

# serve montana

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE



## AmeriCorps State **Competitive FFY2017** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Thank you for your interest in an AmeriCorps Grant! This Notice outlines the process for applying for an AmeriCorps 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).

### **This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

This Notice is of the first of several steps that an applicant must complete to apply for and receive AmeriCorps Competitive funding. The role of ServeMontana 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 through CNCS. A description of the process used by CNCS is contained in this notice. This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520–2550, Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, Application Instructions, and Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. These documents are online at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/> Regulations are online at [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov). It is recommended that applicants review materials on CNCS's website.

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

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 complete the Consultation process as required by CNCS. Failure to consult may result in a 'do not support' recommendation to CNCS.

### **Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding**

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed 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 for up to 7 years, to pay for higher education expenses or for qualified student loans. Members age 55+ may be able to transfer their Education Award to a family member.

## **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 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 preparedness; and strengthens volunteerism for all Montanans.

**Expectations** ServeMontana expects that all respondents display the following characteristics:

- ✓ 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

## **Montana AmeriCorps State Process**

To be eligible for consideration, an applicant must meet the intent of all the requirements listed in this packet. 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 not considered in funding decisions.

Montana Commission on Community Service and the Governor's OCS Appeals Process: <http://serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Appeals-Process-Updated-10.18.10.pdf>

For more information about starting an AmeriCorps State program, visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov), and [http://s3.amazonaws.com/resource\\_center\\_video/taag/program-start-up/index.html](http://s3.amazonaws.com/resource_center_video/taag/program-start-up/index.html).

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

Organizations that are continuing a competitively funded program or who propose an AmeriCorps 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 then presented to the full Montana Commission of Community Service for approval. Applicants that receive funding for AmeriCorps programs through this notice will be 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 granting opportunity, referred to as 'Formula' grants.*

## **Applicants That May Apply Directly to CNCS**

Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to CNCS. Tribes and Tribal organizations may apply directly to CNCS or through the state commission.

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.

## 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 grant application.* Any unauthorized contact may disqualify the application from further consideration.

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

Betsy Miller, OCS Grants Coordinator  
ph: 406.444.1718  
bemiller@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. Visit <http://serve.mt.gov/mtstate-service-plan/> to read the plan.

**Governor's Initiatives** 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 encourages schools to become more energy efficient, reduce waste, promote health, and to 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/or incomplete and will be removed from the review process.

**Appeals** The appeals process for ServeMontana:

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

## Timeline

**Sept 16** Official posting of the Notice

**Sept 26 – Oct 12** Technical assistance period\* Submit questions via email to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov).

**Oct 5** All applicants: Letter of Intent due to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) by 5pm

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

New applicants must also submit the following to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov)

- Current A133 or other audit (*if applicable to organization*)
- Readiness Self-Assessment, also online <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>.

**Oct 12** Last day to submit an Alternative Match Request

- Technical Assistance period closes at noon

**Oct 27** All applicants: Application Due Date 5pm Mountain Time

- Complete Application, submitted in eGrants <http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/>
- Letters of Support, submitted via email to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov)

**Nov 16** Grant Review Work Group Meeting, in Helena, MT

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

**Dec 7** Commission on Community Service Meeting in Helena, MT

- vote on the Work Group funding recommendation

**Dec 12- Jan 6** Applicant clarification period – All recommended applicants

**Jan 6, 2017** Clarified applications must be resubmitted in eGrants *no later* than 5pm

**May 2017** 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 publicly on the ServeMontana website at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>. Participation in the technical assistance period is optional, however, it is advisable that all interested parties participate.

## 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 has the following Focus Areas:

**Disaster Services** Grant activities 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 may have the ability to respond to national disasters under cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

**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, 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 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 provide support for 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 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 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.

**Capacity Building** Grants may 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 activities *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 business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.), or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

**AmeriCorps Funding Priorities**, (See Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for further information about some of the priorities) CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

- Disaster Services - improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity - increasing economic opportunities for communities by engaging opportunity youth, either as the population served and/or as AmeriCorps members
- Education - improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics (STEM)
- Environment - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Service Corps
- 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
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives
- Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities
- Safer communities
- Encore Programs

In order to receive priority consideration and points for submitting an application 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.

### **National Performance Measures**

CNCS expects applicants 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 intervention. 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.

