

# serve montana

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE



## AmeriCorps State **Competitive FFY2016** Announcement of Funding Opportunity

Thank you for your interest in an AmeriCorps Competitive Grant! This packet outlines the process for applying for AmeriCorps grants funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and overseen by the Montana Governor's Office of Community Service (ServeMontana).

### **This Notice**

This notice is of the first of several steps which an applicant must complete to apply for AmeriCorps Competitive funding. The role of ServeMontana in this process is to solicit, screen and rank applications prior to national competition for funding. 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 for funding at a national level.

This step is only required for AmeriCorps programs that propose to serve solely in the state of Montana. Only submit materials to this solicitation if your program will serve primarily in Montana. Tribal organizations may apply directly to CNCS or through this notice.

Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to CNCS. If you are National Direct applicant, please see the For National Directs tab under AmeriCorps on [serve.mt.gov](http://serve.mt.gov) and then complete the Consultation process as required by CNCS, thank you.

Once applications have been received, ranked and screened through this process they will be sent to compete for funding at a national level through CNCS. A description of the process used by CNCS is contained in this notice. It is recommended that applicants review materials on the [CNCS website](#) to understand better the criteria on which applications compete.

### **ServeMontana**

ServeMontana and the Montana Commission on Community Service were 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 Montana AmeriCorps State programs encourages citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in service; involves

youth in the life and work of communities; promotes volunteerism in emergency management and preparedness; and helps to strengthen and expand volunteer opportunities for all Montanans.

### **Expectations**

It is the expectation of ServeMontana that all applications to this notice display the following characteristics:

- ✓ Inclusive in the design and delivery making the program accessible to individuals with disabilities
- ✓ Collaborative approach to planning, design, and the delivery of the program
- ✓ Address rural, underserved or areas of extreme poverty not currently served by AmeriCorps programs

### **Governor's Initiatives**

AmeriCorps Programs that receive funding through this notice will be overseen by ServeMontana in the management of their grant. Because ServeMontana is part of the Governor's office, applicants are encouraged to engage in the initiatives set by the Governor. These initiatives are:

- Childhood Hunger - The Governor and First Lady's initiative to fight childhood hunger in Montana and to increase participation in existing—and initiate the start-up of—breakfast after the bell programs in Montana's schools.
- Early Childhood Education - This is Governor Bullock's Initiative to ensure every Montana child arrives at kindergarten ready to learn. Children who receive high-quality early learning are more likely to read at grade level, graduate from high school, and earn more money as adults.
- SMART Schools – "SMART" Schools refers to a schools' ability to "Save Money and Resources Today" by implementing simple behavioral and operational changes to promote energy efficiency and health. The SMART Schools initiative is meant to encourage schools to become more energy efficient, reduce waste, promote health, and implement sustainable practices.
- Forests in Focus – The Governor's Forests in Focus 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 focus on land management activities that restore forests and watersheds, drought resiliency, wildfire risk reduction, improve habitat and water quality.
- American Indian Affairs- The Governor's American Indian Affairs initiative aims to increase relationships, 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.

### **Screening**

To be eligible for consideration under this notice, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in this packet. Serve Montana 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 removed from the review process.

**Appeals** The appeals process for ServeMontana is located:

<http://serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Appeals-Process-Updated-10.18.10.pdf>

## Timeline

**September 23** Official posting of the Notice

**September 25** Technical Assistance period opens

\*Technical assistance will be available September 25 – October 15. Questions should be submitted via email to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov). All questions and responses will be posted publicly on the ServeMontana website at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>.

**October 1** Due Date 5pm Mountain Time Letter of Intent- all applicants

- Documentation of Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate, *if applicable*.

**October 8** Due Date 5pm Mountain Time New applicants only.

- [Readiness Self-Assessment](#)
- Current A133 or other audit

The Readiness Assessment is available online at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>. The Readiness Assessment and audit should be submitted electronically to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov). If you do not receive an email confirming receipt within 24 hours please call 406.444.5547.

