



**2016-2017 ServeNebraska AmeriCorps*State
Request for New & Re-competing
Competitive Applications**



ISSUED: October 5, 2015
DEADLINE: December 10, 2015- 5:00 pm CST

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CFDA Number: 94.006
OMB Control #: 3045-0047
Expiration Date: 10/31/201

IMPORTANT NOTICE

These application instructions conform to the Corporation for National and Community Service's online grant application system, eGrants. All funding announcements by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) are posted on www.nationalservice.gov and www.grants.gov.

Public Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 80 hours per submission, including reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing the form. Comments on the burden or content of this instrument may be sent to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Attn: Jennifer Bastress Tahmasebi, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20525. CNCS informs people who may respond to this collection of information that they are not required to respond to the collection of information unless the OMB control number and expiration date displayed on page one are current and valid. (See 5 CFR 1320.5(b)(2)(i).)

Privacy Act Notice: The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C § 552a) requires that the following notice be provided to you: The information requested on the AmeriCorps Application Instructions is collected pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12581 - 12585 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended, and 42 U.S.C. § 4953 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 as amended. Purposes and Uses - The information requested is collected for the purposes of reviewing grant applications and granting funding requests. Routine Uses - Routine uses may include disclosure of the information to federal, state, or local agencies pursuant to lawfully authorized requests. In some programs, the information may also be provided to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to determine the existence of any prior criminal convictions. The information may also be provided to appropriate federal agencies and Department contractors that have a need to know the information for the purpose of assisting the Department's efforts to respond to a suspected or confirmed breach of the security or confidentiality or information maintained in this system of records, and the information disclosed is relevant and unnecessary for the assistance. Executive Summaries of all compliant applications received and applications of successful applicants will be published on the CNCS website as part of ongoing efforts to increase transparency in grantmaking. This is described in more detail in the *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity*. The information will not otherwise be disclosed to entities outside of AmeriCorps and CNCS without prior written permission. Effects of Nondisclosure - The information requested is mandatory in order to receive benefits.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act: Grant recipients will be required to report at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for recipients and subrecipients. Recipients must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 C.F.R. Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

Indirect Cost Rates: CNCS allows applicants to include administrative (indirect) costs in grant budgets. Based on qualifying factors, applicants have the option of using a federal or state approved indirect cost rate, a 10% de minimus rate of modified total direct costs, or may claim certain administrative costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR 200.413. Applicants who hold a state or federal negotiated indirect cost rate or will be using the 10% de minimus rate must enter that information in the Organization section in eGrants.

Universal Identifier: Applications must include a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with the Central Contractor's Registry (CCR). All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid registration, which must be renewed annually.

APPLICATION RESOURCES

Please use these application instructions if you are a new or re-competing applicant to CNCS.

If you are submitting a request for continuation to CNCS, please see the Continuation Instructions which begin on page 12.

Use these instructions in conjunction with the *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)*, and the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550. **The Notice includes deadlines, eligibility requirements, submission requirements, maximum amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY),¹ and other information that is specific to the grant competition.**

The AmeriCorps regulations include pertinent information (see Table 1, below). The *Notice* can be found at http://www.americorps.org/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp. The full regulations are available online at www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr.

Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Topics	Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations
Member Service Activities	§2520.20 - §2520.55
Prohibited Activities	§2520.65
Tutoring Programs	§2522.900-2522.950
Matching Funds	§2521.35-2521.90
Member Benefits	§2522.240-2522.250
Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	§2522.485
Performance Measures	§2522.500-2522.650
Evaluation	§2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740
Selection Criteria and Selection Process	§2522.400-2522.475

If there is any inconsistency between the AmeriCorps regulations, the *Notice*, and the Application Instructions, the order of precedence is as follows:

1. AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550 take precedence over the
2. Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity/Notice of Federal Funding Availability which takes precedence over the
3. Application Instructions



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AMERICORPS IN NEBRASKA

ServeNebraska mobilizes Nebraskans to strengthen their communities through volunteering, collaboration, and national service programs. ServeNebraska is committed to uniting individuals in service to their communities and achieving demonstrable results by funding AmeriCorps programs that address Nebraska's unmet educational, economic, environmental, health, veterans and disaster response needs. This Request for Applications (RFA) is being released for new and re-competing applications for AmeriCorps programming operating exclusively within the state of Nebraska.

ServeNebraska encourages organizations to consider or submit AmeriCorps Education Award Only Program applications. Funding for Education Award Only programs assures federal support for the educational awards of enrolled members, but provides very limited operational support -- \$800 per full-time member. Grantees must use their own or other resources to cover any AmeriCorps member living allowances and other program costs. Applicants interested in submitting an Education Award Only Program application or incorporating Education Award Only positions into your program design should contact ServeNebraska Executive Director Cathy Plager at 402-471-6227 or e-mail her at: cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov for consultation and special technical assistance.

ServeNebraska administers AmeriCorps programming and funds in Nebraska as required and governed by federal and state law rules and regulations. Nebraskans have a solid history of providing innovative national service programming. AmeriCorps members, and the volunteers they have recruited, have provided thousands of hours in service aiding children, youth, and families in communities throughout the state. It is exciting that you are interested in building on this legacy.

ServeNebraska strongly recommends that potential applicants thoroughly read and understand this Request for Applications (RFA) prior to writing a response.

ServeNebraska is committed to providing the most helpful and current information to all applicants. A list of all questions posed by potential applicants and the answers to these questions will be posted on www.serve.nebraska.gov

Applicants must carefully put together a proposal that will meet the demands of a potentially strong national competition and to consider creative and innovative collaborations. ServeNebraska also encourages applicants to carefully identify ways these activities can be supported with local resources by reaching out to new partners and introducing visionary service methods should Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) funding be reduced or eliminated.

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEBRASKA COMPETITIVE AMERICORPS PROGRAMMING

Applications for AmeriCorps program funding are subject to review by ServeNebraska and, if funded, programs are subject to ServeNebraska oversight.

ServeNebraska is very interested in supporting a diversity of programs, including those that provide geographic breadth across our state. Central and western regions of the state have traditionally been underrepresented in Nebraska's portfolio of AmeriCorps programs. To address this, geographic representation in Central and Western frontier and rural Nebraska will be a factor in the review and selection of grantees to be recommended to CNCS for funding.

All applications must be submitted via eGrants, the online grants management system operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) accessible at: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>. Details on creating an eGrants account are included in this Request for Applications.

