NEW MEXICO COMMISSION FOR
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM

2018-2019 AmeriCorps Request for Proposals (COMPETITIVE POOL)
Written Response to Questions/Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

As of 12/5/2017--FINAL

CONTENTS

A. RFP CLARIFICATION/GENERAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

A1. When are applications due?

ALL APPLICATIONS (EGRANTS HARDCOPY, AND ELECTRONIC) MUST BE RECEIVED FOR REVIEW AND EVALUATION BY THE PROCUREMENT MANAGER OR DESIGNEE NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M. MOUNTAIN TIME ON DECEMBER 11, 2017.

Proposals received after this deadline will not be accepted. The date and time of receipt will be recorded on each proposal.

A2. What is an operating site?
An operating site is the organization that manages the AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps members may be placed at the operating site, or an operating site may place AmeriCorps members at multiple member service sites.

A3. What is a member service site?
A member service site is the location at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

A4. Which NOFO Application do I apply to?
To select your Prime:

1. Log in to eGrants with the username and password provided to you by eGrants.

2. At the bottom of the home page, click on **Start a New Application**
3. Select **AmeriCorps** for your program area
4. Select the following NOFO (*NOFO Due Dates-01/17/2018)
   - If you are applying as an **State Cost Reimbursement Program**:
     - *FY 2018 AmeriCorps State Commission (New and Continuations),*
   - If you are applying as an State **Full-Time Fixed-Amount Program**:
     - *FY 2018 AmeriCorps State Commission Fixed Amount (New and Continuations)*
   - If you are applying as a State **Education Award only Program (EAP)**
     - *FY 2018 AmeriCorps State and Terr Comm Fixed Amount, EAP*
5. The next page will prompt you to select the state in which you are applying, select **New Mexico**
6. Select the following Prime Application ID or State Application Identifier:
   - If you are applying as a **State Cost Reimbursement Program**:
     - 18AC199011
   - If you are applying as a **Fixed-Amount Program (and EAP)**:
     - 18ES199963

A5. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?

You must read the RFP, Notice of Funding Opportunity, NOFO Mandatory Supplemental Guidance and the Application Instructions for the competition you are interested in. The AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550 is also an important reference to understand the requirements of AmeriCorps programs. If you are considering National Performance Measures, you must read the appropriate National Performance Measures instructions.

A6. What are the page limits in eGrants?

Applications may not exceed 12 pages for the Narratives (15 pages for Rural Intermediaries), including the Executive Summary and SF 424 Facesheet, as the pages print out from eGrants. **NMCCV 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.** This limit does not include the narrative portion of the evaluation plan or the logic model (which can be no more than 3 pages), budget, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable, or the letter of learning (if applicable)..

The overall character limit in eGrants is greater than the 12 page limit (15 pages for Rural Intermediaries) listed in the NOFO, so print out the application before submission to check its length to make sure you adhere to the page limit requirements in the RFP and NOFO. Within the application format, some sections have character limits. For example, the evaluation plan section has a character limit of 10,000 (however, it is not counted towards the page limit of the narrative). If you are having trouble saving a section of content, try reducing its size to resolve the issue.

A7. Could you please clarify how you define "new" for the purpose of this application?

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

1. <u>What applicants can apply for Fixed Amount grants</u> - Organizations that have not previously received AmeriCorps funding or other CNCS funding with a cost-reimbursement budget are considered "new" and therefore are not eligible to receive Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

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

3. <u>Applicant Information</u> – In completing the SF424 worksheet and listing applicant information:
    - If you are applying for the first time, have only received formula funding in the past, or are a former grantee (non-formula) whose last AmeriCorps grant was received more than five years ago, select **New**
    - If you are applying for a different program model (a new project), select **New** (Current and previous grantees need to get approval from their program officer to be considered a new project; an application is "new" if the organization is proposing a project that addresses a different issue area, different priorities, and/or different objectives.)
    - If you were a previous state competitive grantee but your most recent funding was formula funding, select **New** (otherwise eGrants will assume you are applying to continue your formula grant)
    - If your previous funding was from a different grant type within CNCS (e.g. a former national direct applying for state funding; a former state grantee applying for national direct funding; a former cost-reimbursement grant applying for fixed funding), select **New**
    - If you are a current planning grantee applying for an implementation grant, select **New**

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

The intent is to draw a distinction between a <u>new organization</u> (an organization with no prior history of being funded by CNCS), a <u>new program</u> (a set of activities distinct from other sets of activities being or intended to be carried out by an organization), and a <u>new application</u> (a request for funding by a program).

