.
- Add staff of multi-state programs in their state/territory to their mailing/email distribution lists and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

CNCS will solicit Commission input on National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, proposing to operate in their state/territory. Via the CNCS's web-based management system, Commissions indicate "support," "do not support," or "neutral," and provide comments. CNCS reviews and considers Commission input on multi-state applicants proposing to operate in their state.

CNCS will assess an applicant's strategic considerations. Applicants must check the relevant boxes in the Program Information tab in CNCS's web-based management system to be considered for CNCS's assessment of the strategic considerations (see *Selection for Funding* section.) Applicants should only check the boxes if the strategic consideration is a significant and if intentional part of their program design and implementation strategies are described in the application.

Federally-recognized Indian Tribes: Applicants that are Indian Tribes may apply directly to CNCS. In addition to Indian Tribes as defined in 2 CFR §200.54, tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by Indian Tribes are also eligible to apply. An entity applying on behalf of a federally-recognized tribe or multiple specific federally-recognized tribes must submit a sanctioning resolution, applicable for the entirety of the period of performance that the applicant is applying for, adopted by the Tribal Council (or comparable tribal governing body) of each Indian Tribe. The resolution(s) must identify the entity by name as a tribal organization and indicate whether it is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by an Indian Tribe(s). It must authorize the entity to be the legal applicant and act on behalf of and include the Indian Tribe(s) in a CNCS application for the purpose of conducting the activities and providing the services described in the application. A current resolution will not suffice to meet this requirement unless the resolution applies for the entire period of performance of the award, i.e., current resolutions that are applicable to a previous AmeriCorps award at the time of the application submission but expire during the prospective period of performance of a new award, do not meet this requirement.

- In addition to being eligible to apply under this *Notice*, federally-recognized Indian Tribes are also eligible to apply for operating or planning grants under a separate Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for Indian Tribes to be released later in the Winter with an application deadline in the Spring. CNCS may request applicants apply under the Tribal competition, rather than under this *Notice*.

Continuation applicants

To be eligible to receive funding for the following year, organizations that have current AmeriCorps awards that do not end in FY18 must apply to this Notice. See the Application Instructions and Performance Measure Instructions. In addition to the Application Instructed continuation narrative, be sure to address the areas of assessment: Budget, Match & MSY, Compliance Findings, Member Enrollment, Member Retention and Performance Measure Progress.

Continuation applicants whose measures do not align with the 2019 Performance Measure Instructions must revise their measures to conform with the 2019 instructions. To revise performance measures, "View/Edit"

the performance measures that copy over from your original application or add new performance measures. Note in the Continuation Changes field that you have updated your performance measures. If you are proposing significant increase or decrease to output or outcome targets for existing measures, provide a justification for this change.

Continuation Expansion: Requests for continuation expansions will be assessed as to if the applicant has increased, maintained or lowered its cost per MSY, will consider the rationale for doing so. Requests by existing continuation applicants for increases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the criteria under this *Notice*. Continuation applicants may request increase/expansion in CNCS funds to comply with the required minimum living allowance increase for full time members.

Threshold Issues

Applications should meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying.

- All applicants should request at least 20 member slots. New and re-competing applicants with less than 20 members will be deemed noncompliant and will not be reviewed.
- If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application must demonstrate that the community where it will place AmeriCorps members serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals.
- If an applicant is applying for a Full Time Fixed Amount grant, the application must reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted.
- If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 C.F.R. §2522.910-.940), the applicant must describe how the program will meet these requirements.

Other Requirements

Under section 132A(b) of the NCSA, organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime may not receive assistance described in this *Notice*.

Note that under section 745 of Title VII, Division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, if CNCS is aware that any corporation has any unpaid Federal tax liability,

- which has been assessed
- for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and
- that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, that corporation is not eligible for an award under this *Notice*. (However, this exclusion will not apply to a corporation which a Federal agency has considered for suspension or debarment and has made a determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Federal Government.) A similar restriction may be enacted with the appropriation which will fund awards under this *Notice*.

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply for CNCS funding.

2. Funding Restrictions

A. Member Living Allowance

A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage. Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the maximum limits in the table below. For

Cost Reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either CNCS or grantee share. Exceptions noted below.

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are required to provide a living allowance to members that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements. Exceptions noted below. Most Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to indicate that amount in the application and should request those positions as “without living allowance” in the budget.