In utilizing eGrants, ServeNebraska requires only applicants invited to respond to this RFA for 2016-2017 support to submit their grants as “Competitive” applications. Following ServeNebraska’s review process, a decision will be made as to which applications to forward to the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) for Competitive funding consideration. The remaining applications and those applications not selected by CNCS for Competitive funding will be considered for state Formula funds if such funds are appropriated. Depending upon the availability of funds, there will be an opportunity in the spring of 2016 for organizations to submit applications for Formula funding consideration. ServeNebraska will promptly notify applicants of necessary revisions and resubmission that may be needed during the funding process. The distinction between Competitive and Formula funding is provided below:

- **Competitive** funds are allocated at the national level to support innovative and exceptional programming. Established larger multi-site programs and initiatives with sophisticated, well-developed program designs tend to compete well for this pool of funds. All applications received are reviewed and ranked at the state level. Applications for Competitive funding consideration are forwarded with ServeNebraska recommendations to compete against applications put forth by state commissions in other states and with multi-state proposals. The Corporation for National and Community Service makes final decisions on Competitive grant funding.
- **Formula** funds are allocated exclusively at the state level to support outstanding programming. Newer and smaller scale programs tend to be supported with Formula funds. Successful applicants are funded based on the decision of the Commission grant review team with approval by the full Commission. The amount of Formula funds available annually to each state is partially determined through a population-based formula devised by the Corporation for National & Community Service.

The following **Key Factors** should be considered in crafting your application:

- Read this Request for Applications fully and carefully before beginning work on your application.
- All applicants must include a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with SAM, the Federal government’s System for Awards Management. Completing these requirements early is advised.
- CNCS will award-competitive funding to programs that consist of teams of ***no fewer than twenty AmeriCorps members***.
- ServeNebraska encourages applicants to use program models that engage AmeriCorps members serving a quarter-time or larger service positions. Unless using a program model that includes summer programming.
- Applicants for multi-site programs operating exclusively in Nebraska must secure and submit a signed ***Host Site Application*** from each known host site with their response to this Request for

Applications. Host Sites are entities seeking to partner with an applicant and utilize the resources of at least one AmeriCorps member. Internal Departments, Programs, and Divisions of Lead Agencies that utilize AmeriCorps members are considered Host Sites for the purpose of this application. Host sites will need to parallel the focus area of the lead agency.

- The Serve America Act authorizes ***fixed-amount grants***. For 2016-2017, these fixed-amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members only. Fixed-amount grants allow programs to apply for a fixed dollar amount per member. The fixed amount awarded per member is significantly less than the cost of running an AmeriCorps program and the applicant must raise the additional revenue necessary to operate the program. If you are interested in submitting a fixed-amount grant, please contact Cathy Plager at 402-471-6249 or cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov
- ***There is a match requirement for federal funds for cost reimbursement grants.*** The match requirement varies based on the longevity of the grant and can be met through any combination of cash and/or in-kind resources. Minimum grantee share is 24%. Starting in Year 4 of program funding, overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually to 50% by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter. Please contact Janet Schmidt, ServeNebraska Fiscal / Operations Officer at janet.schmidt@nebraska.gov or 402-471-6212 to verify what match ratio applies to your project.
- ***No applicants may exceed the cost per member service year (MSY) of \$13,730 for cost reimbursement grants. The maximum cost per MSY for fixed grant applicants is \$13,430.*** This is the maximum amount of federal funds that may be requested. The total amount of funds available for a project can be determined by multiplying \$13,730 times the number of full-time member positions proposed. Actual MSY costs for current grantees may be examined and considered during the grant review process.
- ***The minimum living allowance for full-time AmeriCorps members is \$12,530*** for 2016-2017. There is no minimum living allowance for any less-full-time positions.
- ServeNebraska is electing to retain a 2% share of the 5% of federal dollars available budgeted for Administrative costs. Please review the calculation and process outlined in keeping with procedures outlined in the Detailed Budget Instructions within the ATTACHMENTS for this funding opportunity. All applicants are required to budget the maximum allowable federal resources for Administrative/ Indirect costs.
- ServeNebraska anticipates hosting two signature events to promote the professional development of AmeriCorps members within Nebraska during the 2016-2017 program year – the ServeNebraska AmeriCorps Conference to be held in the fall and the ServeNebraska Symposium: Celebration of Service to be held in the spring. Budget or identify resources to ensure all projected AmeriCorps members and staff are able to attend these events which will be held in Lincoln.
- Child Care is a benefit for income eligible AmeriCorps members. Funding of child care for AmeriCorps members is provided directly from the Corporation for National & Community Service and is not included as a budgeted expense through this RFA. Eligibility standards that members must meet can be found in the Nebraska Child Care Development Plan for 2014-15 at: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/ChildCareDevelopmentFundPlan.pdf>

- The Educational Award earned by AmeriCorps members is awarded subsequent to service by the National Service Trust and should not be included as a budgeted expense through this RFA.
- **The application cannot exceed 15** pages for the Narratives, including the Executive Summary and SF 424 Facesheet. This page limit does not include the budget, performance measures, evaluation plan or *required* supplementary materials (e.g., letters of commitment, organizational chart, and logic model worksheet).
- Required attachments that must be emailed with the subject line: **Your Organization Name & Application I.D. Number** to Cathy Plager at cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov by the due date include:
 - ❖ Logic Model
 - ❖ Organization Chart
 - ❖ Letters of Commitment from most significant community partners
 - ❖ Host Site Applications (if applicable)
 - ❖ Evaluation or Evaluation plan (if applicable)
 - ❖ Labor Concurrence (if applicable)
 - ❖ Indirect Cost Rate Determination Letter (if applicable)

The Corporation for National & Community Service and ServeNebraska expect to announce 2016-2017 Competitive funding decisions by May 2016. Unless otherwise negotiated, 2016-2017 Nebraska Competitive AmeriCorps programming will begin September 1, 2016.

We are eager to partner with you in enhancing civic engagement and the quality of life in our state. Please contact Cathy Plager by email at cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov with questions as you develop your applications

Thank you for your interest and efforts.

OVERVIEW

Funding for AmeriCorps is provided by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. CNCS—through its AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

This AmeriCorps State and National opportunity will focus grant making for fiscal year 2015 in six focus areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families.

In order to maximize the impact of the public investment in national service, CNCS will provide grants to programs that demonstrate that they will engage AmeriCorps members in an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to providing a service intervention that will result in intended solutions to community problems (e.g., based on proposed program's performance and evaluation data or research demonstrating the effectiveness of a similar intervention). Applicants will be awarded points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change (logic model). Applicants shall provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge.