**October 15** Technical Assistance period closes at noon

**October 16** Last day to submit an Alternative Match Request

**October 29** Due Date 5pm Mountain Time All applicants

- Complete Application, submitted in eGrants
- Letters of Support, submitted via email to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov)

Applications must be submitted in **eGrants**, the online system used by the Corporation for National and Community Service <http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/>.

**November 17** Grant Review Workgroup Meeting, in Helena, MT

- A representative of the Applicant must be present

**December 4** Due Date 5pm Mountain Time National Direct Consultation

**December 9** Commission Meeting, vote on the funding recommendations

**Dec 14 – Jan 6, 2016** Applicant clarification period – All recommended applicants

- Final must be submitted in eGrants *no later* than January 6, 2016.

**May 2016** Successful applicants will be notified

### **Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding**

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community 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 for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans, for up to 7 years. Members age 55+ may be able to transfer their Education Award to a family member.

CNCS may award a Cost Reimbursement or an Education Award Program grant to any successful applicant, but the availability of a Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants.

This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, the Glossary, Application Instructions, and the Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. The documents can be found at <http://www.serve.mt.gov/funding>. The full regulations are available online at [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov). The TTY number is 800.833.3722. For a printed copy of related material, call 406.444.5547.

**Focus Areas** To carry out Congress' intent to maximize the impact of National Service, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has set the following Focus Areas for AmeriCorps:

#### **Disaster Services**

Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters. Grantees also have the ability to respond to national disasters under cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

#### **Economic Opportunity**

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, including youth identified in My Brother's Keeper, to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

#### **Education**

Grants will 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 will provide support for increased individual behavioral change leading to increased energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and communities. Grant activities will decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems; and/or increase formal and informal green training opportunities for economically disadvantaged people.

## **Healthy Futures**

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities; 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 in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

## **Veterans and Military Families**

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, military service members, and their families benefiting from AmeriCorps service; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps.

## **2016 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities**

- Disaster Services - improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity - increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically opportunity youth (see Glossary), both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members.
- Education - improving student academic performance including STEM
- Environment - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Service Corps (see Glossary)
- Veterans and Military Families - positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Montana Governor's priorities: American Indians, Childhood Hunger, Drought Resiliency, Suicide Prevention, Safe & Affordable Housing, and Workforce Development
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives (see Glossary)
- Programing that supports My Brother's Keeper (see Glossary)
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities. (see Glossary)

## **Next Gen AmeriCorps**

Depending on overall funding available, CNCS is inviting applicants to propose the Next Generation AmeriCorps or Next Gen AmeriCorps. The importance of service remains even within tight fiscal constraints we face as a nation. The goal of Next Gen AmeriCorps is to use innovative strategies to offer the same service opportunities but at a more efficient cost to the government. To participate, applicants must have a cost per member that is lower than \$10,000 per year per full time member using CNCS funding. CNCS is looking for innovative approaches and models to implement, for example: locating operations in Promise Zones, areas that meet Promise Zone criteria, or that demonstrate other indicators of severe need.

Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. CNCS seeks to meet that target in this competition and encourages encore programs to apply. Encore will provide an opportunity for current evidence-based Senior Corps Foster Grandparents Program and Senior Companion Program grantees to expand their programs through AmeriCorps funding.

In order to receive priority consideration, 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.

## **National Performance Measures**

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS expects organizations to use National Performance Measures as part of their comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve their goals.

All applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary service activity. 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. As described in the Application Instructions, applicants must include all their information about their proposed performance measure in the Performance Measure section of the applications in eGrants (CNCS's web-based grants management system). All information requested in the National Performance Measure Instructions must be included in the text of the performance measures themselves, and it must be evident in the performance measure text that all definitions and requirements outlined in the National Performance Measures Instructions and NOFO FAQs are met. Providing performance measures information elsewhere in the narrative cannot be in lieu of providing full information in the Performance Measures section of the application in eGrants. For more information, please refer to the National Performance Measure Instructions on the [ServeMontana Website](#).