A8. Is my eGrants access for this proposal the same as it has been for previous years?

Yes.

A9. Should we submit a bibliography/Works Cited section as part of our application?

You may if you choose to, but it would count as part of the narrative page limit, 12 pages or 15 pages for applicants seeking consideration as a Rural intermediary. Alternatively, you can use in-text citations.

A10. How should the Technical Proposal Binder be formatted?
- Includes one **(1)** original and five **(5)** identical hard copies, six **(6)** total proposal binders
- Includes six **(6)** electronic versions of the proposal (must mirror the hard copy submitted) on USB Thumb Drives each containing the entire Proposal
- Proposals are typewritten on standard 8 ½ x 11 inch paper (larger paper is permissible for charts, spreadsheets, etc.) and placed within **binders** with tabs delineating each section
- **Technical Proposal Binder:**
  a. **Signed Letter of Transmittal**-*Required-print and sign. See APPENDIX K*
  b. **Table of Contents**-*Required-print.*
  c. **Copy of Application as submitted through eGrants-**
     Required-print. To include entirety of eGrants application: Facesheet, Narrative, Evaluation Plan, Performance Measures, Logic Model, Budget, Budget Narrative, and Supplemental Materials as requested.
  d. **Response to Specifications-**
     Required-print. To include letters of support (if applicable), financial audit information, and all other information without an already designated section/tab, including additional documents.
  e. **Response to Contract Terms and Conditions-**
     Required-print. Provide a statement that your organization has read and agrees to terms.
  f. **Applicant's Additional Terms and Conditions**- *Provide if applicable. If not, state N/A.*
  g. **Signed Campaign Contribution Form**- *Required-print and sign. See APPENDIX B*
  h. **Signed Employee Health Coverage Form**- *Required-print and sign. See APPENDIX G*
  i. **Signed Affidavit pursuant to Governmental Conduct Act-**
     Print and sign if applicable. If not, state N/A. See APPENDIX F
  j. **Pay Equity Reporting**- *Required-print and sign. Link to Form below.*
  k. **Signed In-Kind Contribution and Donation Form**- *Required-print and sign. See APPENDIX I*
  l. **Signed Statement of Assurance**- *Required-print and sign.*

Within each section of the proposal, applicants should address the items in the order in which they appear in this RFP. All forms provided in this RFP must be thoroughly completed and included in the appropriate section of the proposal.

A11. Where can I find the Pay Equity Reporting Form/ Form PE10-249?

New Mexico State Purchasing Division Website which includes links to New Mexico Pay Equity Initiative information and current forms at:

http://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/statepurchasing/Pay_Equity.aspx

A12. Where can I find the Statement of Assurance Form?

Signed Statement of Assurance can be printed from eGrants, can also be found in Application Instructions.

A13. Can requested Financial Audit/Information be submitted electronically?

Yes, requested documentation can be submitted on the USBs that you provide with your Technical Support Binder.

A14. Are Letters of Support required for submission? In the NOFO it says that Letters of Support should be available upon request only.

Letters of Support are required to be submitted with the applicant's NMCCV application but not in eGrants. Please see the page limits as denoted in the RFP.

A15. Do you recommend that we include our letters of support if we are collaborating with several partners in our project?

Yes, see above. Additionally, see the specific requirements for required letters of support for applicants proposing a Capacity Building program, Priority Areas; Governor and Mayor initiatives, and rural/Rural intermediaries.

A16. Is there a limit to the amount of letters of support?

No, but we ask that you only submit letters of commitment or MOUs for the most important partners.

A17. Response to Specifications - what form or information goes behind this tab?

Response to Specifications are the applicant's response to information requested in the RFP. Applicants often list and collect requested items in this section that do not already have a designated tab assigned to them. As stated in the RFP, applicants should address the items in the order in which they appear in the RFP. See response to A15 for full outline of the Technical Proposal Binder.