CNCS and ServeNebraska believe that all Americans should have opportunities to participate in national service, including those that have been traditionally underrepresented in national service, such as rural residents, people with disabilities, veterans and military families, Native Americans, and Opportunity Youth-- the one in six young people (ages 16-24) who are disconnected from school or work at least six months prior to service. CNCS and ServeNebraska recognize that service can create powerful pathways to education and employment for these populations, transforming their communities and creating broad economic benefit for the country.

CNCS and ServeNebraska remain committed to ensuring programs that recruit and retain underrepresented individuals are a substantial cohort of the national service network. Veterans, military families, and Opportunity Youth are included in Tier 1 of CNCS' funding priorities, and recruiting traditionally underrepresented populations into service is a strategic characteristic. Particular weight will be given to the percent of MSYs that an applicant intends to devote to opportunity youth.

CNCS and ServeNebraska require that programs co-brand as AmeriCorps programs and that their participants consistently identify, and are recognized, as AmeriCorps members providing value to the community. Applicants will be asked to provide their implementation plans to ensure that this occurs. As this is mandatory in the event that an applicant is awarded grant funds, no points will be allocated to this section.

Publication of this *Request for Applications* does not obligate CNCS or ServeNebraska to award any specific number of grants or to obligate the entire amount of funding available.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that members can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

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. See Section II and Glossary for more information. In addition to the funding allocated for competitive distribution under this *Notice*, CNCS provides funding based on the population directly to Governor-appointed State Service Commissions which they, in turn, award through a process they administer according to state priorities.

This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, the *Notice* Glossary, Application Instructions, and the Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. The documents can be found at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>.. The full regulations are now available online at www.ecfr.gov. The TTY number is 800-833-3722. For a printed copy of related material, please call 202-606-7508

A. Focus Areas

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

Economic Opportunity

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

Education

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

Environmental Stewardship

Grants will provide support for increased individual behavioral change leading to increased energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically

disadvantaged households and communities. Grant activities will decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems; and/or increase green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems.

Healthy Futures

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by CNCS-supported programs; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

Veterans and Military Families

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS-supported programs.

B. 2016 AmeriCorps Funding 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, specifically opportunity youth (see Glossary), both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members.
- Education -- improving student academic performance including STEM or addressing student and school needs through School Turnaround AmeriCorps programming (see Glossary and Appendix).
- Environment -- 21st Century Service Corps (see Glossary)
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives (see Glossary)
- Programing that supports My Brother's Keeper (see Glossary)
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure i.e. rural and other underserved communities. (see Glossary)
- Safer communities – activities that focus on public safety, preventing and mitigating civil unrest e.g., summer programming or engaging communities that are part of The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention.
- Elder Justice AmeriCorps (see Glossary)

In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding. **National Performance Measures**

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS' five-year Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious set of objectives that guided the development of 16 agency-wide Priority Performance Measures. CNCS expects organizations to use National Performance Measures as part of a 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. For more information, please refer to the National Performance

Measure Instructions at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measure-instructions> .

All applications must include one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary activity. ServeNebraska does not expect applicants to select performance measures to correspond to each and every potential member activity or community impact. ServeNebraska values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures. As described in these application instructions, applicants must include all their information about their proposed performance measures in the Performance Measure section of the application in eGrants (CNCS's web-based grants management system). All information requested in the National Performance Measures Instructions must be included in the text of the performance measure 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.

Program Authority

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), as amended. 42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq. The full text of the NCSA is available online at <http://uscode.house.gov>. The full regulations are available online at <http://ecfr.gov>.

CNCS's Fiscal year 2016 Congressional Budget Request includes a request for additional statutory authority to operate summer-based programs for disadvantaged Opportunity Youth who are 14 or older at the time they begin their national service.

C. Additional Program Models

Capacity Building

Grants also will provide support for capacity building activities provided by national service participants. As a general rule, CNCS considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CNCS-supported organizations to provide more, better, and sustained *direct services* in CNCS' six focus areas. Capacity building activities cannot be the primary focus of an application or solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization.

Examples of capacity building activities include recruiting and/or managing community volunteers; implementing effective volunteer management practices; completing 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.

Encore Programs

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

Next Gen AmeriCorps

Depending on overall funding available, CNCS is inviting applicants to propose the Next Generation AmeriCorps or Next Gen AmeriCorps. The importance of service remains even with tight fiscal

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

Professional Corps

Professional Corps programs recruit and place qualified members in positions as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of the program costs. Professional Corps members' salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the corps seeks to place members. These grants can either be fixed amount or cost reimbursement grants. Contact Cathy Plager at cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov before initiating your application if you intend to pursue a Professional Corps model.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Funding Available

CNCS expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps FY 2016 grant competition. The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations, which have not yet been made. Grant awards have two components: operating funds and AmeriCorps member positions. Grant award amounts vary – both in the level of operating funds and in the type and amount of AmeriCorps Member positions.

C. Award Period

Unless otherwise specified, the grant generally covers a three-year project period. In approving a multi-year project period, CNCS generally makes an initial award for the first year of operation. In most cases, the application is submitted with a one-year budget. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds. CNCS reserves the right to adjust the amount of a grant or elect not to continue funding for subsequent years.

D. Project/Award Period

The project start date is proposed by the applicant and is generally one 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.

E. Types of Grants

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

Types of Grants - General Summary

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

*CNCS’ assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non-CNCS funds and will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if applicants are able to demonstrate in their narratives and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources.

III. ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligible to apply

The following entities are eligible to apply: public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Indian

Tribes. Receiving funding previously from CNCS or another Federal agency is not a prerequisite to applying under this *Notice*.

In addition to being eligible to apply under this *Notice*, federally recognized Indian Tribes will also be eligible to apply under a separate Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for Indian Tribes for operating or planning grants released later in the fall with an application deadline of spring 2015.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *Notice*. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 501 (c)(4), that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

New Applicants

ServeNebraska encourages organizations that have never received funding from CNCS to apply. The general practice is to award no more than 50 member positions (slots) and at least 20 member positions (slots) to organizations receiving an AmeriCorps grant for the first time.

New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP), but not eligible to apply for Full-Time Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement 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. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants may not apply for Full-Time Fixed Amount grants.

