

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

1. You must submit your complete application in eGrants no later than 4:30 PM on Wednesday, November 2, 2016. If you experience technical difficulties with eGrants, please contact their Help Desk immediately and get a ticket number. Phone: 800-942-2677 and Web: <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>

2. Serve Wisconsin must receive **all** of your additional documents in our office no later than 4:30 PM on Wednesday, November 2, 2016. It doesn't count if it was received by our mail room, by the front desk, was sent to the incorrect e-mail address (servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov), or is lost in transit, so make sure that you get these to us on time. You may drop off your documents to us personally between the hours of 7:00 am – 4:30 pm. Use Additional Checklist A (a required additional document) to ensure that you are submitting everything. This will help ensure you don't miss anything! <http://servewisconsin.wi.gov/Documents/AmeriCorps%20Funding/2017-18%20RFP/Additional%20Checklist%20A%20-%20Additional%20Documents%20Checklist.pdf>

Staff will notify the contact person listed on the NOI via e-mail as soon as your document packet is received.

3. Your proposal cannot exceed 15 pages, which includes the SF-424 Facesheet (18 pages if you are applying for a multi-focused intermediary). Please print your application to ensure that it does not exceed this page limit—**we will not review any pages over the limit.**

4. Your Logic Model may not exceed 3 pages as it prints from eGrants. Please print your logic model to ensure that it does not exceed this page limit—**we will not review any pages over the limit.**

5. If you submit all of your additional documents and your eGrants application on time, your application will be submitted to peer reviewers by Friday, November 4th. They will be reviewing applications throughout the month of November. You will hear from Serve Wisconsin staff before the end of November as to the status of your application. If your application passes peer review, you will be **required to present at the Board's Program Evaluation & Development Committee** at their meeting on **Wednesday, December 7, 2016** in Madison. More details will be provided in November.

2017-2018 WNC SB AmeriCorps*State RFP Questions and Answers

Please review all of these Questions and Answers, which will be updated frequently, to see if your question has been answered below. Answers to prior years' questions have been updated and included for your reference.

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A. General AmeriCorps Questions

A1. What are the general qualifications of AmeriCorps members and how does recruitment work?

Programs set their requirements based on program design. So, for example, if you had a program for teachers, you would want to make sure they are licensed in Wisconsin to teach. The requirements from CNCS are: 1. Must be a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident; 2. Must be at least 17 years old (for most programs); 3. Earned a GED or HSED or are working toward one of the two; 4. Pass Criminal History Background Checks (no registered or required to be registered sex offenders and no convicted murderers).

Most programs promote their program throughout the year, but most recruitment takes place in Spring/Summer. You would be responsible for recruiting, enrolling, and managing your members.

A2. In what types of AmeriCorps training will members need to participate, and when/where are they?

All members must be given an orientation by the program which cover the basics (AmeriCorps, National Service, member contract, etc.). In Wisconsin, they must also receive conflict resolution and citizenship training. You would be responsible for creating and conducting these trainings, so you can host them wherever you want. Obviously, orientation should happen at the beginning of service, but other training should be at appropriate times during the service year.

A3. What types of AmeriCorps reporting and training would be required for the applicant?

Serve Wisconsin AmeriCorps programs submit progress reports (based on their Performance Measures and other reports) and financial reports on a quarterly basis. We provide a new Program Director orientation and other trainings throughout the year. We require you to include \$2000 in your budget for staff to attend CNCS-sponsored training, which will likely be a Regional National Service meeting held somewhere in the Midwest in 2017.

A4. Does the [living allowance] get paid by AmeriCorps directly to the members or are the funds disbursed to the sponsoring agency who then makes the payments?

The living allowance paid to AmeriCorps members (required for all full-time members, optional for less than full-time) is paid by the organization administering the program. It's included in the program budget, and can come from CNCS funds and/or Grantee Cash Match. Please see the Budget Instructions in the Application Instructions and Attachments.

A5. The RFP states that "Award funded staff, national service participants and volunteers with recurring access" must complete the 3-part background check. This volunteer requirement is contrary to CNCS guidance as volunteers do not receive a salary, stipend, etc. Can you please clarify? [New 10.26.2016]

The intent for the volunteers mentioned in the RFP is not community-based volunteers, but rather those who would be receiving any sort of financial benefit from the program's grant funds. This is not applicable for the majority of AmeriCorps programs.