A18. Audit - does it get put in the binder or just emailed? If in the binder, in what section?

Can be included in the binder or electronically on USBs.

A19. tab e - Response to Contract Terms and Conditions - what goes behind this tab - the sample contract? or just a statement that our organization agrees to the contract Terms and Conditions?

Please provide a statement that your organization has read and agrees to the contract Terms and Conditions.

A20. tab f - If the applicant proposes no additional terms and conditions, do we insert a page with n/a on it behind the tab?

Yes, please denote n/a.

A21. tab i - If the applicant management and any contractors have not been a current or former state employee, do we put a page with n/a behind this tab?

Yes, please denote n/a.

A22. tab n - Do we print out the assurance form from eGrants and manually sign it and put it here, not as part of tab c?

Yes, please print out and sign.

A23. How do we need to make changes to our application after submitting?

An applicant may submit an amended proposal before the deadline for receipt of proposals. Such amended proposals must be complete replacements for a previously submitted proposal and must be clearly identified as such in the transmittal letter. The Agency personnel will not merge, collate, or assemble proposal materials.

A24. We are interested in preparing an application for approximately 20 members in Year 1, but would like to increase this number to 30 in Year 2. How is that handled? Would the increase be part of the renewal application in the second year? Should explanations be part of the current year's narrative or is it not relevant to the current application?

Grantees may request additional funds or positions in Continuation applications for years 2 and/or 3. However, approval of such funding is not guaranteed and is subject to many factors including grantee performance, AmeriCorps funding availability, funding priorities, and funding decisions on New and Recompete applicants.

A25. I see that the RFP and the NOFO require a minimum of 20 members in the proposal, is there a particular slot type I am required to include in my application?

No, specific slot types are not required as this is dictated by the program design.

A26. Can a program implement multiple member service periods under the same application?

Yes. Applicants are allowed to apply to any slot type, or combination, this should be determined by the program design. Members can be enrolled in the program at any point, as long as those individuals have a reasonable amount of time to successfully complete their term of service.

A27. How do I determine if I should select "Continuation/Renewal" vs. "New" in the Applicant Info section of eGrants?

If you are recompeting (in the final year of a competitive funding cycle and applying for a new grant cycle), select Continuation/Renewal. If you are not a current grantee, but have received a competitive AmeriCorps grant in the past five years, select Continuation/Renewal. If you are applying for the first time, have only received formula funding in the past, or are a former grantee (non-formula) whose last AmeriCorps grant was recived more than five years ago, select New. If you a current planning grantee applying for an implementation grant, select New.

A.28. What is the difference between a Focus area and the Funding Priority area?

The 6 Focus Areas are used to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment on National Service and are delineated in the Serve America Act. The Funding Priority areas have been designated by the Corporation which is seeking to prioritize investments in those specific areas.

A.29. What is the difference between "leveraged volunteers", "reoccurring volunteer", and "episodic volunteers"?

Leveraged volunteers are volunteers recruited by the AmeriCorps members themselves, not necessarily as a result of the organization's sole efforts. Reoccurring volunteers are volunteers who are consistently looking for fulfilling volunteer activities on a consistent basis. Episodic volunteers are volunteers who look for fulfilling volunteer activities on an inconsistent basis.

A30. The Pay Equity Report PE10-249 Worksheet is password protected. How can I open it?

For more information on how to open, save, and fill out the Pay Equity Report PE10-249 see *PE10-249 Form Worksheet Instructions:* (*http://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/uploads/FileLinks/864df4748b2440569b3af8a95ce155d8/pe10249edefInstructions.pdf*)

A31. What are the definitions of a Multi-Focus Intermediary and a Rural intermediary, and what are the critical differences?

Multi-Focus Intermediaries were included as a Funding Priority in previous RFPs and were defined as "Multi-Focus Intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure, i.e. rural and other underserved communities." (pg 9, 2017-2018 Competitive RFP)

Rural Intermediaries are included as a Funding Priority in the current RFP # 18-631-7004-00028 and are defined as "organizations that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limed resources and organizational infrastructure". Please see the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance for specific information on "Rural Intermediaries" and "Rural Communities".