***Please refer to the 2017 Performance Measures Instructions document for detailed information regarding the performance measure statements and data collection expectations.***

**Federal Award Information**

**Available Funds** OCS expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps grant selection process. OCS and CNCS reserve the right to prioritize providing funding to existing awards over making new awards. 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 projects.

**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. 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.

The earliest suggested start date is September 1, 2017, understanding that some applicants may choose to operate on the calendar year. 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.

**Type of Award**

AmeriCorps Operating Grants:

CNCS may award a Cost Reimbursement or a Fixed Amount grant to any successful applicant, but the availability of a Full Time Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants. See the *Eligible Applicants* section and the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for more information. CNCS will not provide both types of grants for the same project in one fiscal year.

Grant Types	Cost Reimbursement		Fixed Amount			
Available Subtypes	Traditional	Professional Corps	Evidence Based Planning Grant	Full time	EAP	Professional Corps
Maximum Cost per MSY	\$13,830,	Up to \$1,000*	N/A	\$13,430	\$800	Up to \$1,000*
Type of Slots in the National Service Trust	All	All	N/A	Full-time or Less than Full-time serving in a full time capacity	All	Full-time only
Budget Submission Required	Yes		No			Yes, if requesting operating funds

Grant Types	Cost Reimbursement		Fixed Amount		Grant Types
<b>Availability of Funds linked to enrollment &amp; retention of awarded MSYs</b>	No		Yes		
<b>Special Requirements</b>	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 budget.	See Notice	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 budget.
<b>Financial Reporting Requirements</b>	Yes	Yes; Living allowance or salary paid to members may not be counted toward the match requirements	Yes	No	
<b>Available to new Applicants</b>	Yes		No	Yes	
<b>Match requirement</b>	First-time applicant required to match at 24% each year for the first three-year funding period; subsequent match requirements determined according to 45 CFR 2521.60; NCSA 121(e)(5) (42 USC) requires that other federal funds used to match a grant awarded under this notice must report the amount and source of these funds.		There is no specific match requirement for fixed amount grants, however grant awards do not provide all the funds necessary to operate the program. Organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.		

\*CNCS assumes that Professional Corps will cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non-CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their application. CNCS will consider Professional Corps requests for operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant legal applicant financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources.

CNCS will determine whether a Professional Corps legal applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that they cannot effectively operate an AmeriCorps program without receiving CNCS operating funds on a case-by-case basis, examining all of the circumstances surrounding the application. There are a wide variety of circumstances under



which a Professional Corps legal applicant will be able to demonstrate a compelling need for operating funds. However, given the high demand for AmeriCorps funding there are also specific circumstances where CNCS believes that a Professional Corps legal applicant will be highly unlikely to demonstrate a need for operational funds. For example, 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 net assets that are well in excess of the requested level of CNCS funding, it is difficult to see how the Professional Corps would be able to demonstrate that they should receive operational funding (which would inherently reduce the funding available to other high-quality applicants).

## 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)

Previously receiving funds from CNCS or another federal agency is not a prerequisite to apply to this *Notice*.

#### 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 Commission. Each state and territory commission administers 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 Applicants

*Multi-State:* Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one State or Territory apply directly to CNCS. <sup>1</sup> While National Direct applicants do not apply to State Service Commissions, there are substantial requirements to coordinate with the Commissions for states in which national service programs will operate. ServeMontana expects National Direct applicants to comply with the preaward consultation requirements.

#### New Applicants

Organizations that have never received AmeriCorps funding are encouraged to apply. Applicants must request at least 20 member positions (slots). Organizations applying for the first time, are not typically awarded more than 50 member positions (slots). New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants as they are not eligible to apply for Fixed Amount grants.

Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement grantees that 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.

### **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. 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.*

**Continuation Expansion:** Requests for continuation expansions will be assessed using the same criteria as the new and re-compete applications and whether the applicant has lowered its cost per MSY.

### **Threshold Issues**

Applications should reflect that they meet the following 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 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 must 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 must clearly reflect that the application is from one Governor, one or more Mayors, and a minimum of two nonprofits.
- 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. 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 raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.

### 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 C.F.R. §2521.60 and below.

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1, 2, 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	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 over the years 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 Oct 12, 2016.