## **Federal Award Information**

The level of funding is subject to annual appropriations, which have not yet been made.

## **Award Period**

Unless otherwise specified, an awarded grant generally covers a three-year project period, subject to annual continuation. In approving a multi-year project period, generally an initial award is made for the first year of operation. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds.

## **Project/Award Period**

The project start date is proposed by the applicant and is generally one year. The suggested start date is September 1, 2016. Project start date may not occur prior to the date of the grant award. 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.

## **Eligibility Information**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible: public and private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Indian Tribes. Receiving federal funding previously is not a prerequisite to applying under this *Notice*.

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 released later in the fall with an application deadline of spring 2016.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in 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.

### **New Applicants**

Organizations that have never received AmeriCorps funding are encouraged to apply. Under this *Notice* an applicant must request an appropriate amount of Member Service Years (MSY) to mobilize a slot configuration resulting in a minimum of twenty members.

New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants but not eligible to apply for Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

### **Continuation applicants**

Organizations that have current AmeriCorps awards that do not end in FY16 must submit an application in order to be eligible to receive funding for the following year. Please see the Application Instructions. 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*.

## **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

### **Fixed Amount Grants and Education Award Program Grants**

With the understanding that federal funds available through this opportunity are not sufficient to operate the program and that organizations must raise the additional revenue to operate the program, there is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount and Education Award Program grants

### **Cost Reimbursement Grants**

A first-time successful applicant is required to match at 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR §2521.60 and Pub. L. 113-76, Division H, Title IV, § 402 <https://beta.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ76/PLAW-113publ76.htm>

Section 121(e)(5) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, 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. Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year and at closeout.

The living allowance or salary provided to AmeriCorps members in Professional Corps programs (see Glossary) does not count toward the matching requirement.

### **Alternative Match**

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations at 45 CFR §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 by October 16, 2015.

## Application Submission Information

### 1. Address to Request Application Package

Organizations should refer to the ServeMontana website to obtain the necessary information to apply.

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission

#### What are the steps that organizations need to take to apply?

- Determine whether you apply directly to CNCS or through a State Commission
- Submit a request for an alternative match schedule, if applicable
- Get a DUNS number
- Establish an eGrants account
- Write a high quality application responsive to the *Notice*
- New Applicants submit readiness self-assessment, and audit report (*if available*)
- Provide letters of support via email
- Submit the application via eGrants by the deadline

#### How to Submit an Application in eGrants

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the eGrants system. Because it is a unique system, it is *strongly recommended* that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a WORD document, then copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields no later than 7 days prior to the deadline. Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants.

If a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants: Contact the National Service Hotline at 800.942.2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask> National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00 am to 7:00 pm ET. If you contact the Hotline, be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying.

If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants and must communicate with ServeMontana Grants Manager.

An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the application due date and time. Incomplete applications will not be considered. All additional required documents should include the applicant organization name and Application ID number at the top of the page and are due by the application deadline at [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov).

Additional documents may include (if applicable): letter(s) of support, evaluation reports, letters from the consortium members for Multi-focused intermediaries, and up to two evaluation briefs, reports, and/or peer reviewed articles if the applicant has a moderate or strong evidence base.

#### Coordination among State Commissions and National Direct Applicants

CNCS expects State Commissions and 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. The list of State and

Territory Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>.

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

Before application submission:

- Consult with the State/Territory Commission of each state and/or Territory in which the organization knows it will operate and describe this consultation in their applications. Contact the State/Territory 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 State/Territory Commission with contact information for National Direct programs in the state and/or Territory and update these lists on an annual basis.
- Participate in the State/Territory Commission's annual 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 State/Territory Commission on the National Direct's mailing list 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.

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 to their mailing/email distribution list and invite them to appropriate training and other events.

CNCS will solicit State/Territory Commission input on National Direct applicants, except Indian Tribes, proposing to operate in their state/territory. Via eGrants, Commissions have the opportunity to select support, do not support, or neutral, and provide comments. Participation by State/Territory Commissions in providing this input is strongly encouraged. CNCS reviews and considers Commission input.