A32. Do new applicants need to include an evaluation plan?

No, Evaluation Plans are not required of new applicants. On page 27 of the RFP it states the following:

"If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition for "recompeting" below) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the "Evaluation Summary or Plan" section of the Narratives field in CNCS's web-based management system. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report and a learning memo as attachments (see the *Submission of Additional Documents* section for more information), and must also submit an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the "Evaluation Summary or Plan" field in the system."

A33. Do we need to submit 6 thumb drives? What information must be included on the thumb drives and how should it be organized?

Please see Pg 19 of the RFP for specific information on "How to Submit a Proposal Packet". It states the following in regards to the electronic copies: " Applicants shall deliver six (6) electronic versions of the proposal (must mirror the hard copy submitted) on the USB Thumb Drives each containing the entire Proposal. All Confidential Information must be readily separable on the electronic version and listed as a separate file."

B. AMERICORPS MEMBERS

B1. What is an AmeriCorps member?

An AmeriCorps member is an individual enrolled in and serving with an AmeriCorps program who commits to engage in a service for an intensive period of time. Some AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance to support them during their term of service, and upon successful completion of their service they receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

B2. What is the difference between an AmeriCorps member and a volunteer?
An AmeriCorps member is an individual serving in an approved national service position with an AmeriCorps program. An AmeriCorps member serves for a pre-determined term of service and is eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of service. AmeriCorps members are supervised by program staff and often receive a living allowance. Volunteers are not eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award, usually do not receive compensation and might not be required to provide consistent, sustained service. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members might serve side-by-side. In answering questions for the application, do not confuse "volunteers" with "AmeriCorps members".

B3. Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?
No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers. Also note that

AmeriCorps members "serve", they do not "work". They are "enrolled" in the program, they are not "hired".

B4. What are the living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members?
The living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members vary by grant type. Detailed information on the living allowance requirements can be found in the Request for Proposals and the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity. Additional information can also be found in the AmeriCorps Application Instructions. Also note that AmeriCorps members receive a "stipend", they do not "earn a wage".

B5. Does NMCCV or the Corporation recruit and train the AmeriCorps members?
No. While the Corporation has an online recruitment and placement system that AmeriCorps programs are strongly encouraged to use, each program is responsible for recruiting its own AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps programs are entirely responsible for providing training to AmeriCorps members. In your proposal you must describe how you will recruit, orient and train the AmeriCorps members you are requesting.

B6. Must an AmeriCorps member serve for a certain amount of time?
Yes. An AmeriCorps member may serve either a full-time term of service, which requires 1700 hours; or a part-time term, which can range from 300 hours to 900 hours. The AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, provides additional detail. In your application, you must specify the terms of service you are proposing for your AmeriCorps members.

B7. What is "cost per MSY"?
Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours). You calculate your cost per MSY by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if your application requests $10,000 in CNCS share and 10 MSYs, then your cost per MSY is $1,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Education Award a member may earn.

B8. Is there a maximum cost per MSY?
Yes. The maximum cost per MSY varies by grant program. Specific information about the maximum cost per MSY for each grant program can be found in the AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity. Additional information can also be found in the AmeriCorps Application Instructions and the RFP

C. AMERICORPS EDUCATION AWARD PROGRAMS

C1. What is an Education Award Program?
An Education Award Program (EAP) is an AmeriCorps program that receives minimal financial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service and has fewer fiscal reporting requirements. Because of the minimal financial support, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. For instance, the association with AmeriCorps might allow a program to recruit more service participants, to recruit a higher caliber of service participants, or serve more beneficiaries. Additional information can also be found in the AmeriCorps Application Instructions.

C2. What is the difference between the Education Award Program and other AmeriCorps grants?
The primary difference is that an Education Award Program grantee receives a small administrative grant – up to $800 per Member Service Year – but uses its own or other resources to cover AmeriCorps members' living allowance, if applicable, and other program costs.

C3. Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?
Yes, the maximum for EAP is $800 per MSY. For example, if you propose a program with 50 full-time members, the maximum amount of funds you may request is $40,000 (50 MSY multiplied by $800).

