

## Request for Proposal Questions

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers generated during the current and previous New York State AmeriCorps Requests for Proposals process. The questions are organized by issue area.

### GENERAL

**Q 1. *When are the 2015 New York State AmeriCorps applications due?***

A. All applications in response to the 2015 New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals (RFP) are due no later than **5:00 pm on December 10, 2014** to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service. This deadline is for all single-state applicants who are requesting funding to operate an AmeriCorps program (*including Cost Reimbursement, Education Award, & Fixed-Cost Grant*). “Single-State” applicants are those eligible entities proposing to operate any of the aforementioned grant programs in New York State ONLY.

**The application due date of January 21, 2015 on the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the CNCS website <http://www.nationalservice.gov/>, and in the CNCS Application Instructions DOES NOT APPLY to applicants who wish to operate solely in New York State.**

**Q 2. *Do I need to submit a proposal to the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP if I am a current grantee with Competitive Funding?***

A. Current Competitive funded AmeriCorps programs completing their first or second year of operation within a three-year grant cycle must submit a proposal for Continuation funding. If your program is currently in the third and final year of its grant cycle and plans to compete for another three years of AmeriCorps funding, you must apply by referring to the Application Instructions for “New and Recompeting” Applicants in the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP.

**Q 3. *How do I access the eGrants system to prepare and submit my AmeriCorps application?***

A. The eGrants system can be accessed here: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> New users must first create an eGrants Account. When submitting an application using eGrants, the Corporation for National and Community Service’s integrated, secure, web-based system for applications, New and Recompeting applicants for operating grants must select New York as the State to which they are applying. Select one of the Prime Application(s) depending upon the type of application you are submitting. (See the response to Question 5, below).

**Q 4. *Where might I find past projects that were supported by your organization?***

A. CNCS makes information available on its website regarding applicants funded in previous competitions. It is on the open government page. A direct link to previous grant competitions is here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government->

[initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition](#). Some information for the 2013 AmeriCorps grant competition is not yet available.

**Q. 5. *If an organization is awarded funding through AmeriCorps, is it possible to increase the funding request when you re-apply in years 2 and 3? If so, is it common practice for organizations to do so, or would this be out of the ordinary?***

A. Currently Competitive funded grantees in the first or second year of their three-year grant cycle may request additional funds or positions in Continuation applications for years 2 and/or 3. This is not out of the ordinary. The additional funding is subject to many factors including grantee performance, AmeriCorps funding, funding priorities, and funding decisions on New and Recompete applicants.

**Q 6. *Which Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) do I apply to in the eGrants system?***

A. Applicants responding to the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP may only apply to one of **three** Notices of Funding Available (NOFA) in the eGrants system.

Review the description associated with each of the four NOFA/NOFOs below and select the appropriate NOFA to respond to when completing your AmeriCorps application in eGrants. Applicants should note that while there are other NOFA/NOFOs open in eGrants, **only the following three are eligible for funding through the 2015 New York State Competitive AmeriCorps RFP.**

**FY 2015 AmeriCorps State Commission (New and Continuations)**

Summary: This application is for the State Commission applicants that are new or continuations (Year 2 or Year 3 in their grant cycle.)

**FY 2015 AmeriCorps State Commission Fixed Amount (New and Continuation)**

Summary: This application is for State Fixed Price applicants that are new or continuations.

**FY 2015 AmeriCorps State Commission Education Award Program (New and Continuations)**

Summary: This application is for new and recompeting State applicants that are new and continuations.

**Although The NOFA/NOFO due date is listed as January 21, 2015, this does not apply for applicants for funding through the 2015 New York State Competitive AmeriCorps RFP. Again, the application due date for this competition is December 10, 2014**

## Additional Required Documents

**Q 7. *Previous RFPs provided a "required application forms checklist." For the 2015 RFP, other than the evidence base evaluation studies which are to be emailed as an attachment and not submitted in eGrants, are there any additional documents that we will need to submit that are emailed and not submitted through eGrants?***

A. If the Commission recommends your application to the Corporation, you will then be required to provide additional documents including an evaluation (if applicable), labor union concurrence (if necessary), a federally-approved indirect cost agreement (if applicable), and other required documents as necessary. At that time, you will be provided with detailed instructions by Commission staff.

The evidence based evaluation studies (RFP, Part 2, 2.3) to support applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. Applicants must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments. Studies should be sent to BOTH [AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov](mailto:AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov), [americorpsgrants@cncs.gov](mailto:americorpsgrants@cncs.gov), AND to [americorps.rfp@newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov](mailto:americorps.rfp@newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov) by the application deadline of December 10, 2014. Include in the subject line the application ID and "evaluation studies."

## Early contract start date (prior to October 1, 2015)

**Q 8. *Page 14 of the RFP states: "Applicants proposing a contract start date earlier than October 1, 2015 (e.g., programs with an education focus) must receive written approval from the Commission." Do I need to receive written approval prior to submitting the application on 12/10? If so, what is the process for requesting approval from the Commission?***

A. Written approval is not required prior to submitting the application. The requested start date will be reviewed along with the application.