#### **Application Fields and Page Limits**

In eGrants, applicants will enter text in the following fields

- Executive Summary
- Program Design
- Organizational Capability
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
- Evaluation Plan

Applications may not exceed the 15 page base limit for the Narratives (18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries), including the Executive Summary and SF 424 Facesheet, as the pages print out from eGrants. Applicants are *strongly encouraged* to print out the application from the "Review and Submit" page prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit. This limit does not include the

narrative portion of the evaluation plan or the logic model, budget, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable.

Logic Models may not exceed three pages in length as printed from eGrants.

Reviewers will not consider submitted material that is over the page limit in the printed report, even if eGrants allows an applicant to enter and submit text over the limit. eGrants does not limit sections. Submit only items requested in the *Notice* or Application Instructions.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Each applicant must clearly describe a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant, clearly defined community problem. Applicants are urged to carefully follow the guidance in this *Notice* and in the Application Instructions. The quality of an application is an important factor in determining whether an organization will be awarded funding.

### **Threshold Issues**

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. New and re-competing applicants must submit an application with a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps members. Applications that have 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 should demonstrate that the community in which 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 should reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. An application for the Governor and Mayor Initiative should clearly reflect that the application is from one Governor, one Mayor, and a minimum of two nonprofits. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must describe how the program will meet these requirements. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants must meet the threshold requirements outlined in the Glossary and Appendix.

CNCS will assess an applicant's strategic considerations. Applicants must check the relevant boxes in the Performance Measure tab in eGrants in order to be considered for CNCS' assessment of the strategic considerations. Applicants should only check the boxes if the strategic consideration is an intentional part of their program design and the implementation strategies are described in the application.

### **Application Fields**

#### **A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 points)**

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [what 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 an additional [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 should list their leveraged resources (see Glossary) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program. Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications will be posted on [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

### **B. Program Design (50 points)**

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. Problem/Need (9 points)**

- The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve, and the need has been well documented with relevant data.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by the program.

#### **2. Theory Of Change and Logic Model (15 points)**

- The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's Theory Of Change.
- The applicant clearly describes how the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.
- All elements of the logic model are logically aligned.

The Logic Model shall depict the following and shall not exceed three pages:

- A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
  - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
  - Number of AmeriCorps members that 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.) 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.

Programs may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the logic model. While performance measure outcomes should be consistent with the program's Theory Of Change, programs are not required to measure all outcomes in the logic model. The Logic Model should identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention.

### **3. Evidence Base (1-12 points)**

Applicants will be awarded up to 12 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the logic model. Applicants shall provide a description of up to two research studies or evaluations that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the target population and community problem, and should describe how this evidence places them in the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible. Applicants should pay particular attention to the requirements for each tier of evidence. More points are awarded for higher tiers of evidence.

This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments. Studies should be sent to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) by the application deadline and include in the subject line the application ID and "evaluation studies."

For each report cited, include the date of the report, a description that shows its relevancy to the proposed program model, the methodology used in the study, and the strength of the findings (e.g. confidence level.)

For current grantees that are required to submit an evaluation report: The evaluation report will be considered as part of the evidence base of the program. Grantees may opt to include that evaluation report as one of the two studies, or submit two separate studies in addition to the evaluation report. In the latter case, all three studies will be reviewed against this criterion.

#### ***The five tiered evidence levels are:***

**No evidence** (0 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

**Pre-preliminary evidence** (1-2 points) means the applicant has demonstrated data collection experience testing or tracking at least one aspect of its logic model. For example, the applicant has collected systemic and accurate data on one or more of the following: the community need the proposed intervention will address, the program intervention's activities and services delivered, participation in the intervention by the target population, and/or participant outcomes (for example, performance measurement data or a process evaluation assessing implementation of the intervention.) The data collection process and results must be described fully and the applicant should explain the link between data collection and the relevant component(s) of its logic model. Evidence for the pre-preliminary tier should be described in the Evidence section of the application but does not require submission of supplemental documentation.