Table: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance

| Service Term | Minimum # of Hours | Minimum Living Allowance | Maximum Total Living Allowance |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Full-time | 1,700 | \$13,992 | \$27,984 |
| Three Quarter-time | 1,200 | n/a | \$19,753 |
| Half-time | 900 | n/a | \$14,815 |
| Reduced Half-time | 675 | n/a | \$11,111 |
| Quarter-time | 450 | n/a | \$7,408 |
| Minimum-time | 300 | n/a | \$4,938 |

Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements

Programs existing prior to September 21, 1993 are not required to offer a living allowance. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement, but not the maximum requirement.

EAP Grantees are not required to provide a living allowance, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Table above.

Professional Corps Grantees must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above. Professional Corps member salaries and benefits including child care are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve and are not included in the budget request to CNCS (federal or matching share).

B. Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

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. The maximum cost per MSY is determined on an annual basis by CNCS.

Table: Maximum Cost per MSY

| Grant Program | Maximum |
|---|-----------|
| Individual Competitive State/Territory Program (cost reimbursement) | \$15,190* |
| Fulltime Fixed Amount Grant | \$15,190 |
| Professional Corps Fixed Amount Grant | \$1,000** |
| Education Award Program Fixed Amount Grant | \$800 |

*Cost reimbursement programs operating in rural communities (as defined in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) and cost reimbursement programs that recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may

request up to \$15,355 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members who will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth.

**CNCS requires Professional Corps programs to cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS. CNCS will only consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate significant organizational financial need based on the materials reviewed by the Office of Grant Management.

CNCS reserves the right to determine whether an applicant is a Professional Corps and whether the legal applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that they cannot effectively operate an AmeriCorps program without receiving CNCS operating funds. Given the high demand for AmeriCorps funding there may be specific circumstances where CNCS determines that either a legal applicant is not a Professional Corps program or is unlikely to demonstrate a need for operational funds due to other funding resources. Where CNCS’s due diligence review of a Professional Corps application shows that the applicant has a historically high level of support from non-CNCS sources, and as a result has levels of unrestricted funding that is in excess of the requested level of CNCS funding, CNCS may choose to not provide additional operational funding.

C. Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete a term of service will be eligible for an Education Award from the National Service Trust. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant. A member has up to seven years after the term of service to use the Education Award. CNCS will provide the updated Education Award amounts at the time of grant award.

- Note: Education Awards amounts are determined by the grant year that the applicant was awarded. This may be different than the amount listed on the Corporation for National & Community Service website.

3. Cost Sharing and Matching

Fixed Amount Grants and Education Award Program Grants

There is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount grants. CNCS does not provide all the funds necessary to operate the program; therefore, organizations must contribute the additional revenue required to operate the program and be prepared to report on separate accounting on those funds.

Cost Reimbursement Grants

A first-time successful applicant is required to match 24% for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases each year, to 50% by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 C.F.R. §2521.60 and below.

| AmeriCorps Funding Year | 1, 2, 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10+ |
|------------------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Grantee Share Required Match | 24% | 26% | 30% | 34% | 38% | 42% | 46% | 50% |

Section 121(e)(5) of NCSA (42 U.S.C. 12571(e)) requires programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant to report the amount and source of these funds to CNCS on a Federal Financial Report (FFR). Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout. The living allowance provided to AmeriCorps members in Professional Corps programs (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) does not count toward the matching requirement.

Alternative Match

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations at 45 C.F.R. §2521.60(b). To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. An alternative match request must be submitted to OCS by the date specified in the Timeline.

Indirect Costs

Application budgets may include indirect costs. Based on qualifying factors, applicants will either use a federally approved indirect cost rate, a 5/10 percent fixed option, a 10 percent *de minimis* rate of modified total direct costs or may claim certain costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR § 200.413. States, local governments and Indian Tribes may use approved indirect cost allocation plans. All methods must be applied consistently across federal awards. Applicants that have a federal negotiated indirect cost rate or that will be using the 10 percent *de minimis* rate must enter that information in the Organization section in the CNCS's web-based management system. *However, under section 121(d) of the NCSA and CNCS's regulations at 45 CFR 2521.95 and 2540.110, no more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps grants.*

Application Submission Information

1. **Application Package** Information necessary to apply is accessible at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>. Applicants may email serve@mt.gov or call 406.444.5547 for printed materials. TTY # is 800.833.3722.