Continuation applicants

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

Type of Applicants

Single-State Applicants

Organizations that propose to operate in only one state must apply through the Governor-appointed State or Territory Commissions. Each state and territory administers its own selection process and submits to CNCS the applicants it selects to compete for funding. State applicants must contact their State Commissions to learn about their state or territory processes and deadlines which may be significantly earlier than CNCS deadlines and may have additional requirements. The list of State and Territory Commissions can be found here: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. A single-state application submitted directly to CNCS by the applicant and not to ServeNebraska will be considered noncompliant and will not be reviewed.

National Direct Applicants

Multi-state: Organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one state or territory apply directly to CNCS.

Federally-recognized Indian Tribes: An Indian Tribe is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, Regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and services provided

under federal law to Indians because of their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

Territories without Commissions: Applicants in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands apply directly to CNCS because these Territories have not established a State Commission.

B. Match Requirements

Fixed Amount Grants and Education Award Program Grants

There is no specific match requirement for Fixed Amount and Education Award Program and AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge 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 CFR §2521.60.

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

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

Alternative Match

Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35 percent instead of 50 percent as specified in the regulations at 45 CFR §2521.60(b). To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the Application Instructions. Applicants that plan to request an alternative match schedule must submit a request by December 10, 2015. State programs submit requests for alternative match to the State Commission and State Commissions submit the requests on behalf of their state applicants. For questions concerning match requirements contact Janet Schmidt at janet.schmidt@nebraska.gov.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

- 1. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)** Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. All applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM).

DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, we suggest registering at

least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number register with SAM at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

2. SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM.
3. **Content and Form of Application Submission - What are the steps that organizations need to take to apply?**
 - Apply directly through State Commission, ServeNebraska
 - Submit a request for an alternative match schedule, if applicable
 - Submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the deadline of November 30, 2015
 - Obtain a DUNS number if this is your first grant application
 - Establish an eGrants account if you do not have one by going to this link: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>
 - Coordinate with State Commission, ServeNebraska, for the location where proposed grant activities will occur
 - Write a high quality application responsive to the *Competitive Request for Applications*
 - Provide required supplemental materials via email, if applicable
 - Submit the application via eGrants by the deadline of December 10, 2015

Coordination among ServeNebraska and National Direct Applicants

ServeNebraska expects National Direct applicants to consult and coordinate activities at the local level, as specified in Section 131 of the NCSA (42 U.S.C. § 12583). This consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination. ServeNebraska has a consultation form available on their website at: <http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/amicorps/amicorps.htm>.

How to Submit an Application in eGrants

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the CNCS web-based system, eGrants. New applicants need to establish an eGrants account by accessing this link:

<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> and selecting “Don’t have an eGrants account?”

Because it is a unique system, it is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process *at least three weeks* before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document and copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields no later than 10 days before the deadline. Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants.

Contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/> to ask for assistance if a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants.

National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. If you contact the Hotline, be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying.

If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If

the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

If extenuating circumstances make the use of e-Grants impossible, applicants may submit a hard copy of the application and include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via e-Grants to the address provided by the grant application deadline of December 10, 2015.

An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the application due date. 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 AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov. Emails should include in the Subject line, the applicant organization name and Application ID number.

Application Fields and Page Limits

In eGrants, applicants will enter text in the following fields:

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

Applications may not exceed **15 pages** for the Narratives (16 pages for Multi-State applications with more than five operating sites, **18 pages** for Multi-Focus Intermediaries, School Turnaround, and Next Gen AmeriCorps applicants). Application content considered in determining page limit compliance includes the Executive Summary and SF 424 Face Sheet, and the Narrative Sections contained in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy as the pages print out from eGrants. CNCS will consider the number pages as the pages print out from eGrants when determining compliance for page limits. **CNCS strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the “Review and Submit” page prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit.** The application page limit does not include the narrative portion of the Evaluation Plan or the Logic Model, budget, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable.

The Logic Model may not exceed more than three pages when printed from the application.

Reviewers will not consider submitted material that is over the page limit in the printed report, even if eGrants allows an applicant to enter and submit text over the limit. This applies to both the application page limit and the Logic Model page limit. Do not submit other items not requested in the *Request for Applications* Instructions. CNCS will not review or return them.

Assessment Criteria

Each applicant must clearly describe a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant community problem. ServeNebraska urges applicants to submit high quality applications that carefully follow the guidance in this *Request for Applications*. The quality of an application will be an important factor in determining whether an organization will receive funding.

Threshold Issues

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. No applicant should submit an application with less than 20 member slots. If an applicant is

applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place AmeriCorps members serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals.

If an applicant is applying for a Full-Time Fixed Amount grant, the application should reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must clearly describe how the program will meet these requirements. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants must meet the threshold requirements outlined in the Glossary and Appendix.

New and re-competing applicants must submit an application with a minimum of 20 AmeriCorps members. Applications that have less than 20 members will be deemed noncompliant and will not be reviewed.

Application Fields

A. Executive Summary (Required – 0 percent)

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

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

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of *[Focus Area(s)]*. * The CNCS investment of *[\$[amount of request]* will be matched with *[\$[amount of projected match]*, *[\$[amount of local, state, and federal funds]* in public funding and *[\$[amount of non-governmental funds]* in private funding. *If the program is not operating in a CNCS' focus area, omit this sentence.

Fixed Amount grant applicants (EAP, Full-Time Fixed, and AmeriCorps Partnership Challenge) should list their Other Revenue (see Glossary) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program. CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications on www.nationalservice.gov in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

B. Program Design (50 percent)

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

1. Problem/Need (9 points)

- The community problem/need is clearly defined and aligns with the proposed intervention.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and has been well documented with relevant data.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model (17 points)

- The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.

- The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant’s theory of change. The 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 in the evidence section.
- The proposed outcomes represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem/need identified by the applicant.
- The applicant’s AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the state problem.

The logic model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem/need outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
 - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
 - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
 - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention).
 - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week.)
 - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level).
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served.) Identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

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

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

3. Evidence Base (8 points)

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

Applicants requesting consideration for the moderate and strong evidence levels should reference the Submission of Additional Documents section for guidance on the submission of evaluation studies.

All applicants must include as much detailed information as possible in the Evidence section of the application. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from two of the strongest and most relevant studies. 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 not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

All applicants must include a description of up to two research studies or evaluations in order to earn points, including the following information:

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

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 will be considered for a lower tier of evidence and related point values.