**Preliminary evidence** (3-6 points) means the applicant has described up to two outcome studies about the intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or a similar intervention that the applicant will replicate with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows:

- The applicant must describe at least one outcome study that was conducted of their own intervention. This must include a detailed description of the outcome study data from pre and post-tests without a comparison group or post-test comparison between intervention and comparison groups. An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement. This description should explain whether the outcome study was conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant.

OR

- The applicant must describe at least one random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation (e.g. propensity score matching) that found positive results for the same intervention that the applicant plans to replicate. The description should include details about how the intervention studied and the applicant’s proposed approach are the same and how the applicant will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model. The study must have been conducted by an entity external to the organization whose program was studied.

OR

- The applicant may submit evidence from both bullets listed above. In this case, the applicant must provide data from an outcome study of an intervention it has previously implemented (see above) and also proposes to modify their program by replicating another random control trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation. Applicants should describe their previous outcome study and should also describe and submit the study (ies) of the proposed evidence-based intervention.

For the purposes of this Notice, “replicate” means that the key elements of the applicant’s intervention are implemented as the evidence-based program model describes (e.g., in terms of content or curriculum, delivery process, and target population), and the applicant’s adaptations are relatively minor. For example, an applicant implementing an intervention using certified teachers to administer the curriculum would not be considered replicating that program with fidelity if it replaces teachers with AmeriCorps members who are not certified teachers, because the documented success of the intervention relied on the specialization of certified teachers.

**Moderate evidence** (7-9 points) means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies that evaluated the same intervention described in this application and identified evidence of effectiveness on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant’s logic model. Evidence of effectiveness (or positive findings) is determined using experimental design evaluations (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)) or quasi-experimental design evaluations (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site). The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Applicants classifying their evidence as **Moderate** must submit up to two evaluation reports from external sources or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

Current CNCS grantees are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report may count towards one of the two studies required for Moderate evidence tier or may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not a current grantee, then more than two studies will not be considered.

**Strong evidence** (10-12 points) means the applicant has demonstrated that the intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented QED or RCT. Alternatively, the proposed intervention’s evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive. Findings from the RCT or QED

studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Applicants classifying their evidence as **Strong** must submit up to two evaluation reports from external sources or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

Current CNCS grantees are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report may count towards one of the two studies required for Strong evidence tier or may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not a current grantee, then more than two studies will not be considered.

**4. Notice Priority (3 points)**

- The applicant clearly describes how its proposed program is within one or more of the 2016 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined on page 5 and more fully described in the Glossary.
- The applicant clearly describes how the proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed on page 5 and in the Glossary.

**5. Member Training (4 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to AmeriCorps requirements including the rules regarding prohibited activities (see Glossary).

**6. Member Supervision (2 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will receive high quality 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.

**7. Member Experience (3 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience 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.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences, including opportunities for reflection and connection to the broader National Service network.
- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the programs operate.

**8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (2 points)**

- The applicant clearly describes how members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how the staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

### **C. Organizational Capability (25 points)**

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 (7 points/10 points for new applicants)**

- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

**As documentation of community support and commitment to the program; please procure letter(s) from the applicant's most significant community partner(s).** The letter(s) should include what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant's AmeriCorps members and what activities would not happen without the AmeriCorps members. Letters should be submitted to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) on or before the application due date.

#### **2. Compliance and Accountability (11 points/15 points for new applicants)**

- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).

#### **3. Past Performance for Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only (7 points for recompeting applicants and formula Grantees) Any applicant that has received competitive or formula funding for the same project in any of the past three years must address this criteria.**

- The applicant clearly describes how it has met performance measurement targets during the last three years of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member enrollment, in the most recent full year of program operations, or if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member retention, in the most recent full year of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes any compliance issues or areas of weakness/risk identified during the last three years of program operations (if applicable) and describes an effective corrective action plan that was implemented.