C4. Will I have to contribute match funds?
There is no mandated match requirement percentage, but you may only request up to $800 per Member Service Year. The grantee must secure all other resources needed to support the program.

C5. Is it correct that applicants applying only for an EAP grant should only complete the "enter source of matching funds" text box and enter the amount of members without an allowance into the budget?
The detailed budget instructions for Fixed Amount and EAP proposals, starting on page 31 of the Application Instructions, will allow you to fully calculate the MSY and the allowable costs associated with those MSY.

C6. The "enter source of matching funds" section in egrants only contains a text box and is not a table like displayed in the instructions. Is the same information that is displayed in the application instructions required in the egrants "enter source of matching funds" text box?
You will need to follow the budget instructions, as noted above. If you think there is a technical error you will need to contact the eGrants Help Desk at 1-800-942-2677.

D. AMERICORPS FULL-TIME FIXED-AMOUNT PROGRAMS

D1. What is a Full-time Fixed-amount Program?
These fixed-amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity only. Full-time Fixed-amount grants allow programs to apply for a fixed dollar amount of up to $13,430 per MSY. Applicants apply for a fixed amount per MSY and use their own or other resources for the remaining costs of the program. There is no match required for fixed-amount grants, but organizations must still raise the additional funds needed to run the program. Additional information can also be found in the AmeriCorps Application Instructions.

Full-time Fixed-amount grants are only available for recompeting applicants. Second- and third-year continuation applications must submit a new application if they are interested in a Full-time fixed-amount grant.

D2. What is the difference between the Full-time Fixed-amount Program and other AmeriCorps grants?
The primary difference is that a full-time fixed-amount grantee receives a grant that is significantly less than the true cost of managing an AmeriCorps program, up to $13,430 per Member Service Year – but uses its own or other resources to cover AmeriCorps members' living allowance, if applicable, and other program costs. Additionally, a program may only request Full-time (1700 hour) members or members serving in a full-time capacity.

Full-time fixed-amount programs are also reimbursed based on the retention of their members. For example, if you have a cost per MSY of $10,000 and lose a member after they have only served ¾ of their AmeriCorps hours (1,275 hours) then you will only receive ¾ of the cost per MSY for that member position ($7,500).

D3. Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?
Yes, the maximum is $13,430 per MSY. For example, if you propose a program with 50 full-time members, the maximum amount of funds you may request is $671,500 (50 MSY multiplied by $13,430).

D4. Will I have to contribute match funds?

There is no mandated match requirement percentage, but you may only request up to $13,430 in federal funds per Member Service Year, which is significantly less than the true cost of managing an AmeriCorps program. The grantee must secure all other resources needed to support the program.

E. AMERICORPS PROFESSIONAL CORPS PROGRAMS

E1. What is 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. 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 challenges to raising non CNCS resources.

E2. Who pays the member salaries?

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.

E3. What type of grant should I use to support Professional Corps members?

These grants can either be fixed amount or cost reimbursement grants. However, new applicants are not eligible to apply for fixed amount professional corps grants.

F. BUDGET

F1. What does Cost per MSY mean? How is it different from a member living allowance?

Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost to CNCS of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours). The cost per MSY is calculated by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if the application requests $10,000 in CNCS funds and 10 MSYs, then the cost per MSY is $1,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award a member may earn. Living allowance is an amount provided to members to assist with supporting them during service and is one of the line items in the budget.

F2. Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?

No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project, rather than general organizational expenses. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with grant funds. However, to a limited degree, you may capture indirect administrative costs related to your AmeriCorps program. The application instructions provide guidance on charging administrative costs to the grant.

F3. How do we determine our budget? How much/what percentage of the grantee match must be cash? What is the match requirement for living allowance?

The budget should be determined by you based on your organization's needs/resources and the structure of your proposed program. There is no required percentage for the portion of grantee match that must be cash. There is also no specific match requirement for living allowance; it may be covered by CNCS funds, non-federal cash match, or a combination of both. The Knowledge Network website has resources on how to put together a budget:

http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management/preparing-grant-budget-americorps-programs-ecourse

F4. What is the difference between a member living allowance and an employee salary/wage if both require FICA and tax payments?