2. **Content and Form of Application:** In eGrants, applicants will enter the following components of a complete application:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Populates when applicants complete eGrants fields
- Narratives
 - Executive Summary
 - Program Design
 - Organizational Capability
 - Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
 - Evaluation Plan
- Logic Model
- Standard Form 424 Budget
- Performance Measures
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certification

Page Limits

There are two page limits that must be adhered to: Narrative and Logic Model.

Narrative: Applications may not exceed 10 pages for the Narratives or 13 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries with more than five operating sites. However, eGrants will allow an applicant to enter text that exceeds page limits. The number of locations entered by the applicant into the "multi-state operating sites" field in eGrants will be used to determine whether a multi-site application has more than five operating sites. The "multi-site operating sites" field can be found by clicking on the "operating sites" link in eGrants. Multi-state applicants that list five or fewer operating sites cannot exceed 10 pages for the Narrative.

In determining whether an application complies with page limits, CNCS will include:

- The application's Executive Summary, SF 424 Facesheet, and
- The Narrative portions contained in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy sections of the application.

The application page limit does not include the Budget, narrative portion of the Evaluation Plan, the Logic Model, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable. However, the Logic Model may not exceed three pages when printed with the application from the "Review" tab in eGrants. Note the length of a document in word processing may be different than the eGrants printout. Reviewers will not consider material that is over the page limits in the printed report.

Logic Model: The Logic Model may not exceed three pages when printed with the application from the "Review" tab in CNCS's web-based management system.

The page limit for the Continuation Changes field is six pages, as the pages print out from eGrants.

3. How to Submit an Application in eGrants

Applicants must submit the applications electronically via the [CNCS eGrants](#) system. Because it is a unique system, it is *strongly recommended* that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application well before the deadline. Applicants should draft the content as a word processing document, then copy and paste the content into the appropriate eGrants fields. The length of a document in word processing software will likely be different than what will print out in eGrants- follow the page limits. The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must be using eGrants under his/her own account to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

Contact the National Service Hotline at (800) 942-2677 or via [eGrants Questions](#) if a problem arises when creating an account or preparing or submitting the application. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the *Notice* to which the organization is applying. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit their application via eGrants. An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the due date and time. *Incomplete applications will not be considered.* All required additional documents should be correctly labeled and submitted by the application deadline to serve@mt.gov.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Notification of Intent to Apply. Submission of a Letter Of Intent (LOI) to apply is strongly encouraged and is due **October 15, 2018**. Submit the LOI by completing the template and emailing it to serve@mt.gov

Applications are due Friday November 9, 2018 by 5:00pm Mountain Standard Time to OCS via eGrants.

This deadline applies to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants, and includes submission of additional documents. ServeMontana reserves the right to add documents to the RFP and to extend the submission deadline. Any *Notice* of such extended deadline will be posted on OCS's website. Late applications may not be reviewed. When the application is submitted, send an email to serve@mt.gov.

Late Applications

All applications received after the submission deadline published in this *Notice* are presumed to be non-compliant. To overcome this presumption, the applicant must provide a written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstance(s) that caused the delay, including:

- the timing and specific cause(s) of the delay
- the ticket number if a request for assistance was submitted to the National Service Hotline
- any information provided to the applicant by the National Service Hotline
- any other documentation or evidence that supports the justification

OCS must receive the written justification no more than one business day of the submission deadline at serve@mt.gov. Applicants are required to continue working in [eGrants](#) and with the National Service Hotline to submit the application as soon possible. OCS will determine whether to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis. Applicants that do not submit a justification or any other evidence to overcome the presumption of non-compliance within the published timeframe will not be reviewed.

Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Depending on the availability of funding, CNCS expects that successful State Commissions will be notified no later than the end of April 2019, contingent on appropriations and CNCS. Applicants will be notified by OCS as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. A formal *Notice of Grant Award* will be produced and the state contracting process is then initiated.

Additional Documents: Only submit items requested in this *Notice* and Application Instructions. Items not requested that are submitted will not be reviewed or returned.

Applicants are required to submit additional documents by the application deadline:

All applicants

- Current indirect rate cost agreement, if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Evaluation briefs, reports, studies. Refer to the *Evidence Base* section for instructions by evidence tier.
- AmeriCorps Identification memo: In no more than one double spaced page, describe how participants will know they are AmeriCorps members, how participants will be trained on describing their role and position while in service, and how staff and community members will know they are AmeriCorps members.