### Indirect Costs

CNCS allows applicants to include indirect costs in application budgets. Based on qualifying factors, applicants have the option of using a federally approved indirect cost rate, a 10% de minimis rate of modified total direct costs, or may claim certain costs directly as outlined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.413 Direct costs. States, local governments and Indian Tribes may use approved cost allocation plans. All methods must be applied consistently across federal awards. Applicants who hold a federal negotiated indirect cost rate or will be using the 10% de minimis rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants. However, under section 121(d) of the NCSA and CNCS's regulations at 45 C.F.R. 2517.710, no more than five percent of award funds may be used to recover indirect costs on AmeriCorps grants.

## 3. 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 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

\*The expectation 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

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 fulltime 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	1700	\$12,630	\$24,930
Half-time	900	n/a	\$13,199
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,899
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,599
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,400

### **Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements**

**1. 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.

**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.

## C. 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: 2016 Maximum Cost per MSY**

Grant Program	Maximum
Individual Competitive State/Territory Program (cost reimbursement)	\$13,830
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 cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program with non-AmeriCorps funds and thus will not request operating funds as part of the application. 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 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) and cost reimbursement programs that recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to \$13,950 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members that will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth. Applicants requesting the higher cost/MSY must include a compelling case justifying the cost/MSY and explaining why these costs cannot be covered by the Grantee Share (Match).

**D. Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FFY2017**

AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded with FY 2017 dollars who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of \$5,815.00 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 the term of service to use the Education Award.

**Table: Term of Service and Education Award**

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Education Award
Full Time	1700	\$5,815.00
Half Time	900	\$2,907.50
Reduced Half Time	675	\$2,215.24
Quarter Time	450	\$1,538.36
Minimum Time	300	\$1,230.69

\*Note: Education Awards amounts are determined by the grant year that the applicant 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 the Corporation for National and Community Service for final funding determination.

The review process will consist of:

- OCS Staff review Letters of Intent; Appendix B, Readiness Self-Assessments (New Applicants); and if applicable, Audit Report. 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 as well as 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 the Governor’s OCS. When making funding recommendations, the Grant Review Work Group will consider the score of the application, the effectiveness of the program in addressing the needs of Montana, the priorities, if any, set by the Governor and/or State Service Plan and the input of commission staff.

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

OCS 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, OCS 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.

## **Application Submission Information**

**1. Application Package** Information necessary to apply can be accessed at <http://serve.mt.gov/funding/>. Applicants may email [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) or call 406.444.5547 for printed application materials. TTY number is 800.833.3722.

### **2. Content and Form of Application Submission**

In eGrants, applicants will enter the following components of a complete application:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet: Automatically populated when applicants complete eGrants data 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

### **3. Dun and Bradstreet University Numbering System (DUNS) Number & 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: DUNS Request Service. OCS advises registering at least 30 days before the application due date.

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 may be ineligible to receive an award. See the SAM Quick Guide for Grantees.

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

**Notification of Intent to Apply:** Submission of a Letter Of Intent to Apply is strongly encouraged for this competition and is due **October 5, 2016**. Eligibility is not based on submission of Notification of Intent to Apply. Please send the letter of intent by completing the template and emailing it to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov)

#### **Application Submission**

**Applications are due Thursday October 27 by 5:00p to OCS via eGrants.** This deadline applies to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants. OCS reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted on OCS's website.

#### **c. Additional Documents Deadline**

Any required additional documents are due as described on the ServeMontana funding page.

#### **d. Late Applications**

OCS may consider an application submitted after the deadline if an applicant submits a letter to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) explaining the extenuating difficulties that resulted in the delay. *OCS must receive the letter within one business day of the submission deadline.* If technical difficulties prevent a timely submission, the letter should include the Help Desk ticket number provided by the National Service Hotline. (See the *Electronic Application Submission in eGrants* section). Applicants are required to continue working in eGrants, CNCS's web-based system and with the National Service Hotline to submit the application as soon possible. OCS/CNCS will determine whether or not to accept a late application on a case-by-case basis.

If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting the application on time, 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.

### **5. How to Submit an Application in eGrants**

Applicants must submit their 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 at least two 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 5 days prior to the deadline. Note the length of a document in word processing software will likely be different than what will print out in eGrants.

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.

The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must be using eGrants under his or her own account in order 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.

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.

### **Submission of Additional Documents**

Applicants are required to submit the following additional documents by the application submission 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.
- Up to three letters of support

#### Recompeting applications

- Evaluation report, if required. Please see the *Evidence Base* section for further information.