The living allowance is paid by the grantee using federal grant funds, matching funds, or a combination of both. Unlike a wage, an AmeriCorps living allowance is paid in regular increments throughout the service term regardless of the number of hours served during a pay period. You also may find the opinion letter from the Department of Labor informative in relation to this question. It can be found on the CNCS Office of General Counsel resource page:

http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/guidance-from-office-general-counsel.

F5. Does the living allowance come from grantee match or CNCS funds?

It can come from either source. The specific guidance around balancing grantee funds versus CNCS funds is provided in the NOFO and the Application Instructions.

F6. If, during the contract period, my organization receives funding from other sources of funding will we need to report this to NMCCV/CNCS? Will this pose a serious conflict to our participation in AmeriCorps for future operations?

If you receive funding from a source that was NOT indicated in the "Source of Funds" section of the budget narrative, you are required to inform your program officer of the source and the amount. It will be up to the program to determine if the other funder allows their funds to be claimed as match against CNCS funds.

This may affect your ability to operate an AmeriCorps program in the future.

- If you bring on contractors, employees, or volunteers that would be doing the same thing as future AmeriCorps members you may be in direct violation of Section 177 of the National Service Act, which outlines the nonduplication and nondisplacement regulations.
- If the other funding source does not allow the money to be claimed as match against CNCS funding, the organization may have a hard time meeting the match requirements as stipulated in the NOFO/RFP.

F7. Is match required for EAP programs?

There is no match requirement for Education Award Program grants, but CNCS does not provide all the funds necessary to operate the program. Organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.

F8. Do I need to include costs for the Education Award in my budget?
No, the Education Award is paid directly by the National Service Trust to the member's loan holder or institution of higher education upon the successful completion of their term of service. You will not include the cost of the Education Award in the budget you submit.

F9. Do I need to include costs for Health Care for members in my budget?

If you are requesting Full-Time members, then you are required to provide them with Health Care. Please see the Application Instructions and also § 2522.250.b of the AmeriCorps Regulations for additional information on the minimum requirements for Health Care.

F10. May I provide health care for my members who are serving less-than-full-time?

You may choose to provide health care benefits to less-than-full-time members from other sources (i.e. non-federal) but the costs cannot be included in the budget as either CNCS or Grantee Share. Less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (such as full-time summer project) are eligible for health care benefits.

F11. What is the indirect cost percentage that the Commission recommends? Our organization has a policy of charging a rate that reflects the grant making organization's recommendation.

The Commission does not recommend a particular indirect cost rate. CNCS provides three options for calculating your administrative/indirect costs. The options are as follows:

A. CNCS-Fixed Percentage Method
B. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate
C. De Minimis Rate of 10% of Modified Direct Costs

For full explanation and calculations please see Application Instructions, Attachment B page 26.

G. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

G1. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?

AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary intervention and aligns with the program's theory of change.

G2. What are National Performance Measures?

CNCS has established six Focus Areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, as well as for Capacity Building, CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives.

G3. What is the difference between Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures?

The National Performance Measures are split into two groups: Priority Measures and Complementary Program Measures. Priority Measures are performance measures that are included in CNCS's strategic plan. Complementary Program Measures are additional measures that are important to AmeriCorps but not included in the strategic plan.

G4. What is a "self-nominated" or "applicant-determined" performance measure?

A self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and/or outcomes that will be measured, based on its intervention. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where CNCS pre-determines common outputs and, in some instances, outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

G5. Are National Performance Measures required?

The use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged but is not required.

G6. What is an aligned performance measure?

An aligned performance measure is an output paired with an outcome. Most of our National Performance Measures include aligned measures, but in some cases you may need to create your own aligned applicant-determined outcome. Please see the selection criteria in the Performance Measure Instructions.

Please refer to the Application Instructions, Attachment A: Performance Measure Instructions for detailed information on entering Performance Measures. Under Performance Measures Tab it states the following: "You must create at least one aligned performance measure (either a National Performance Measure or an applicant-determined measure) that includes your primary intervention. You may create additional aligned performance measures and/or output-only measures provided that they measure significant program activities. There is no expectation that 100% of program activity would be allocated to National Performance Measures or to any performance measures at all."