Recompeting applications

- Evaluation report, if required. Please see the *Evidence Tiers* definitions in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance and Section E. Evaluation Plan for further information.
- Labor union concurrence (if applicable)
- Federal debt delinquency (if applicable)

New and Recompeting applications

- Two letters of support
- Financial Management Survey (FMS) and supporting documents located on the CNCS website. Selected Financial Survey under the Application Certification Form section.

Additional Documents continued:

Governor/Mayor Initiative applicants (New applicants)

- Letter(s) of support from partnering nonprofits
- Letter of support cosigned by Governor/Tribal Chair and participating Mayor(s)

Rural Intermediaries: Letters of support from the consortium members, no more than three.

Entities applying on behalf of a state or Federally Recognized Tribe

- Sanctioning resolution adopted by the Tribal Council of each Indian Tribe. (See the *Eligible Applicants*)

Additional Documents must be emailed to serve@mt.gov with the subject line: [Legal Applicant Name] – [Application ID number]. Emails should include the following information:

- the legal applicant name and its point of contact information
- a list of documents that should be attached to the email
- individually saved files that are clearly labeled
- files that include the legal applicant name and application ID number within the body of each document.

Attachments to emails should include

- Individually saved files
- Each file should also include a header or title within the body of each additional document to include the legal applicant name and application ID number.

Assessment Criteria The score sheet is available online.

Each applicant must describe a project to deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to meet significant community need(s). OCS urges applicants to submit high quality applications that follow the *Notice* and the Application Instructions. Application and budget quality are key factors in determining the funding recommendation.

Application Review Information by Application Fields

A. Executive Summary (Required – Pass/Fail - 0 percent)

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from the template.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [service activities the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)].* The CNCS investment of \$[amount of request] will be matched with \$[amount of projected match], \$[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and \$[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

*If the program is not operating in a CNCS focus area, omit this sentence.

Fixed-Amount grant applicants (EAP, Full-time Fixed, No Cost Slots) should list their Other Revenue (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still raise significant additional resources to operate the program. CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications on www.nationalservice.gov in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

B. Program Design (50 percent)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

1. Theory of Change and Logic Model (28 points)

The Theory of Change shall address:

- 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.

The Logic Model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
 - Locations or sites in which members will provide services
 - Number of AmeriCorps members who will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
 - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
 - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
 - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served, types and number of activities conducted.) If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention. If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Note: The logic model is a visual representation of the applicant's theory of change. Programs may include short, medium or long-term outcomes in the logic model. Applicants are not required to measure all components of the theory of change. The applicant's performance measures should be consistent with the program's theory of change and should represent significant program activities.

In the application narrative, applicants should discuss their rationale for setting output and outcome targets for their performance measures.

Rationales and justifications should be informed by the organization's performance data (e.g., program data observed over time that suggests targets are reasonable), relevant research (e.g. targets documented by organizations running similar programs with similar populations), or prior program evaluation findings.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention. Logic model content that exceeds three pages will not be reviewed.

2. Evidence Base (16 points)

The assessment of an applicant's evidence base has two parts. First, the applicant will be assigned to an evidence tier (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.) Second, the quality of the applicant's evidence and the degree to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

Evidence Tier (8 points)

An evidence tier will be assessed for each applicant for the purpose of applying the strategic characteristics (moderate/strong evidence) and understanding the relative strength of each applicant's evidence base and the likelihood that the proposed intervention will lead to outcomes identified in the logic model.

In 2018, the evidence tiers of successful AmeriCorps State and National applicants that were competing were as follows: Strong 9%, Moderate 5%, Preliminary 40%, and Pre-Preliminary 46%. As these figures indicate, CNCS values and funds programs at all points along the evidence continuum and expects programs to progress along the evidence continuum over time. Thus, do not be deterred from applying for funding due to your current evidence level.

Applicants who have evaluation reports of the same intervention described in the application (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for a definition of "same intervention") may submit up to 2 of those reports, plus (if applicable) the evaluation report from their last three-year grant cycle, to qualify for the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tier. In order to qualify for consideration, the intervention evaluated in the submitted report(s) must match the intervention proposed by the applicant in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Submitted reports that do not sufficiently match the intervention proposed by the applicant in all of these areas will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points. Submission of additional documents that are not consistent with the guidance and requirements described in the *Notice* (e.g., advocacy pieces, policy briefs, other narratives that are not research studies or program evaluations) will not be reviewed.