#### 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)

#### Multi-focused 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](mailto: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.

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



## Page Limits

Applications may not exceed 15 pages for the Narratives or 18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries with more than five operating sites applicants. 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 15 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. However, eGrants will allow an applicant to enter text that exceeds page limits.

When determining compliance for page limits, OCS will only consider the number of pages as printed from the “Review” tab in eGrants (See the “View/Print application”). Therefore, to verify that the application is compliant with the page limits, applicants are encouraged to print the application from the “Review” tab prior to submission. OCS/CNCS will not consider results of any alternative printing methods in determining whether an application complies with page limits. This applies to both the application page limit and the Logic Model page limit. Do not submit other items not requested in this *Notice* or Application Instructions. Submitted items not requested will not be reviewed or returned.

**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 follows the *Notice* and the Application Instructions. Application and budget quality are important factors in determining the funding recommendation.

## Application Review Information by Application Fields

### A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)

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. To complete the Executive Summary, fill in the blanks of the sentences below:

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [# of] AmeriCorps members who will [member service activities] in [locations AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome(s) of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged community volunteers, if applicable] who engage 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. (*Fixed Amount grant applicants should list ‘other revenue’ because they are required to contribute additional resources to operate the program.*)

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

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

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application with the following criteria. Sub-criteria are not of equal value.

### **1. Need, 2 points**

- The community need is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and has been documented with relevant data.

“Community” can be a geographic region, a specific population of people, or a combination of both. The applicant organization must document the need it plans to address with its proposed program, whether it is a defined geographic community or a subset of individuals living in a particular area.

### **2. Intervention, 3 points**

- The proposed intervention is clearly described.
- The proposed intervention aligns with the identified community need.

### **3. Theory of Change and Logic Model, 19 points**

The Theory of Change shall address:

- The applicant’s proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, 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 theory of change should be either evidence-informed or evidence-based, meaning that the proposed intervention is guided by the best available research evidence that supports its effectiveness, as described in the *Evidence Base* section below.
- The proposed outcomes articulated in the application narrative and Logic Model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community need identified by the applicant. Applicants should provide rationale for selecting output and outcome targets. Note, re-competing applicants proposing to significantly increase or decrease output and outcome targets from their previous grant must provide a justification for this change.
- The applicant’s AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.

The Logic Model shall concisely depict:

- A summary of the community problem/need outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
  - 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.) 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.

Programs may include short, medium, and 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 that are included in the Logic Model.

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.

#### **4. Evidence Base, 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 must 1) state the evidence tier in which they think they qualify; 2) clearly indicate and describe the evidence that supports the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible and 3) describe the complete body of evidence that supports their program intervention including evidence from lower tiers. Applicants should pay particular attention to the requirements for each tier of evidence. More points are awarded for higher tiers of evidence.

Do not be deterred from applying for funding due to your perceived current evidence level. In 2016, the evidence tiers of funded AmeriCorps State & National competitive grantees' were: Strong 17%, Moderate 9%, Preliminary 39%, and Pre-Preliminary 24%. OCS and CNCS expect the programs it funds to be progressing along the evidence continuum.

Applicants classifying their evidence as preliminary who propose to replicate an identical or similar evidence-based intervention, as well as applicants classifying their evidence as either moderate or strong evidence should reference the information about the evidence tiers provided below. Submission of additional documents (e.g., advocacy pieces, policy briefs, other narratives not research studies or program evaluations) that are not consistent with the guidance and requirements described in the Notice will not be reviewed.

All applicants must include as much detailed information as possible in the Evidence section of the application. Applicants that have collected relevant performance measurement data must describe this data. Applicants that have conducted evaluations of their own program or that are replicating other evidence-based programs must describe these evaluations as outlined in the evidence tier descriptions. *Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from up to two of the strongest and most relevant studies while also summarizing the remaining body of evidence that exists for the program.* Studies must be evaluations of specific programs or interventions. Research that does not focus on a specific program or intervention, but rather focuses on a broader issue area or population, will considered not applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

When describing research studies or evaluations in the application narrative, applicants must include the following information in order to earn points:

1. The date the research or evaluation was completed, and the time period for which the intervention was examined
2. A description that shows the study's relevance to the proposed intervention
3. A description of the target population studied (e.g. the demographics)
4. The methodology used in the study (e.g.; outcome study, random assignment, regression discontinuity design, propensity score matching, etc.)
5. A description of the data, data source, and data collection methods
6. The outcomes or impacts examined and the study findings
7. The strength of the findings (e.g. effect size, confidence level, statistical power of the study design and statistical significance of findings).