B. Minimum Requirements

B1. Will Serve Wisconsin accept a proposal from an organization requesting fewer than 20 members?

No, the 20 member minimum is a CNCS requirement for proposals, and so we will not accept proposals seeking fewer than 20 members in the competitive cycle. *Updated Answer (10/1/2015): If a program wants to engage fewer than 20 AmeriCorps members per year, please contact the RFP Manager at servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov. This might be allowable; however, your application will not be eligible for competitive consideration, and there is no guarantee that it will be funded with Formula funds.*

B2. Can the 20 member minimum be any slot type? Is there a Member Service Year (MSY) minimum?

Yes, the members can be of any slot type (i.e., they do not all need to be Full-Time members—1 MSY). There is no MSY minimum.

B3. As a previously funded program, would we be able to submit a fixed-price grant even if this is a new grant? May we submit for more than the 50 maximum members if our track record supports more than 50?

Yes. If organization has experience managing AmeriCorps funds, you would be eligible to apply for a fixed-amount application and request more than 50 members.

C. Continuation Funding Questions

C1. The continuation narrative is limited to 6 pages maximum. Do I delete the Year Two changes or do I limit my Year Three changes to 6 pages?

Please edit down your Year Two changes as much as you need in order to make both Year Two and Year Three fit on six pages. Make a note that you removed Year Two text to make space.

C2. In the Application Instructions it says “Continuation applicants requesting expansions should not modify performance measures and the application budget to reflect the increase.” However, a few paragraphs later it says the opposite: “If you made changes to your program, such as adding or changing grant-funded activities, or requesting additional slots or MSYs, you may need to revise your performance measures.” Can you clarify? **[New 10.26.2016]**

Continuation applicants who are asking for additional MSY or grant funds (i.e. expansions) should not modify their budgets or PMs at this time. They should justify the expansion request in items 7. a-e in the Application Instructions. If approved, the continuation applicant would make revisions to the PMs and/or budget during the clarification period in Spring 2017. CNCS has to approve any expansions, so they would prefer continuation applicants not make any changes anticipating that the expansion will be approved. If a continuation applicant needs to change their performance measures for any other reason (adjusting targets, adding/removing a measure, etc.), you may do so at this time. You must include a justification for any changes in the Continuation Changes narrative.

C3. Is it required that a continuation fixed-amount applicant complete the Increasing Grantee Overall Share of Total Budgeted Costs section? **[New 10.26.2016]**

No, continuation applicants do not need to provide any information about the budget in the narrative unless there are any changes to note, such as an expansion.

D. Performance Scoring

D1. If we have a year in the past three [calendar] years we weren't funded, will you go back 4 years to get 3 years of performance?

No, Serve Wisconsin only looks at the last three calendar years of performance, so we will be looking at your performance in the 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 program years.

D2. Is performance composite over those 3 years, or is each year's data considered independently?

We combine all of the performance data for each criteria over the three calendar years. This gives us an average of your performance for that period.

E. eGrants Questions

E1. We will have multiple people working on the RFP. Can they all work in egrants collaboratively?

You should be able to have multiple accounts for the same application, and each person accessing eGrants should have their own account. Make sure that each person has enough user permission to access the application when you set up new accounts. Please contact the eGrants Help Desk if you have any questions or problems with this.

E2. In eGrants there are grant characteristics for AmeriCorps member populations. How do we know how to answer this if these are future members?

Some of the member populations are easier to select than others, such as rural residents for a rural AmeriCorps program, but may depend on where your host sites operate. If you're really not sure that you will intentionally engage any of the groups listed in the grant characteristics, there's nothing wrong with checking "none of the above". However, if you do select any of those groups, you will want to make sure that you include how you will engage that population somewhere in your narrative.

F. Program and Application Questions

F1. What is the difference between Education Award Programs (EAP) and Competitive Programs?

EAP programs receive only \$800 per MSY (not member...this is the full-time equivalent) enrolled. That means that 100% of the operating costs, member support costs, etc. must come from the organization. This is typically only feasible for organizations that run a program where members are receiving college credit for being in the program (such as a teacher education program) or a program utilizing very small slot types and not providing members a living allowance.

F2. May a program have more than one CNCS focus area?