The five tiered evidence levels are:

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

Pre-preliminary evidence (1-2 points) means the applicant has demonstrated data collection experience testing or tracking at least one aspect of its logic model. For example, the applicant has collected systemic and accurate data on one or more of the following: the community need the proposed intervention will address, the program intervention’s activities and services delivered, participation in the intervention by the target population, and/or participant outcomes (for example, performance measurement data or a process evaluation assessing implementation of the intervention.)

The data collection process and results must be described fully and the applicant should explain the link between data collection and the relevant component(s) of its logic model. Evidence for the pre-preliminary tier should be described in the Evidence section of the application but does not require submission of supplemental documentation.

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

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

OR

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

OR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Notice Priority (3 points)

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2016 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined on page 3 and more fully described in the Glossary.
- The proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed on page 3 and in the Glossary.

5. Member Training (4 points)

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

6. Member Supervision (2 points)

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

7. Member Experience (3 points)

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences, including opportunities for reflection and connection to the broader National Service network.

- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.

8. 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.
- AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)

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

1. Organizational Background and Staffing (10 points)

- The organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- ServeNebraska strongly encourages programs to have dedicated staff appropriate to the size of the program responsible to operate the AmeriCorps program and manage members.
- The organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants effectively.
- The organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

As documentation of community support and commitment to the program; please procure, keep on file, but do not submit to CNCS, letter(s) from the applicant’s most significant community partner(s). The letter(s) should include what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant’s AmeriCorps members and what activities would not happen without the AmeriCorps members.

2. Compliance and Accountability (15 points)

- The applicant’s organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- The applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.
- The applicant organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).
- The AmeriCorps members service will not duplicate, displace, or supplant volunteers, staff and/or interns.

D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)

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

1. Cost Effectiveness (18 points)

- The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.*
- The budget aligns with the applicant’s narrative.*

- The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost. The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program. The applicant, if re-competing, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Glossary) than approved in previous grants, or provides a compelling rationale for the same or increased cost including why this increase could not be covered by the grantee share.

*Program costs not included in the formal budget, including for Fixed Price and Partnership Challenge grantees, must be described in this section in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess their sufficiency and alignment.

Having a low Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. New applicants that submit with a low cost per MSY and re-competing applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher priority for funding. Applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than in previous years must justify their requests. If an applicant requests above the maximum cost per MSY (see Section 5.C.), 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 assess how each line item is calculated.
 - Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
 - Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.

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

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

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

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the Evaluation Plan field since it pertains only to re-competing grantees. If the applicant is re-competing for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of “re-competing” below) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. If the applicant is re-competing for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report via email to AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov by the application deadline, as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. Evaluation plans submitted outside of e-Grants will not be reviewed.

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

- A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation
- Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes
- 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

- Qualifications needed for the evaluator
- The estimated budget.

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

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

A program will be considered a re-competing application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” (see Glossary) and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan. Applicants should print out the plan to ensure the narrative does not exceed the character limits when entered in eGrants.

The Evaluation Plan field of eGrants does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit. Applicants should print out the plan to ensure the narrative does not exceed the character limits when entered in eGrants.

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 approaches can be found at:

https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.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 filed 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.

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

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online:

<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, CNCS suggests registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

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

4. Submission Dates and Times

Notice of Intent to Apply

Submission of a Notice of Intent to Apply is required to be eligible for this competition is due **Monday, November 30, 2015 by 5:00 p.m.** ServeNebraska will not consider applications eligible if the Notice of Intent to Apply is not received by the deadline.

Application Submission Deadline

Applications are **due Thursday, December 10, 2015 at 5:00 p.m.** to ServeNebraska. ServeNebraska will not consider applications received after this deadline. ServeNebraska reserves the right to extend the submission deadline and any notice of such extended deadline will be posted. This deadline applies to new, re-competing, and continuation applicants.

Late Applications

In cases where an applicant is unable to submit the application by the deadline, ServeNebraska may, at its discretion, consider an application received after the deadline; but only if the applicant submits a letter to

cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov explaining the extenuating circumstance that caused the delay. Applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit the application. Communication with ServeNebraska staff is not a substitution for the above protocol. The letter must be received no later than one business day after the application deadline. If the applicant experiences technical difficulties with eGrants that are unresolved, the correspondence must include the National Service Hotline ticket number. ServeNebraska will determine whether or not to accept a late application for review on a case-by-case basis.

If extenuating circumstances make the use of eGrants impossible, applicants may send a hard copy of the application and include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via eGrants to the address provided in Section G. Agency Contacts, via overnight carrier. All deadlines and requirements in these instructions apply to hard copy applications. ServeNebraska does not accept applications submitted via fax or email.

V. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

1. Member Living Allowance

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

Cost reimbursement programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply with the maximum limits in Table 1 below. For Cost Reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either CNCS or grantee share. (EXCEPTION: as noted in Section B.1. and B.3.)

Table 1: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance Service Term	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full-time	1700	\$12,530	\$25,060
One-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$13,265
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,950
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,635
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,420

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements to members (EXCEPTION: as noted in section B.2. and B.3.) Most Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to indicate that amount in the application and should request those positions as “without living allowance” in the budget.

1. Exceptions to the Living Allowance Requirements (for programs existing prior to September 21, 1993) If a program existed prior to September 21, 1993, a living allowance is not required. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement of \$12,530, but not the maximum requirement of \$25,060.

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

3. **Professional Corps Grantees** must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table above. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. School Turnaround AmeriCorps Continuation EAPs may exceed the maximum living allowance consistent with their existing grant terms.

B. Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

Maximum Costs per MSY are set forth in Table 2 below. The CNCS 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 amount an applicant may request from CNCS per MSY is determined on an annual basis. (See table 2)

New and re-competing State Commission subgrantees/applicants will be held to the maximum cost per MSY for their grant type.

Table 2: 2015 Maximum Cost per MSY Grant Program	Maximum
Individual Competitive State/Territory Program (cost reimbursement)	\$13,730
Multi-state (cost reimbursement)	\$13,730
Professional Corps Grant (Cost Reimbursement)	Up to \$1,000*
Professional Corps Fixed Amount Grant	Up to \$1,000*
Education Award Program Fixed Amount Grant	\$800
Education Award Program Partnership Challenge Grant **	\$0
Fulltime Fixed Amount Grant	\$13,430
State/Territory Commission Formula Prime	\$18,000
Individual State/Territory Formula Program	\$20,000
State/Territory Commission Average (of all its subgrants)	\$13,730

*CNCS’ assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider 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 CNCS resources.