Applicants must provide this information in the narrative even if they submit the study or evaluation. Applicants should provide citations for the studies they describe, if applicable; however, reviewers will not review any links or cited documents referenced in the application and will not review any additional documents that is not a study submitted in accordance with the *Notice* instructions.

Reviewers will examine the descriptions (and attached studies if relevant) using the following criteria:

- a) How closely the intervention evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant;
- b) The methodological quality and rigor of the studies presented (e.g., sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, use of control or equivalent comparison groups, baseline equivalence and study attrition, etc.);
- c) Strength and consistency of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a meaningful and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels; and
- d) The date of the study, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years.

If the evidence submitted as part of an application does not describe a well-designed and well-implemented evaluation, the applicant may be considered for a lower tier of evidence and related point values. Applicants must meet all requirements of the evidence tier in order to be considered for that tier. Applicants that do not meet all requirements will be considered for a lower tier.

Requirements associated with the five evidence tiers are described next.

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

Applicants in this tier must describe how their program design is evidence-informed. An evidence-informed program uses the best available knowledge, research and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but does not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the program itself. Applicants may describe up to two research or evaluation studies that inform their program design but may not submit these studies.

**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.)

In order to qualify for this tier, the applicant must have collected data about their own program. 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. Applicants should describe evidence for the pre-preliminary tier in the Evidence section of the application but should not submit additional documents unless required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements.

**Preliminary evidence** (3-6 points) means the applicant has provided data from at least one outcome study of their own intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or that the applicant proposes to replicate a similar intervention with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows:

#### Preliminary with Outcome Study

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. In some cases a retrospective pre-post test may be considered, but its use must be justified. This description should explain whether the outcome study was conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant. Applicants must describe the studies fully but should not submit them unless required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements. Outcome

evaluations that are submitted to fulfill the CNCS evaluation requirements will be reviewed only for compliance with evaluation requirements. Outcome evaluations submitted by applicants who were not required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements will not be considered when assessing evidence tier.

An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement. In addition to describing up to two outcome studies of their own program or intervention, applicants must describe the performance measurement data they have collected and how the outcome study data goes beyond performance measurement.

#### Preliminary with Replication

- The applicant must describe and submit at least one randomized controlled 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 applicant must describe 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. An applicant may be eligible for more points if they also submit evidence from a process evaluation demonstrating that they have implemented the replication with fidelity. The process evaluation should be described but not submitted.
- Applicants who do not submit the required study or who do not describe fully how they are replicating the evidence-based program with fidelity will be considered for a lower tier.

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.

Applicants proposing to replicate an evidence-based program with fidelity must describe how their program is the same as, or very similar to, the program they will replicate in the following areas:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
- Training for the AmeriCorps members and/or other individuals, such as volunteers, delivering the intervention
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Applicants must describe how they will assess whether they are implementing the intervention with fidelity to the intervention they are replicating.

In cases where the applicant is part of a multi-site program (for example, a national program operating in multiple states) that has conducted an evaluation that qualifies them for the moderate or strong evidence tier, but the evaluation did not include the applicant's proposed sites, the applicant must describe how they are replicating the evidence-based program with fidelity at all of the sites included in the application. In this case, an application for sites included in the evaluation would receive moderate or strong evidence, and an application for the sites not included in the evaluation would receive preliminary evidence.

**Moderate evidence** (7-9 points) means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies of their own program 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 entities or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

CNCS grantees recompeting for their third competitive grant cycle 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 the 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 required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program, then more than two studies will not be considered.

**Strong evidence** (10-12 points) means the applicant has demonstrated that the intervention described in the application has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented QED or RCT of their own program. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs of their own program in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive on the key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. 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 entities or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

CNCS grantees recompeting for their third competitive grant cycle 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 the 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 required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program, then more than two studies will not be considered.

#### **5. Notice Priority, 3 points**

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2017 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section and more fully described in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.
- The proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed in the *Funding Priorities* section and in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

#### **6. 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 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance).

### **7. 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.

### **8. 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.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to 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.

### **9. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification, 2 points**

- Members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- Staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.