### **D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (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. Cost Effectiveness (18 points)**

- The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.
- The budget aligns with the applicant's narrative.
- The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost.

- The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to resources to fully support the program. This applies to Fixed Amount, EAP, and Cost Reimbursement grants.
- The applicant, if recompeting, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Glossary) than approved in previous grants, or provides a compelling rationale for the same or increased cost including why this increase could not be covered by the grantee share.

**Having a low cost per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage.** New applicants that submit with a low cost per MSY and recompeting applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher priority for funding. Applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than in previous years must justify their request. If an applicant requests above the maximum cost per MSY, it must justify its request. Such requests may or may not be approved.

**2. Budget Adequacy (7 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.

Applicants must complete and validate the budget, and ensure the following information is in the budget narrative (requested information in the budget screens):

- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments.

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

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the Evaluation Plan field since it pertains only to recompeting grantees. 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 Plan field in eGrants. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report via email to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) by the application deadline, as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants.

Evaluation plans must include the following:

- A description of the Theory Of Change, or why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results;
- Clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the Theory Of Change and will be assessed during the evaluation;
- Concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes;
- A proposed research design for the evaluation;
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator; and
- The estimated budget.

The evaluation requirements are based on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710:

- If the applicant has an annual AmeriCorps program grant of \$500,000 or more, it must arrange for an external evaluation of the program, and must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart.

- If the applicant has annual AmeriCorps 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 must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart.

Grantees with an annual AmeriCorps program grant of \$500,000 or more that are recompeting for funds are 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 eGrants. 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. More information on alternative evaluation approaches can be found at:

[https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/files/guidance\\_for\\_grantees\\_approval\\_of\\_alternative\\_evaluation\\_approach.pdf](https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.pdf).

A program will be considered a recompeting application if it satisfies the definition of “same project” (see Glossary) and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report *and* an evaluation plan. If the project does not satisfy the definition of recompeting, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, summary, or completed evaluation.

The Evaluation Plan field of eGrants does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit. Applicants should print out the report to ensure the narrative is complete.

#### **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 I) 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 your organization, your 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.

### **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.

## **3. Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, it is suggested that applicants register at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM. To register online go to <https://www.sam.gov/portal/pulbic/SAM/>.

#### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

##### **Application Submission Deadline**

Applications are **due Thursday October 29, 2015 at 5pm Mountain Standard Time**

Late applications will not be accepted. Serve Montana reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted. This deadline applies to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants.

## 5. Funding Restrictions

### A. Types of Grants

AmeriCorps grants can be awarded on a cost reimbursement or fixed amount basis. Both types of grants will not be awarded for the same project in one fiscal year. See Glossary.

Grant Types	Cost Reimbursement		Fixed Amount		
	Traditional	Professional Corps	Full-Time/Less than FT Serving in a full time capacity	EAP	Professional Corps
Maximum Cost per MSY	\$13,730	Up to \$1,000*	\$13,430	\$800	Up to \$1,000*
Type of Slots in the National Service Trust	All	All	Full-Time or Less than Full-Time Serving in a full time capacity Only	All	Full-Time Only
Budget Submission Required	Yes		No		Yes, if requesting operating funds
Availability of Funds linked to enrollment and retention of awarded MSY	No		Yes		
Special Requirements	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Member salaries must be paid entirely by organization where member serves and not included in the budget.	School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants are not eligible for Full Time Fixed Amount grants	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. No CNCS funds may be used to pay member living allowance or salary.
Match Requirements	Yes	Yes; Living allowance or salary paid to members may not be counted toward the match requirement.	No, but organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.		
Financial Reporting Requirements	Yes		No		
Available to New Applicants	Yes		No	Yes	Yes

\*The assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non AmeriCorps funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of the application. Operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY will be considered, if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non AmeriCorps resources.

## B. Member Living Allowance

The proposed budget must include a living allowance for each full-time member that is between \$12,530 (minimum) and \$25,060 (maximum) per member except as noted below. A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage.