Yes, a program may address more than one CNCS focus area, but you need to identify which is the Primary Focus Area and which is the Secondary Focus Area.

F3. Where do we find information on the 21st century program?

The basic definition of the 21st Century is in the RFP Glossary, Section 8.0. More information can be found on CNCS's website: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/task-force-expanding-national-service/us-forest-service-amicorps>

F4. Where's the language regarding page limits?

The page limits for your application and logic model in eGrants is detailed in the RFP Section 2.3 "Application Fields and Page Limits (pages 17-18 of the RFP). Your proposal is not to exceed 15 pages as it prints from eGrants. This includes the SF-424 Facesheet, which is essentially page 1 of your proposal. Therefore, you have 14 pages to work with. (Multi-Focus Intermediaries have a page limit of 18.)

Your logic model cannot exceed three (3) pages as they print from eGrants.

F5. The Budget Adequacy section of the narrative has bullet points about the budget, calculations, math, etc. It seems they want all of that information in the budget itself. What do we put in the Budget Adequacy narrative?

You should use this section to briefly describe additional information or more descriptions of what you put in your budget narrative, such as describing your source(s) of match, what has been secured to date, how you know the budget is adequate for the program (i.e., based on your experience managing this program). You don't need to spend much space on this since the 7 points are going to your budget narrative.

F6. When filling out the "Alignment with State Service Plan" form, the text boxes do not expand and most of the text is hidden. Is there a way to expand the boxes?

No, there isn't a way to expand this in the PDF form. If you find you need more space than what is provided, please contact servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov to request an alternate format, or attach a separate page with your responses.

F7. Do we need to have a hard copy on the SF-424 Facesheet and the Assurances and Certifications?

No, you will sign it electronically when you submit your application in eGrants. The Assurances and Certifications are provided in the Application Instructions so that you have a chance to read over them outside of eGrants. Please make sure that the authorized representative of your organization is the one who signs and submits the grant.

F8. On Page 14 of the RFP, it has bullet points for the logic model. Is this a guide for the narrative part of the grant or a guide for the logic model that's in eGrants?

Your logic model must contain the items listed in the bullet points on page 17. Here is a template for you to use: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7FUCNVwAN3tSGxrTDdoYTNwc2s/view?usp=sharing>

F9. Under Application Info, it states "Subject to Review by State Executive Order 12372 Process"—do I click yes for that? (Number 16 on the SF-424 Facesheet)

No, this program is excluded from coverage by Executive Order 12372, so this should be marked "No". Please see Attachment A in the Application Instructions and Attachments for a step-by-step guide on how to complete the Facesheet.

F10. What format would you like the Organizational Chart? Do you want the entire Organization or just the staff working on the AmeriCorps program?

If you have a very large State Department or organization that is largely not involved with your AmeriCorps program, please provide a chart of the individuals connected to the program, leading up through your supervisor to the head of your organization.

F11. If our proposal is for capacity building activities in different areas, does each area need its own theory of change, logic model, etc. given that it would address many different areas? [New 10.12.2016]

You will have one logic model and one theory of change that addresses all of the core focus areas and activities of the program.

F12. If we elect to start our grant year on 8/15/2017, may we set our member start date a week later? If our current grant year ends on 8/31/2017, are there any administrative considerations as one grant period overlaps with the start of another during the transition? [New 10.12.2016]

Yes, you may start your members a week after your grant date. The only change you will need to make is amending your enrollment period for the current year in eGrants. Otherwise, you will end your current program on August 31st as usual.

F13. The RFP states we should copy and paste our narrative in eGrants no later than 10 days before the due date. Is this advice or a requirement? [New 10.12.2016]

This is advice. As long as you get your application submitted on time, it doesn't matter when you start entering your information. Ten days is a good rule of thumb to at least start getting the basic information entered.

F14. Can you tell me more about the second competitive deadline for those applying for Opioid Abuse and/or Police/Community Relations programs? [New 10.12.2016]

CNCS will have a second deadline for competitive applications addressing the opioid epidemic and/or police and community relations. The deadline will be early May. Serve Wisconsin plans to release a second RFP around February 1, 2017 to get competitive applications for this additional opportunity. The deadline will be mid-March.

F15. Do we need to enter a citizenship Performance Measure in eGrants? [New 10.26.2016]

No, the Citizenship Performance Measure is a Serve Wisconsin-specific requirement, so you do not enter this in eGrants.