## Eligibility for Grant Types

**Q 9. *How do you define "new" for the purpose of this application?***

A. Whether a program is considered "new" or not is a factor in several different contexts within the AmeriCorps State and National application. Whether or not a project is "new" can be different depending on which context. Below are detailed descriptions of instances where an applicant or application project is considered "new."

A) **Fixed Amount grants** - Organizations that have not previously received AmeriCorps funding or other CNCS funding with a cost-reimbursement budget are considered "new" and therefore are not eligible to receive Fixed Amount grants. Subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

**B) Narrative content** - For the purposes of development and review of the application narrative, applicants that have previously received AmeriCorps funding for the same program model – either through a state formula grant, a state competitive grant, or a national direct grant – are not considered new applicants and should respond to the Past Performance criteria as stated in the NOFO.

**C) Applicant Information** – In completing the SF424 worksheet (in eGrants) and listing applicant information:

- If you are applying for the first time, have only received formula funding in the past, or are a former grantee (non-formula) whose last AmeriCorps grant was received more than five years ago, select **New**
- If you are applying for a different program model (a new project), select **New** (Current and previous grantees need to get approval from their program officer to be considered a new project; an application is “new” if the organization is proposing a project that addresses a different issue area, different priorities, and/or different objectives.)
- If you were a previous state competitive grantee but your most recent funding was formula funding, select **New** (otherwise eGrants will assume you are applying to continue your formula grant)
- If your previous funding was from a different grant type within CNCS (e.g. a former national direct applying for state funding; a former state grantee applying for national direct funding; a former cost-reimbursement grant applying for fixed funding), select **New**
- If you are a current planning grantee applying for an implementation grant, select **New**

**D) Evaluation requirement -**

- If the applicant is competing for the first time, they are new so they enter N/A in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field.
- If the applicant is re-competing for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (previously received competitive funding for one 3-year cycle of AmeriCorps funding for this project, the program must submit an evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary, or Plan field in eGrants.
- If the applicant is re-competing for a subsequent time (has received two or more 3-year cycles of competitive funding), the program must submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period.

**Evaluation Plan**

***Q. 10 I need clarification regarding the Evaluation plan measures. How can I obtain this information?***

- A. Specific responses regarding standardized performance measures, complementary measures and applicant determined performance measures are found at the following links:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN\\_PM\\_Instructions\\_2015\\_NOFO.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN_PM_Instructions_2015_NOFO.pdf)

Corporation for National and Community Service Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)  
Evaluation Requirements, p 28

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/2015%20FAQs\\_11-20-14.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/2015%20FAQs_11-20-14.pdf)

**Q 11. Does the \$500,000 threshold for whether an applicant is required to arrange for an external evaluation refer to the funds provided by CNCS via the NY State Commission only or also includes funds provided by CNCS if the applicant has a separate national direct grant?**

A. The \$500,000 threshold refers to the funds provided by CNCS via the NY State Commission.

### Performance Measure Outcomes

**Q. 12 I need clarification regarding the performance measures. How can I obtain this information?**

A. Specific responses regarding standardized performance measures, complementary measures and applicant determined performance measures are found at the following links:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN\\_PM\\_Instructions\\_2015\\_NOFO.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN_PM_Instructions_2015_NOFO.pdf)

Corporation for National and Community Service Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/2015%20FAQs\\_11-20-14.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/2015%20FAQs_11-20-14.pdf)

Performance Measures/Logic Model, p 16

### Members

**Q. 13 Is \$13,500 the maximum amount an applicant can receive per member, or is there a separate amount that can be requested for living allowances?**

A. The \$13,500 per member cost ceiling must include any portion of the living allowances requested from grant funds.

**Q.14 Are there any restrictions on the activities members can undertake?**

A. Yes. While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- Providing a direct benefit to: (1) a business organized for profit; (2) a labor union; (3) a partisan political organization; (4) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (participating in partisan political activities or spending funds on lobbying and grassroots efforts in excess of allowable limits); and (5) an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, (unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities);
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

#### Nonduplication.

Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless there is nondisplacement, Corporation assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.

#### Nondisplacement.

- (1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
- (2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
- (3) A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.
- (4) A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.
- (5) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—
  - (i) Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or

(ii) Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.

(6) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—

(i) Presently employed worker;

(ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;

(iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;

(iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or

(v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

**Q. 15 *Can organizations set their own rules for selection of AmeriCorps members?***

A. Yes, a program can make rules about selection based on specific qualities relevant to the program or type of service, as long as the selection rules are consistent with AmeriCorps' eligibility requirements and are not discriminatory.

**Q. 16 *We are trying to decide whether to have full-time or half-time members. How do we determine the feasibility of the member types to determine what is right for the program?***

A. This depends on several factors, such as the nature of your program, population served, proposed interventions and specific member activities, etc. The applicant must determine the appropriate member roles and ensure that proposed positions would provide members with the opportunity to serve the necessary number of hours for their slot type while addressing the demonstrated community need(s).

**Q.17 *Do individuals under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) meet the citizenship requirements to be AmeriCorps members?***

A. No, individuals must be US citizens or permanent residents to be eligible to serve in AmeriCorps.

The Corporation for National and Community Service has provided Performance Measure Instructions and other technical assistance documents to assist you in crafting your application; please refer to the following link:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2015>