In the Evidence Tier section of the application narrative, applicants must (1) summarize the study design and key findings of any evaluation report(s) submitted and (2) describe any other evidence that supports their program, including past performance measure data and/or other research studies that inform their program design. Applicants who submit evaluation reports for consideration must also describe in the Evidence Base section of the application narrative how the intervention described in the submitted reports is the same as the intervention described in the application (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance).

Applicants should provide citations for the studies they describe, if applicable; however, reviewers will not review any documents external to the application other than evaluation report(s) submitted in accordance with the *Notice* instructions.

Applicants must meet all requirements of an evidence tier in order to be considered for that tier. If the evaluation reports submitted by the applicant do not meet the definitions in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, the applicant may be considered for a lower evidence tier.

Evidence Quality (8 points)

After the applicant's evidence tier has been assessed, the quality of the applicant's evidence and the extent to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

For applicants who are assessed as being in the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tiers, reviewers will score the submitted evaluation reports using the following standards:

- The submitted reports are of satisfactory methodological quality and rigor for the type of evaluation conducted (e.g., adequate sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, appropriate use of control or comparison groups, etc.);
- The submitted reports describe evaluations that were conducted relatively recently, preferably within the last six years;
- The submitted reports show a meaningful and significant positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest.

For applicants who are assessed as being in the Pre-Preliminary evidence tier, reviewers will score the narrative provided in the Evidence Base section of the application using the following standards:

- The applicant uses relevant evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to inform their proposed program design;
- The described evidence is relatively recent, preferably from the last six years;
- The evidence described by the applicant indicates a meaningful positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest.

All applicants, including new grantees, are required to provide additional information in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field of the application (See Section E. Evaluation Plan); however, information provided in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field will not be scored and will not be reviewed until after funding decisions have been made.

3. Notice Priority (0 points)

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2018 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section and more fully described in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance and the proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed in the *Funding Priorities* section and in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

4. Member Experience (6 points)

- 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 will 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.*

C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

1. Organizational Background and Staffing (9 points)

- 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.

2. Compliance and Accountability (8 points)

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

3. Culture that Values Learning (6 points)

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

4. Member Supervision (2 points)

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

D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)

Reviewers will assess the quality of the application's budget to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

This criterion will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for "See budget"

1. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.
- The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year.
- The cost per MSY is equal to or less than the maximum cost per MSY.

Proposed budgets that contain MSY costs that exceed the maximum cost per MSY and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget screens:

- Current indirect rate cost if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project, including for Fixed Amount applicants.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash), the sources of these commitments, and if the commitments are proposed or secured.

E. Evaluation Plan (Required for recompeting grantees - 0 percent)

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please provide a data collection plan in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field that includes the following:

- A description of the applicant’s data collection system and how it is sufficient to collect high quality performance measurement data during the first three years of the grant. If the applicant does not yet have a data collection system, describe the plan and timeline for developing a high quality system.
- A description of how the applicant will use performance data (including CNCS performance measures and other process and outcome measures if applicable) to improve its program in the first three years of funding.

First-time applicants should be aware that CNCS may require submission of data collection instruments if a grant is approved for funding. For more information about how to develop a high-quality data collection plan, visit the CNCS Knowledge Network.

If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of “recompeting” below) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” section of the Narratives field in CNCS’s web-based management system. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report as an attachment (see the *Submission of Additional Documents* section for more information) and must also submit an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field in the system. Evaluations plans submitted outside of the system will not be reviewed.

Evaluation plans must include as much information as possible for each of the following (see Frequently Asked Questions: Evaluation, available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cncs-evaluation-policies>):

- A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome(s) of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation
- Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes
- Proposed research design for the evaluation including a rationale for the design selected, an assessment of its strengths and limitations, and a description of the main components;
- Description of the data sources, sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures that will be used in the evaluation
- Analysis plan that clearly describes the methodology/ies that will be used to analyze the collected data

- A timeline for the evaluation that describes how the evaluation will cover at least one year of CNCS-funded activity and will be completed within the three-year timeframe of the grant
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator
- The proposed budget

Information provided in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field will not be scored and will not be reviewed until after funding decisions have been made. Note that in FFY18, CNCS began a separate review process for Evaluation Plans. After the Award is determined, the Applicant must be available to respond to Evaluation specific feedback and if requested, be prepared to submit a revised Evaluation Plan.