Cost reimbursement 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 Table 1 below. For Cost Reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either AmeriCorps or grantee share. (EXCEPTION: as noted in Section B.1. and B.3.)

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements to members (EXCEPTION: as noted in section B.2. and B.3.) 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 1: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance**

Service Term	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full-time	1700	\$12,530	\$25,060
One-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$13,265
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,950
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,635
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,420

### **1. Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements (programs existing prior to September 21, 1993)**

If a program existed prior to September 21, 1993, a living allowance is not required. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement of \$12,530, but not the maximum requirement of \$25,060.

**2. 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.

**3. 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 are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. School Turnaround AmeriCorps Continuation EAPs may exceed the maximum living allowance consistent with their existing grant terms.

## C. Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

Maximum Costs per MSY are set forth in Table 2 below. The cost per MSY is determined by dividing the AmeriCorps 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 amount an applicant may request from AmeriCorps per MSY is determined on an annual basis.

**Table 2: 2016 Maximum Cost per MSY**

<b>Grant Program</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Individual Competitive State/Territory Program (cost reimbursement)	\$13,730
Professional Corps Grant (Cost Reimbursement)	Up to \$1,000*
Professional Corps Fixed Amount Grant	Up to \$1,000*
Education Award Program Fixed Amount Grant	\$800
Fulltime Fixed Amount Grant	\$13,430

\*The assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non AmeriCorps funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. Grants will be considered with operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non AmeriCorps resources.

Programs operating in rural communities (as defined in the Glossary) and programs that recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to \$13,930 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members that will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth. The applicant must include a compelling case as to why the applicant’s cost per MSY must be higher.

**D. Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FY 2016**

AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded with FY 2016 dollars who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of \$5,775 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly smaller awards for less than full-time service. The amount of the Education Award is linked to the value of the Pell Grant. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service to use the Education Award.

**Table 3: Term of Service and FY16 Education Award\***

<b>Term of Service</b>	<b>Minimum # of Hours</b>	<b>FY16 Education Award</b>
Full Time	1700	\$5,775.00
One-Year Half Time	900	\$2,887.50
Reduced Half Time	675	\$2,200.00
Quarter Time	450	\$1,527.78
Minimum Time	300	\$1,222.22

\*Note: Education Awards for members are determined by the grant year that the applicant applied and was awarded. This may be different than the amount advertised on the Corporation for National & Community Service website.

**Review and Selection Process**

Applications that are cleared through this process will be sent to compete for funding at the National Level. The following guidance is provided on how the competition for funds will be handled from there.

**A. Compliance and Eligibility Review**

CNCS staff will review all applications submitted to CNCS to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to Phase One Review, an applicant must satisfy all the following requirements:

- Submit a Notification of Intent to Apply by the deadline

- Submit an application by the application submission deadline
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and follows the instructions provided in this *Notice*
- New and re-competing applicants must submit an application with a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps members. Applications that have less than 20 members will be deemed noncompliant and will not be reviewed.

### **B. Phase One Review**

There are three components to Phase One: 1) An assessment of the applicant's past performance for the same program model (if applicable), 2) a review of Theory of Change and Logic Model portion of the application narrative, and 3) a review of the Evidence Base portion of the Application. Each application will be read by several CNCS staff.

State Commission staff will assess their re-competing subgrantees' past performance and submit those assessments to CNCS. CNCS will assess its re-competing direct grantees related to past performance. This assessment is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of 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 formula and competitive grantees and are submitting applications for the same program model:

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

External reviewers will review and assess the evidence base criteria in the *Notice*.

### **C. Selection of Applications for Phase Two Review**

Applications will advance to Phase Two Review based on the results of the Phase One Review, as well as consideration of the priorities and the strategic considerations outlined in the *Notice*. Those applications that do not advance to Phase Two Review will not be recommended for funding.