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

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application with the following criteria. Sub-criteria are not of equal value.

### **1. Organizational Background and Staffing, 10 points**

- The organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the program.

As documentation of community support and commitment to the program please procure and submit no more than three letters from the applicant's most significant community partners. Letters should be submitted by the application due date to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov) 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.

### **2. Compliance and Accountability, 15 points**

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

## **D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application with the following criteria. Sub-criteria are not 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 applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program.
- The applicant, if re-competing, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) 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.

\*Program costs not included in the formal budget, including for Fixed Price grantees, must be described in this section in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess their sufficiency and alignment. Failure to provide adequate information in this section may result in a lower score.

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 funded in previous years must justify their requests. If an applicant requests above the maximum cost per MSY (see *Maximum Cost per MSY* Section), it must justify its request. Please note that such requests are rarely 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 determine 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. Source of Match section of the budget is complete and totals the amount of proposed match.

Applicants must complete 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, including for Fixed Price applicants.
- 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 percent)**

If the applicant is competing for the first time, enter N/A in the “Evaluation Summary or 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”) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” section of the eGrants Narratives field. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report and the evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the “Evaluation Plan” field in eGrants.

A program is considered a recompetite if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) 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 competitively funded three-year cycle, it is required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more competitively funded three-year cycles, the applicant is required to submit an evaluation report and an evaluation plan for the upcoming 3 year grant. If the project does not satisfy the definition of recompeting, it is not required to submit an evaluation plan, or completed evaluation report.

The evaluation requirements differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 C.F.R. §2522.710:

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

The “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field of the Narrative does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit of 10,000 characters. Applicants should print out the plan to ensure the narrative does not exceed the character limits in eGrants.

Evaluation plans must include information for each of the following,

- Concise description of the theory of change -why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that align with the theory of change and that will be assessed during the evaluation
- Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that clearly connect to the outcomes
- Study components – a) a 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; b) description of the sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures, and c) an analysis plan
- Evaluator Qualifications
- The estimated budget.

Evaluation plans on CNCS Knowledge Network: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/planning-evaluation>

Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cnccs-evaluation-policies>

State/Territory subgrantees and/or National Direct Grantees with an average annual CNCS program grant of \$500,000 or more that are re-competing 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: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/alternativeevaluationapproach.pdf>

If the request for the alternative evaluation approach and the evaluation plan itself will exceed the character limit of the evaluation summary or plan field in eGrants, the applicant should do the following:

- Enter the evaluation plan in the evaluation summary or plan field in eGrants.
- 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 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. This will include compliance with 30 day rule 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.

### For all applications: Clarification Process

As a result of the review, 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 may result in the removal of applications from consideration.

## Submission Dates and Times

**Application Submission Deadline: Thursday October 27, 2016 at 5pm Mountain Standard Time** via eGrants. 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, recompeting, and continuation applicants.

### 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 May 2017**, contingent on appropriations. 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 will be initiated.

### Federal Award Administration Information

#### 1. 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 requirements of applicable sections of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and other applicable statutes. Awards will also be subject to the specific terms and conditions established for AmeriCorps grants and/or defined in the Terms and Conditions or Special Conditions attached to the award.

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

Grants under this program are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), now consolidated in 2 C.F.R. Parts 200 and 2205. This final guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122 (the former Cost Principles), A-110 and A-102 (the former Administrative Requirements), A-133 and A-50 (the former Audits and Audit Follow up), and A-89 (the former Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information).

#### Requests for Improper Payment Information

OCS and CNCS may at any time, request documentation from recipients in order to monitor the award or to comply with other legal requirements, such as the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, as amended. 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, OCS and CNCS may, in appropriate circumstances, consider in its funding decisions any previous failures to make timely responses.

#### 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)
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 NSCHCs 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.

### **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)

## **2. Reporting**

Cost reimbursement grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports, monthly and semi-annual reports, and an internal or external evaluation report as required by the AmeriCorps regulations

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.

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  
Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620  
Grants Manager: 406.444.5547 [ssadowski@mt.gov](mailto:ssadowski@mt.gov)  
General email: [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 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 ('15)	Request ('16)	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 rate and 30 compliance
  - iv. Member retention and 30 day compliance
  - v. Performance measure performance versus goals

Performance Measure statements	2015-16 Grant Year		
	Target	Actual	Status

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