For more information about evaluation plans visit the CNCS Knowledge Network's Evaluation Resources: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/planning-evaluation>.

Evaluation requirements differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.700-710:

- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee (other than an Education Award Program grantee), and its average annual CNCS program grant is \$500,000 or more, it must arrange for an external impact evaluation of the program (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance), and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 CFR §2522.730.
- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee whose average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program Grantee, it must conduct an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 CFR §2522.730.

For purposes of compliance with evaluation plan and report requirements, an application will be considered a re-competing application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of "same project" (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) and has been funded competitively for at least three years. If the applicant has received competitive funding for at least three of the last five years, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed, including at least six years of competitive funding for the same project, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the upcoming 3 year grant. If the applicant does not satisfy the definition of re-competing, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan or completed evaluation report.

The "Evaluation Summary or Plan" field of the Narrative does not count toward the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit of 10,000 characters.

State/Territory subgrantees and/or National Direct Grantees that are re-competing for funds may be eligible to apply for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. Grantees requesting approval of an alternative evaluation approach should submit a request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach along with their evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in the system. The request should clearly explain: (a) the evaluation constraints faced by the program, (b) why the proposed approach is the most rigorous option feasible, and (c) how the proposed alternative approach will help the grantee build their evidence base. Evaluation plans should include, at a minimum, the required elements listed in this *Notice*. The evaluation plan must be consistent with the information submitted in the competitive funding application and in the request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. CNCS guidance on alternative evaluation approaches can be found on the CNCS website.

The "Evaluation Summary or Plan" field of the Narrative does not count toward the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit of 10,000 characters. If the request for the alternative evaluation approach plus the Evaluation Plan itself will exceed the character limit of the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in the system, the applicant should do the following:

- Enter the Evaluation Plan in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in the system.
- Include a note in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field stating that the applicant is requesting an alternative evaluation approach.
- Include the alternative evaluation approach at the END of the application narrative with the heading "REQUEST FOR ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION APPROACH." This section of the application narrative will not count against the page limit.

F. Amendment Justification (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant and needs to amend it.

G. Clarification Information (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.

H. Continuation Changes (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter changes in the application narratives in continuation requests.

Assessment of Continuation Applications

For each continuation application, ServeMontana staff will complete an assessment document (Appendix A) that will provide reviewers with critical information about the current performance of the grantee.

Reviewers will provide each continuation applicant with feedback on the narrative and budget, but will only score the application based on the information provided in the staff assessment document. The following are the scoring areas included on the staff assessment document:

1. Budget, Match, and Cost Per MSY, 10 Points

Staff will provide reviewers with information pertaining to the program's performance in relation to their budget. This information will include spending as compared to their budget, ability to meet budgeted match and the programs cost per MSY as compared to previous operating periods.

2. Compliance Findings, 10 Points

Staff will describe any compliance issues and areas of weakness/risk identified during the last full year of program operation at the organization, the subgrantees (if applicable), and service site locations (if applicable). If the applicant, its subgrantees, and/or service site locations had compliance or areas of weakness/risk identified, provide an explanation and describe the corrective action taken and the plan for improvement. This will include compliance with the time sensitive rules for member enrollments and exits.

3. Member Enrollment, 10 Points

If the program enrolled less than 100% of the slots received during its last full year of program operation, the program should provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement in the continuation narrative. Enrollment rate is calculated as slots filled, plus refill slots filled, divided by slots awarded.

4. Member Retention, 10 Points

If the applicant was not able to retain all of its members during the last full year of program operation, the applicant should provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement in the continuation narrative. While retention rates may vary among effective programs depending on the program model, the expectation is that Grantees to pursue the highest retention rate possible. Retention rate is calculated as the number of members exited with award (full or partial award) divided by the number of members enrolled.

5. Performance Measure Progress Versus Stated Goals (10 Points)

Staff will describe the applicant's performance against performance measure targets during its last year of program operations. How successful has the applicant been in solving the identified problem? If the applicant did not meet performance targets, provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement.

Review and Selection Process Applications cleared through this process will be sent the Corporation for National and Community Service for final funding determination.

The review process will consist of:

- OCS staff review Letters of Intent; Additional Documents and Audit Report, as applicable. If the applicant is determined to have sufficient capacity to manage federal grants they are eligible to continue the application process.
- Submitted applications are reviewed for compliance with pertinent state and federal regulations, and responsibility to the request for proposal. All compliant and responsive applications will continue through the review process.
- Applications passing staff review will next be reviewed by a Grant Review Work Group responsible for scoring applications and making funding decisions.
- Grant Review Work Group recommendations are presented to the Montana Commission on Community Service for approval. If the proposal of the review committee is rejected by the Montana Commission the review process may be repeated.