****Partnership Challenge applicants should apply as an EAP program in e-Grants, but will request \$0 cost per MSY.**

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

C. Amount of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FY 2016

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

Table 3: Term of Service and FY15 Education Award	Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	FY15 Education Award
	Full Time	1700	\$5,775.00
	One-Year Half Time	900	\$2,887.50
	Reduced Half Time	675	\$2,199.92
	Quarter Time	450	\$1,527.45
	Minimum Time	300	\$1,221.96

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Selection Criteria

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. CNCS will engage external reviewers to provide insight and input with respect to eligible applications. In addition, CNCS staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and selection factors described in this *Request for Applications*.

Specifically, the review and selection process will:

A. Identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- High alignment with narrative assessment criteria
- High alignment with priorities outlined in the *RFA*, including priority-specific requirements as detailed in the Glossary
- Relative risk and opportunity

B. Consider:

- State/Territory Commission rank and recommendations on state applicants
- State/Territory Commission input on National Direct applications, except federally-recognized Indian Tribes

C. Yield a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:

- Meaningful representation of
 - Geographic diversity
 - Rural communities (see definition in Glossary)
 - Small and medium programs
 - Single and multi-state programs
 - Faith- and community-based organizations

D. Focus area representation

2. Review and Selection Process

A. ServeNebraska Staff Review

1. **Compliance Review:** ServeNebraska staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to Staff Review, an applicant must satisfy all of the application requirements.
 - Submit a notice of Intent to Apply by the deadline of November 30, 2015
 - Submit an application and all required additional documents by the application submission deadline of December 10, 2015
 - Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and additional documents and follows the instructions provided in this *Request for Applications*
 - Submit an application with a minimum of twenty AmeriCorps members.
2. **Recommendation for Competitive AmeriCorps funding consideration:** Utilizing Staff reviews and past performance information for applicants which have previously operated AmeriCorps programming, ServeNebraska will develop a ranked listing of programs to be forwarded on to CNCS for Competitive AmeriCorps consideration. All submitted applications will not necessarily be forwarded for CNCS Competitive AmeriCorps consideration.

Applications not forwarded for CNCS Competitive AmeriCorps consideration – and applications forwarded for CNCS Competitive AmeriCorps consideration and not funded – will be considered subsequently for ServeNebraska Formula AmeriCorps funding depending upon funding availability.

B. Phase One Review

There are three components to Phase One:

- 1) An assessment of the applicant's past performance for the same program model (if applicable),
- 2) A review of Theory of Change and Logic Model portion of the application narrative, and
- 3) A review of the Evidence Base portion of the Application. Each application will be read by several CNCS staff.

ServeNebraska staff will assess their re-competing subgrantees' past performance and submit those assessments to CNCS. CNCS will assess its re-competing direct grantees related to past performance. This assessment is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this assessment will inform funding decisions. In evaluating programmatic performance, CNCS will consider the following for applicants that are current formula and competitive grantees and are submitting applications for the same program model:

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

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

C. Selection of Applications for Phase Two Review

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

D. Phase Two Review

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

E. Financial and Risk Assessment Evaluation

CNCS staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award. In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following:

- 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 45 CFR § 2522.140; and
- The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

F. Selection for Funding

Applicants that do not advance to Phase Two will not be selected for funding. The CEO will select the final portfolio, based on staff recommendations on the quality of response (including clarification

responses) against the criteria, programmatic and financial risk assessments, external review input, *Notice*'s priorities and strategic considerations.

G. Feedback to Applicants

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

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

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>

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

3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition depending on the availability of appropriations. CNCS expects that successful State and Territory Commissions and National Directs will be notified **no later than May 8, 2015**, contingent on timely full year appropriations.

VII. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

Applicants will be notified via email as to funding decisions. This notification is not an authorization to begin grant activities. The Subgrant Award Agreement signed by the Executive Director of ServeNebraska is the authorizing document for grant activities.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements - Documents that Govern the Grant

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

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

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

Use of Material

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, CNCS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so. 45 CFR § 2543.36; 2541.30

3. Reporting

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

Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide mid-year and end of year progress reports and an internal or external evaluation report. All grantees, including Fixed Amount grantees, submit quarterly financial reports to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Payment Management System.

If you receive an award directly from CNCS, you will be required to report at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000 and may be required to report on executive compensation for your organization and for your subgrantees. You must have the necessary systems in place to collect and report this information. See 2 CFR. Part 170 for more information and to determine how these requirements apply.

While applications will not be evaluated on these criteria, grantees will be expected to have data collection and data management policies and practices that provide reasonable assurance that they are providing ServeNebraska 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 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.
- The data measures what it intends to measure.

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).

Re-Focusing of Funding

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

VIII. CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

1. Submitting in eGrants

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the CNCS web-based system, eGrants. New applicants need to establish an eGrants account by accessing this link:

<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> and selecting "Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account." Because it is a unique system, it is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the eGrants application creation process at least three weeks before the deadline.

Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document, then copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields no later than 10 days before the deadline. Please note the length of a document in your word processing software likely will be different than what will appear in eGrants.

In eGrants, before Starting Section I you will need to:

- Start a new Grant Application
- Select a Program Area (AmeriCorps)
- Select a NOFA

Your application consists of the following components. Make sure to complete each section.

- Applicant Info
- Application Info
- Narratives
- Performance Measures
- Documents
- Budget
- Review, Authorize, and Submit

Contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask> if a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants. National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying. If technical issues will prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the application due date. Incomplete applications will not be considered. All additional required documents that are not possible to attach in eGrants are due by the application deadline. See below for a list of required documentation. All documents should be attached to an email and sent to Cathy Plager at cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov. Your email subject should include your organization name and Application ID number.

Required Additional Documents:

- Logic Model Worksheet
- Organizational Chart
- Letters of Commitment from most significant community partners
- Host Site Applications (if applicable)
-

IX. APPLICANT & APPLICATION INFO GUIDANCE

- A. Applicant Info:** Information entered in the Applicant Info, Application Info, and Budget sections will populate the SF 424 Face sheet.
- If you are applying for the first time and have never had an AmeriCorps State or National grant, select **New**.

- If you are a previous Grantee that has been funded through state formula grants and/or were an unsuccessful re-compete applicant in previous years, select **Previous**.

Enter or update the requested information in the fields that appear. The contact person needs to be the person who can answer questions about the application.