### **D. Phase Two Review**

Several CNCS staff will assess the remaining portions of the application on the basis of the selection criteria. Some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application including changes to the budget. This information is used by CNCS staff in making final recommendations. Applications may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked clarification questions. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award. Failure to respond to requests for additional information in response to clarification questions in a timely fashion will result in the removal of applications from consideration.

### **E. Financial and Risk Assessment Evaluation**

CNCS staff 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 evaluation 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 the 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, and
  - 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, or
  - “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; and
- The applicant’s ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

#### **F. Selection for Funding**

Applicants that do not advance to Phase Two will not be selected for funding. The CEO will select the final portfolio, based on staff recommendations on the quality of response (including clarification responses) against the criteria, programmatic and financial risk assessments, external review input, *Notice’s* priorities and strategic considerations.

#### **G. Feedback to Applicants**

Following grant awards, each applicant will receive the summary comments of Phase One and, if applicable, Phase Two Review pertaining to their application. Feedback will be based on the review of the original application and will not reflect any information that may have been provided in response to clarification questions, if any.

CNCS is committed to transparency in grantmaking. The following information pertaining to this competition for new and recompeting applications will be published on the CNCS website (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>), within 90 business days after all grants are awarded:

- A blank template of the internal review form.
- A blank template of the external review form of the Evidence Base.
- A list of all compliant applications submitted.
- Executive summaries of all compliant applications submitted by the applicants as part of the application.
- Data extracted from the Standard Form 424 Face Sheet (SF424) and Program Narrative submitted by applicants for successful applications.
- Summaries of external reviewers’ comments for successful applications.
- A list of external reviewers who completed the review process.

### **3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. Depending on the availability of funding, CNCS expects that successful State and Territory Commissions and National Directs will be notified **no later than May 13, 2016**, contingent on timely full year appropriations.

### **Federal Award Administration Information**

#### **1. Federal Award Notices**

Applicants will be notified via email as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. The Notice of Grant Award signed by the grant officer is the authorizing document for grant activities.

#### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

##### **Documents that Govern the Grant**

The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant as well as the AmeriCorps regulations and grant provisions.

##### **Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards**

Grants under this program are subject to 2 CFR Part 200 and CNCS regulations issued to implement Part 200. Those regulations supersede and streamline requirements the from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, and A-122 (which have been placed in OMB guidances); Circulars A-89, A-102, and A-133; and the guidance in Circular A-50 on Single Audit Act follow-up.

##### **National Service Criminal History Check 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.

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-funded staff, national service participants, and volunteers must undergo NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based search of the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW); *and*
2. *Either*
  - 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*
  - 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 NSCHCs that include:

1. A nationwide name-based check of the [NSOPW](#); *and*
2. *Both*
  - 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*

- A fingerprint-based FBI criminal history check.

See 45 C.F.R. § 2540.200–§ 2540.207 and <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check> for complete information and FAQs. Vendor checks (checks performed by commercial vendors) are often noncompliant with these requirements. Inability of a grantee to demonstrate that they have conducted an NSOPW and other required criminal history checks, as specified in CNCS’s regulations, may result in disallowance of all or part of the costs associated with noncompliance.

### **Use of Material**

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, CNCS reserves 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. 45 CFR §2543.36; 2541.30

### **3. Reporting**

Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, 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.

Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports and an internal or external evaluation report.

While applications will not be evaluated on these criteria, grantees will be 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 outcomes and progress toward the grant approved performance measures, additional data must be reported annually (as applicable).

### **Re-Focusing of Funding**

CNCS reserves 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  
Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620  
Grants Manager: 406.444.5547  
[serve@mt.gov](mailto: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 competition period.

**APPENDIX I: STAFF ASSESSMENT**

**THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE  
STAFF ASSESSMENT**



**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 ('12)	Request ('13)	Difference
<b>Federal Funds</b>			\$0
<b>Cash Match</b>			\$0
<b>In-Kind Match</b>			\$0
<b>Total Match</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Match %</b>	#DIV/0!	0%	#DIV/0!
<b>Project Cost</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>MSY</b>	-		0.00
<b>Cost per MSY</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0

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