G7. How many performance measures should I propose?
Each program should have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) reflecting its primary intervention. It is appropriate to have additional aligned performance measures for other significant components of your program. Performance measures reflecting non-primary activities should not be included in your application and will not be reported to CNCS, although you might still collect the data for your own purposes.

G8. Is there still only one performance measure expectation for rural intermediaries- how do I choose?

Yes, AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary intervention and aligns with the program's theory of change.

G9. Is there a preference for having applicants use national performance measures to the greatest extent possible?

Your performance measures should be consistent with your program's theory of change. If the national performance measures align with your program design and your theory of change, you should use them.

G10. We have identified multiple performance measures we would like to use in our application.

You are encouraged to use measures that reflect the most significant member activities. It is common for programs to track data that they do not necessarily report to CNCS. It is more important that they are aligned. There are some programs that have many measures, but it is not common. You are only required to utilize one aligned Performance Measure.

G11. If I select National Performance Measures, are there specific outputs and outcomes I am required to use?

Yes, in most cases there are specific requirements for outputs and outcomes as well as data definitions and collection expectations. Please read the National Performance Measures Instructions carefully.

G12. Will our proposal lose its competitive edge if we only have one priority area as our performance measure? Most of our future programing aligns with complimentary areas, is this problematic?

A program can select more than one Focus Area in their application. However, no additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure.

As for selecting Priority vs. Complimentary Measures, it is most important that you select the National Performance Measures that align with your program's activities. The National Performance Measures

Instructions provide definitions, requirements and guidelines that will help you determine which are right for you. These instructions can be found on the NOFO webpage.

G13. If we chose the Performance Measures indicating that National Service Participants are the beneficiaries, are those National Service Participants still eligible to receive an Eli Segal Education Award?

Yes, if those members successfully complete their term of service they will be eligible to receive the allotted amounts according to their slot type.

G14. Must all MSY be accounted for in the Performance Measures?

Please refer to the Application Instructions, Attachment A: Performance Measure Instructions for detailed information on entering Performance Measures. Under MSYs/Members Tab it states the following: " When you create your performance measures, you will be asked to allocate MSYs to each performance measure; however, you will not be required to assign 100% of your total MSYs to performance measures."

G15. Our program falls within two of the focus areas. Should we include performance measures for both?

See G12.

H. CONTINUATION REQUESTS

H1. On page 50, the RFP says "1. Proposal Review for Continuation Competitive Applications, Since CNCS currently funds these projects, these organizations are only required to submit continuation requests and required additional documents that will be reviewed by NMCCV staff. A recommendation for funding will be made to the Commission Board without peer review. ."

Two questions:
- **Do continuation applicants need to submit an Application Package (binders, etc) as outlined for new and recompeting applicants, or just the eGrants application as detailed in the Application Instructions from the Corporation?**

No, this year continuation applicants will need to submit a continuation application package as detailed in the *Application Instructions*. Submit your eGrants application based on Application Instructions' continuation request guidance.

- **What are the "required additional documents" that NMCCV staff would like continuation applicants to submit in addition to their continuation requests?**

Currently there are no additional required documents, only what is presently requested in the RFP and Application Instructions.

H2. As a continuation applicant, we are not proposing any changes this year and will only be entering information in the continuation section and we only respond to the following questions, correct?

Provide the following information in the Continuation Changes narrative field:

1. Identify whether this is a Year 2 and Year 3 continuation in the heading of this section.
2. Did the program enroll 100% of the slots in the last full year of program operation? If no, provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement.
3. Did the program retain 100% of the members in the last full year of program operation? If no, provide an explanation, and describe the plan for improvement. CNCS recognizes retention rates may vary among equally effective programs depending on the program model but expects all grantees to pursue the highest retention rate possible.
4. Was the program 100% compliant with 30-day enrollment and exit requirements? If no, provide an explanation and the plan to ensure future compliance.
5. For national direct applicants: describe the manner and extent to which you consulted with the State Commission in the states in which you plan to operate (not applicable to Tribes or single state applications applying through state commissions.)
6. Are you proposing a change in operating sites or service locations? This includes expansion to new sites. If yes, describe these changes and provide a justification for the change. The justification should include the need that will be met at any new sites, the activities of the members, and organizational capacity to support new sites.
7. Are you proposing a change in program scope or design? If yes, describe the change and provide a justification.
8. Are you requesting an expansion (increase in members, increase in funding, and/or an increase in cost/MSY)? Please note that continuation requests for increases in funding are rarely approved and are considered against the criteria outlined in the Notice and subject to available funding

9. Are you proposing other changes not captured above? If yes, describe these changes and provide a justification for them.