B. Application Info: In the Application Info Section enter:

- Areas affected by your proposed program. Please include the two-letter abbreviation with both letters capitalized for each state where you plan to operate. Separate each two-letter state abbreviation with a comma. For city or county information, please follow each one with the two-letter capitalized state abbreviation.
- Requested project period start and end dates. The length of the project period is specified in the *Request for Applications*.
- Enter Funding Type.
- State Application Identifier: Enter N/A.
 - The Application is Subject to Review by State Executive Order 12372 Process: This is pre-filled as “No, this is not applicable.”
- Indicate Yes or No if you are delinquent on any federal debt. If yes, send explanation
- Leave the box for “Program Initiative” blank unless otherwise noted in the *RFA*

In the Funding/Demographics Section enter:

- Other Revenue funds. Enter the amount of funds that your program uses to run the program that are not identified as CNCS share or grantee share (match). Note: Programs should not enter the total operating budget for their organization unless the entire operating budget supports the AmeriCorps program. Programs that have additional revenue sources not included in the matching funds section of the budget should provide the amount of this additional revenue that supports the program. This amount should not include the CNCS or grantee share amounts in the budget. Fixed amount grantees should enter all non-CNCS funds that support the program in this field. All fixed grants will have other revenue.
- Number of Episodic Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members. Please enter the number of volunteers that will be participating in one day service projects that the proposed AmeriCorps members will generate.
- Number of Ongoing Volunteers Generated by AmeriCorps members. Please enter the number of volunteers that have an ongoing volunteer commitment that the proposed AmeriCorps members will generate.
- Percentage of MSYs who are opportunity youth, if any
- Number of reported in performance measure O15 who are opportunity youth
- Number of reported in performance measure O17 who are opportunity youth

General Information: select either Yes or No from the drop down menu

- My organization has received an AmeriCorps State and National Grant. Organizations that have been a host site for AmeriCorps members but never had a direct grant relationship with either a State Commission or CNCS should answer No.
- Opt in to the National Service Registry. Applicants wishing to make information from their application to potential private sector funders can opt in during the application process.

2016 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

Check any priority area(s) that apply to the proposed program. In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus, high quality program design, and outcomes.

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity – especially opportunity youth
- Education - improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics (STEM) or addressing student and school need through School Turnaround AmeriCorps programming (see Glossary and Appendix)
- Environment – 21st Century Service corps
- Veterans and Military Families
- Governor and Mayor Initiative
- Programming that supports My Brother's Keeper
- Multi-focus Intermediary
- Safer Communities
- Next Generation AmeriCorps School Turnaround
- Elder Justice AmeriCorps
- No NOFO priority area

Populations Served

Check the appropriate box (es) to identify the populations the proposed program will serve. If you do not plan to serve any of the listed populations, select "None of the above."

- Individuals who are homeless.
- Adult ESL participants.
- Youth ESL participants.
- Disadvantaged youth (K-12).
- Head Start participants.
- Immigrants and refugees.
- Individuals receiving hospice or other care for terminal illness.
- Individuals receiving mental health services.
- Individuals receiving substance abuse services.
- Individuals with HIV/AIDS.
- Individuals with physical or developmental disabilities.
- Senior Citizens
- Victims/Survivors of violence and abuse.
- Veterans.
- Veteran family members
- Caregivers.
- None of the Above

Grant Characteristics

Check any grant characteristics that apply to the proposed program:

- Encore Program
- Faith based organizations
- Community-based organizations,
- SIG/Priority Schools
- Professional Corps
- STEM Program
- Geographic Focus – Urban
- Geographic Focus – Rural
- None of the the above grant characteristics

Applicants must check the relevant boxes in order to be considered for CNCS' assessment of the strategic considerations and Special Initiatives.

Grant Characteristics:

- AmeriCorps member Population – Communities of Color
- AmeriCorps member Population – Low-income individuals
- AmeriCorps member Population – Native Americans
- AmeriCorps member Population – New Americans
- AmeriCorps member Population – Older Americans
- AmeriCorps member Population – People with Disabilities
- AmeriCorps member Population – Rural Residents
- AmeriCorps member Population – Veterans, Active Military, or their Families
- AmeriCorps member Population – Economically disadvantaged young adults/Opportunity Youth
- AmeriCorps member Population – None of the above categories

AmeriCorps Identity/Co-branding Questions. Check all that apply.

In the Multi-State Operating Section (For applicants that are operating in more than one state):

- Please fill in the following information for your operating sites: organization name, address, city, and state, zip code + 0000 (eGrants will correct the last four digits to the correct numbers), amount of funding going to the operating site, number of proposed AmeriCorps members that will be located at the site.

C. NARRATIVE GUIDANCE

The narrative section of the application is your opportunity to convince reviewers that your project meets the selection criteria as outlined in the *Notice*. Below are some general recommendations to help you present your project in a way the reviewers will find compelling and persuasive.

- **Lead from your program strengths and be explicit.** Do not make the mistake of trying to stretch your proposed program description to fit each funding priority and special consideration articulated in the regulations or the *RFA*.
- **Be clear and succinct.** Reviewers are not interested in jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. They are interested in learning precisely what you intend to do, and how your project responds to the selection criteria presented below.
- **Avoid circular reasoning.** The problem you describe should not be defined as the lack of the solution you are proposing.
- **Explain how.** Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
- **Don't make assumptions.** Even if you have received funding from CNCS in the past, do not assume your reviewers know anything about you, your proposed program, your partners, or your beneficiaries. Avoid overuse of acronyms.
- **Use an impartial proofreader.** Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the project narrative.
- **Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order they are presented in the instructions.** Use headings to differentiate narrative sections by criterion.

X. BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

Use the Budget Instructions and Budget Worksheets included in the ATTACHMENTS to prepare your budget.

A. Match Requirements

Program requirements, including requirements on match are located in the AmeriCorps regulations and summarized below.

Match Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Grant Type	Match Requirement
Cost Reimbursement including Professional Corps, States and Territories without Commissions, Indian Tribes	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 Funding to 50% by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter.
EAP Fixed-amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost in the RFA provided by ServeNebraska.
Professional Corps Fixed-amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost in the RFA provided by ServeNebraska.
Stipended Fixed-amount Grants	There are no specific match requirements for full-time Fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the cost in the RFA provided by ServeNebraska.