Funding priority will be given to continuation applicants. Following continuation applications, funding priority will be given to applications in order of the scores assigned by the Grant Review Work Group. Review scores will not necessarily have a direct bearing on the distribution of funds. However, a lower scoring application will not be recommended for funding at the expense of a higher scoring one. The distribution of funds will be based on the assessment of the Grant Review Work Group as to how best to carry out the mission of OCS. When making funding recommendations, the Grant Review Work Group will consider the score of the application, the effectiveness of the program in addressing Montana's needs, the priorities, if any, set by the Governor and/or State Service Plan, and the input of commission staff.

For all applications

F. Risk Assessment Evaluation

Commission staff will assess the re-competing subgrantees' past performance and submit those assessments to CNCS. This assessment is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application based on the Selection Criteria. Results from this assessment will inform funding decisions. In evaluating programmatic performance, CNCS will consider the following for applicants that are current grantees:

- Grant progress reports – attainment of Performance Measures
- Enrollment and retention
- Compliance with 30 day enrollment and exit requirements in the AmeriCorps portal
- Site visit or other monitoring findings (if applicable)
- OIG findings (if applicable)
- Significant opportunities and/or risks of the grantee related to national service
- Commission rank

Additionally, CNCS may use the results of the review of the risk assessment evaluation in determining which applications to fund. If CNCS concludes that the reasons for applicants having poor risk assessment evaluations are not likely to be mitigated, those applications may not be selected for funding.

G. Financial and Risk Assessment Evaluation

CNCS will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding, the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria, and the assessment of programmatic past performance. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award. In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following, but not limited to:

- Financial stability
- Quality of financial management systems and ability to meet administrative standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance
- History of performance as reflected in the applicant's record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including:
 - Timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements
 - If applicable, meeting matching requirements
 - If applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards
- Information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as—
 - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)
 - Dun and Bradstreet
 - "Do Not Pay"
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under OMB Circular A-133 and findings of any other available audits
- IRS Tax Form 990
- An applicant organization's annual report
- Publicly available information including information from an applicant organization's website
- Any other information listed in CFR § 2522.140
- The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Consideration of Integrity and Performance System Information

Prior to making any award that exceeds \$150,000, CNCS is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM and FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). Additionally, CNCS may expand upon these requirements and use its discretion to review and consider information about any applicant receiving an award, including those under \$150,000.

Any applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through FAPIIS and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through FAPIIS;

CNCS will consider any comments by any applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing its review of risk posed by the applicant under the Risk Assessment Evaluation section of this *Notice*.

Clarification Process

As a result of the review, prior to OCS submission to CNCS, and again after submission to CNCS, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application including changes to the budget. This information is used by OCS and CNCS staff in making final recommendations. Applications may be recommended for funding with or without clarification requests. Failure to respond to OCS/CNCS requests for clarification information in a timely fashion may result in the removal of application from consideration.

Resolution Process

As a result of the review, applicants may receive time sensitive requests to provide resolution information and/or make changes to the application including the budget. This information is used by CNCS staff in making final funding determination. Applications may be recommended for funding with or without a Resolution request. Failure to respond to CNCS/OCS requests for additional information in response to Resolution items in a timely fashion may result in the removal of application from consideration.

Federal Award Administration Information

Uniform Guidance

All awards under this *Notice* are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205.

Requests for Improper Payment Information

To monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, as amended, CNCS may, with little notice, request time sensitive documentation from recipients. Failure to make timely responses to these requests may result in award funds being placed on temporary manual hold, reimbursement only, or other remedies as appropriate. In addition, CNCS may, in appropriate circumstances, consider in its funding decisions any previous failures to make timely responses.