Other Continuation Application Sections:

   I.   Applicant Info and Application Info-Review and update information as necessary.
   II.   Narrative-See above.
   III.   Performance Measures-Update only if making programmatic changes.
   IV.   Budget-Revise budget for upcoming year.
   V.   Increasing Grantee Overall Share of Total Budget-Confirm that match is being met.

H3. In the Narrative- Continuation Section, should the prior year information (Year 2) be deleted? Or should the current year (Year 3) information be written underneath Year 2 with appropriate headings?

Please include prior year information, with a header designating each year's continuation submissions, if the required page limit is not reached or exceeded. If exceeded, please remove Year 2 continuation submission.

I. EVIDENCE BASED PLANNING GRANT

I1. Are evidence based planning grant applicants required to submit performance measures?

Evidence based planning grants are required to follow the "Performance Measures Instructions for Planning Grants".

J. OTHER QUESTIONS

J1. I noticed that the state RFP which I downloaded did not include Capacity Building as a focus area - is it no longer a national focus area or just not in New Mexico?

CNCS has established six Focus Areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, **as well as for Capacity Building**, CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives.

CNCS defines Capacity Building as a set of activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations served by CNCS-supported organizations (i.e. AmeriCorps programs.) 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. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Capacity building activities must:

1) Be intended to support or enhance the program delivery model.

2) Respond to the program's goal of increasing, expanding, or enhancing services in order to address the most pressing needs identified in the community, and

3) Enable the program to provide a sustained level of more or better direct services after the capacity building services ended.

J2. Where can I learn more about VISTA and how can I apply for VISTA?

This particular RFP is for AmeriCorps*State and National projects. If you are interested in AmeriCorps VISTA programming you'll need to respond to the next "Call for Concept Papers" from our New Mexico State Office, as they administer the AmeriCorps VISTA program. To learn more about the VISTA program and what members do please contact:

Michael J. Garcia

New Mexico State Program Director

Corporation for National and Community Service

(505)988-6578

J3.The NOFO and RFP mentioned that a low MSY budget is more competitive. What is a ballpark amount that we should aim for?

CNCS has not provided the competitive average that they are looking for. You can however view recent awardees' executive summaries, award amounts, member slots, etc. here:

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

J4. We are debating as to what would be best for us, fixed amount or cost reimbursement?

That is up to you. A Cost reimbursement grant involves a budget, financial reporting, match requirement, and full access to grant funding. Fixed Amount grants involve no formal match, no budget, and no financial reporting, **but access to all funding is dependent on enrollment and retention of all of your AmeriCorps members.** *Except for EAP grants, new applicants may not apply for fixed amount

grants.

Cost Reimbursement	Fixed Amount
Available to new applicants	Not available to new applicants
Budget	No Budget
4 annual financial reports	No financial reports
Match required	No formal match required
Access to funds regardless of member enrollment or retention	Access to all funds depends on member enrollment and/or retention

Please see Section D for more information on Fixed-Amount Grants.

J5. In the RFP it discusses the application status. Will you provide clarification on the applicants – Are NM grantees all considered new AmeriCorps State Competitive Grant applicants?

Please see answer A7.

J6. Please explain the Award period– if an applicant is selected for a national competitive grant if I'm reading this right –the funding period is generally for three years. Does that mean if an applicant is successful in the national competitive round and is awarded that the grant is awarded with subject to continuation for years 2 and 3?

Yes, that is correct. Competitive Pool funding is for a three-year cycle.

J7. Will there be any confirmation of submission by NMCCV? Last year there were some glitches with eGrants, is it possible to have a confirmation of some sort that an application was submitted/received?

The Commission will not confirm eGrants submission, but will confirm receipt of the entire proposal packet which includes your eGrants submission.