- Grantees are required to meet an overall matching rate that increases over time. You have the flexibility to meet the overall match requirements in any of the three budget areas, as long as the minimum match of 24% for the first three years, and the increasing minimums in years thereafter, are maintained. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.35–2521.90 for the specific regulations.
- If you are applying for the first time, you must match with cash or in-kind contributions at least 24% of the project’s total Operating Costs (Section I) plus Member Costs (Section II) plus Administrative Costs (Section III). If you are re-competing, please see 45 CFR §§ 2521.40-2521.95 for the match schedule.
- The acceptable sources of matching funds are federal, state, local, private sector, and/or other funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements.
- In Section III of the budget, enter a brief description of the source of match. Identify each match source separately. Include dollar amount, the match classification (cash, in-kind, or Not Available) and the source type (Private, State/Local, Federal, Other or Not Available). Define all acronyms the first time they are used.
- See Attachment I for instructions for applying for the Alternative Match Schedule.

Note: The CNCS legislation permits the use of non-CNCS federal funds as match for the grantee share of the budget. Please discuss your intention of using federal funds to match an AmeriCorps grant with the other agency prior to submitting your application. Section 121(e)(5) of the National Community Service Act requires that grantees that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to ServeNebraska. If you use other federal funds as match, you must ensure you can meet the requirements and purposes of both grants. ServeNebraska’s Federal Financial Report (FFR) will be used to collect the federal match data.

B. Preparing Your Budget

Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your narrative. Reviewers will consider the information you provide in this section in their assessment of the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy selection criterion.

Follow the detailed budget instructions in Attachment E to prepare your budget. We recommend that you prepare your budget in the same order as indicated in the Budget Worksheets in the ATTACHMENTS.

As you enter your detailed budget information, eGrants will automatically populate a budget summary and budget narrative report. Prior to submission be sure to review the budget checklist (ATTACHMENTS) to ensure your budget is compliant. In addition, eGrants will perform a limited compliance check to validate the budget. If it finds any compliance issues, you will receive a warning and/or error messages. You must resolve all errors before you can submit your budget.

As you prepare your budget:

- All the amounts you request must be defined for a particular purpose. Do not include miscellaneous, contingency, or other undefined budget amounts.
- Itemize each cost and present the basis for all calculations in the form of an equation.
- Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an activity.
- Do not include fractional amounts (cents).

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and the requirements of the Omni Circular. Please refer to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200) for allowable, allocable, and reasonable cost information, as well as, audit requirements, including the need to provide audits to the Clearinghouse if expending over \$750,000 in federal funds as required in the Omni Circular. The OMB Omni Circular can be found on-line at www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars.

XI. REVIEW, AUTHORIZE, AND SUBMIT

eGrants requires that you review and verify your entire application before submitting, by completing the following sections in eGrants:

- Review
- Authorize
- Assurances
- Certifications
- Verify
- Submit

Read the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications carefully (Attachment L). The person who authorizes the application must be the applicant's Authorized Representative or his/her designee and must have an active eGrants account to sign these documents electronically. An Authorized Representative is the person in your organization authorized to accept and commit funds on behalf of the organization. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

Be sure to check your entire application to ensure that there are no errors before submitting it. EGrants will also generate a list of errors if there are sections that need to be corrected prior to submission when you verify the application. If someone else is acting in the role of the applicant's authorized representative, that person must log into his/her eGrants account and proceed with Authorize and Submit. After signing off on the Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications, his/her name will override any previous signatory that may appear and show on the application as the Authorized Representative.

Note: *Anyone within your organization who will be entering information in the application at any point during application preparation and submission in the eGrants system must have their own eGrants account.* Individuals may establish an eGrants account by accessing this link: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> and selecting "Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account."

XII. DOCUMENTS

In addition to the application submitted in eGrants, you are required to provide your evaluation, labor union concurrence (if necessary – see B., below) a federally-approved indirect cost agreement (if applicable and as indicated in the *Notice*), other required documents listed in the *RFA* (if applicable), and an explanation of federal debt delinquency (if applicable) via the e-mail listed in the *RFA*, as part of your application. After you have submitted the documents, change their status in eGrants from the default "Not Sent" to the applicable status "Sent," "Not Applicable," or "Already on File at CNCS."

A. Required attachments

The following must be emailed to Cathy Plager at cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov by the due date include:

- Logic Model
- Organization Chart
- Letter of Commitment from Significant Partners
- Evaluation or Evaluation plan (if applicable)
- Labor Concurrence (if applicable)
- Indirect Cost Rate Determination Letter (if applicable)
- Letter of Support for Governor and Mayor initiative (if applicable)
- Tier 1 Education Letters of Support (if applicable)

A. Evaluation

Submit any completed evaluation plan or report as described in F., below. Select Evaluation and select "Sent" once you have submitted a completed evaluation plan or report. If an evaluation is required, you must submit a copy at the time of application even if you think CNCS may already have it on file.

B. Labor Union Concurrence

1. If a program applicant

- a) proposes to serve as the placement site for AmeriCorps members; and
 - b) Has employees engaged in the same or substantially similar work as that proposed to be carried out by AmeriCorps members; and
- 2) Those employees are represented by a local labor organization, then the application must include the written concurrence of the local labor organization representing those employees. Written concurrence can be in the form of a letter or e-mail from the local union leadership.

1. If a program applicant

- a) Proposes to place AmeriCorps members at sites where they will be engaged in the same or substantially similar work as employees represented by a local labor organization, then the applicant must submit a written description of how it will ensure that
 - i) AmeriCorps members won't be placed in positions that were recently occupied by paid staff.
 - ii) No AmeriCorps member will be placed into a position for which a recently resigned or discharged employee has recall rights as a result of a collective bargaining agreement, from which a recently resigned or discharged employee was removed as a result of a reduction in force, or from which a recently resigned/discharged employee is on leave or strike.

For the purposes of this section, "program applicant" includes any applicant to CNCS or a State Commission, as well as any entity applying for assistance or approved national service positions through a CNCS grantee or subgrantee.

If either 1) or 2) above applies to you, please select "Enter New," name the new document 1) "Labor Union Concurrence," or 2) "Displacement Assurance" and select "Sent."

C. Federally-approved Indirect Cost Agreement

Applicants applying that include a federally approved indirect cost rate amount in their budget must submit the approved indirect cost rate agreement to cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov at the same time they submit their application.

XIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions about budget or matching resources, contact:

Cathy Plager
Executive Director
ServeNebraska
cathleen.plager@nebraska.gov
(402) 471-6227

Janet Schmidt
Fiscal/Operations Officer
ServeNebraska
janet.schmidt@nebraska.gov
(402) 471-6212