CNCS Terms and Conditions

All awards made under this *Notice* will be subject to the 2019 CNCS General Terms and Conditions, and the 2019 Specific Terms and Conditions for the particular program (when applicable.) These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements. The CNCS General and Specific Terms and Conditions for each of its programs is available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/terms-and-conditions-cnccs-grants>

National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) Requirements

The National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) is a screening procedure established by law to protect the beneficiaries of National Service. The law requires recipients to conduct and document NSCHCs on any person (including award-funded staff, national service participant, or volunteer) receiving a salary, living allowance, stipend, or education award through a program receiving CNCS funds. An individual is ineligible to serve in a position that receives such CNCS funding if the individual is registered, or required to be registered, as a sex offender or has been convicted of murder. The cost of conducting NSCHCs is an allowable expense under the award. ***CNCS requires that all applicants budget at least \$54 plus the cost of a state check, per covered individual (staff and members) on the CNCS share of the budget.***

Unless CNCS has provided a recipient with a written exemption or written approval of an alternative search procedure, recipients must perform the following checks–

All award-grant funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers must undergo NSCHC that include:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW)
2. Either
 - a. A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person’s state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work; *or*
 - b. A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

Special Rule for Persons Serving Vulnerable Populations. Award-funded staff, National Service participants, and volunteers *with recurring access to vulnerable populations* (i.e., children age 17 or younger, individuals age 60 or older, or individuals with disabilities) must undergo NSCHC that include:

1. A nationwide name-based check of the [NSOPW](#) and;
2. Both
 - a. A name- or fingerprint-based search of the statewide criminal history registry in the person’s state of residence and in the state where the person will serve/work; *and*
 - b. A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

See 45 C.F.R.2540.200–2540.207 and [CNCS Criminal History Check Resources](#) for complete information and FAQs. Noncompliance with NSCHC requirements has financial consequences that may be significant.

Use of Material

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, OCS and CNCS reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so. 2 CFR §200.315(b)

Reporting

Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, monthly and semi-annual financial reports, and an internal or external evaluation report as required by the AmeriCorps regulations §§2522.500-2522.540 and §§2522.700-2522.740. A final financial report is due at the end of the grant.

Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide monthly financial reports and mid-year and end of year progress reports, and an internal or external evaluation report. A final financial report is due at the end of the grant.

While applications will not be evaluated on these criteria, grantees are expected to have data collection and data management policies and practices that provide reasonable assurance that they are providing CNCS with high quality performance measure data. At a minimum, grantees should have policies and practices which address the following five aspects of data quality:

- The data measures what it intends to measure;
- The grantee collects data in a consistent manner;
- The grantee takes steps to correct data errors;
- The grantee ensures that the data reported is complete; and
- The grantee actively reviews data prior to submission.

Progress Report Data

In addition to semi-annual reporting of progress toward the grant's approved performance measure outputs and outcomes, additional demographic and narrative data must be reported annually (as applicable), including the number of applicants for AmeriCorps positions and the number of volunteers recruited and/or supported by AmeriCorps members (both episodic and ongoing volunteers.) Failure to submit accurate, complete, and timely required reports may affect the recipient's ability to secure future OCS and CNCS funding.

- For further guidance and training resources see – [Resources: Data Collection and Instruments](#).

Re-Focusing Funding

CNCS and OCS reserve the right to re-focus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

Agency Contact

Montana Governor's Office of Community Service
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Grants Manager: 406.444.5547 ssadowski@mt.gov
General email: serve@mt.gov

Other Information In addition to consulting the Application Instructions, Supplementary Materials, and AmeriCorps regulations applicants are encouraged also to consult the ServeMontana website for materials that may be updated during the RFP period.

APPENDIX A: Staff Assessment

**ServeMontana, the Governor’s Office of Community Service
Staff Assessment of Continuation Applications**

AmeriCorps State Grant Applications

Staff will complete the following assessment for all previously funded applicants.

- 1) Applicant:
- 2) Federal Request:
- 3) Total Match:
- 4) Match %:

| | Current Grant ('18) | Request ('19) | Difference |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| Federal Funds | | | \$0 |
| Cash Match | | | \$0 |
| In-Kind Match | | | \$0 |
| Total Match | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Match % | #DIV/0! | 0% | #DIV/0! |
| Project Cost | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| MSY | - | | 0.00 |
| Cost per MSY | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

- 5) Areas of Assessment
 - i. Budget, match, and cost per MSY (10 Points)
 - ii. Compliance findings
 - iii. Member enrollment rate and 30 compliance
 - iv. Member retention and 30 day compliance
 - v. Performance measure performance versus goals

| Performance Measure statements | 2017 or 2018 Grant Year | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|--------|
| | Target | Actual | Status |
| | | | |
| | | | |

End of AmeriCorps State Grant Competitive Request for Proposal (RFP)