F16. Am I submitting the right documents for my additional document packet? [New 10.26.2016]

Please review the Additional Documents Checklist (a required additional document to submit) to review the items that all applicants must submit. <http://servewisconsin.wi.gov/Documents/AmeriCorps%20Funding/2017-18%20RFP/Additional%20Checklist%20A%20-%20Additional%20Documents%20Checklist.pdf>

Some items may not be applicable to you due to your program design (fixed versus cost reimbursement) or application type (continuation vs. recomplete), but the checklist should make it very clear what you need to submit.

All of the additional checklists and forms can be filled out in PDF or Word, saved, and e-mailed by the deadline. If you are having difficulty accessing any documents, filling them out, or saving them, please contact us right away.

F17. What is the CDFA # for this grant competition? [New 10.26.2016]

CNCS's CDFA number for this competition is 94.006.

F18. What is the difference between Section #2 Intervention and Section #3 Theory of Change? Are they asking the same thing? [New 10.28.2016]

Section #2 (Intervention) is asking for a brief description of what the intervention is. It bridges the Need section with the Theory of Change by answering how you will address the need with a specific intervention. You then go on to further explain the intervention in Section #3 (TOC), and then provide your evidence that it will work in Section #4 (Evidence Base).

F19. If we have multiple interventions/parts to our program, do we need to address all of them in the evidence base? [New 10.28.2016]

You need to provide evidence on each intervention, which will likely vary depending on which components have had an external program evaluation. For any parts of your intervention that have been evaluated, make sure to describe that evaluation and provide the report. For any parts that have not been evaluated, cite the body of evidence that shows that your intervention/activity will lead to your proposed outcomes.

F20. Is it allowable to have activities in the Logic Model that we don't have in our Performance Measures? [New 10.28.2016]

Yes, you do not need to have a performance measure for each activity in your logic model. The logic model gives a more complete picture of what AmeriCorps members and volunteers are doing, but performance measures are for the core activity(ies) of the program.

G. Evidence Base and Program Evaluations

Please review the Evidence Base and Program Evaluation resources posted on our Google Drive:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B7FUCNVwAN3tSzhncXZ1TW1TNm8?usp=sharing>

And on CNCS's Knowledge Network:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/all-evaluation-resources>

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange>

G1. If we have a multi-pronged intervention, how are we supposed to provide evidence for each portion of the intervention if we are limited to only two research studies or evaluations?

If you are a currently funded applicant and are providing moderate or strong evidence, you may be able to use your own program's evaluation as a third source. **[Updated Answer 10.12.2016]** Moderate or Strong evidence base is only achieved by submitting an external report or study on your program design. Submitting a peer-reviewed journal on a similar program is not strong or moderate evidence. Please review all of the evidence tiers to determine your level of evidence base and provide all of the information requested in order to achieve maximum points.

G2. The RFP states that moderate and strong evidence must be conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention, and up to two evaluation reports from external sources OR evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles must be provided. Does this mean that moderate or strong evidence does not need to be from a peer-reviewed journal?

Correct. Evidence submitted by an applicant does not need to be a peer-reviewed article as long as it is from an external source. (Answer from CNCS.)

G3. Regarding evaluations, if we just completed an impact evaluation, does our new evaluation plan have to be an impact evaluation? Can we focus instead on a process evaluation that looks at one aspect of the program?

This information comes from CNCS's Evaluation Frequently Asked Questions:

Grantees with an average annual CNCS grant of \$500,000 or more who have fulfilled the evaluation requirements and have completed an impact evaluation are not required to conduct another impact evaluation in subsequent grant periods. However, their subsequent independent evaluation activities should build on the findings from the impact evaluation and other evaluation efforts in order to strengthen the evidence-base for their program and make continuous improvements to the program. For example, subsequent evaluation activities may be designed to answer questions that arose during or as a result of past evaluations; conduct a cost-benefit analysis based on the impact findings; examine the relationship between components of the program model and the program's impacts; or test the effectiveness of the program when replicated in new communities or expanded to reach new populations. Grantees are encouraged to work with an experienced evaluator to identify evaluation activities that will build on past evaluation findings and strengthen the evidence-base for their program.

G4. The RFP says up to two evaluations in the Moderate evidence base—does that mean we can submit one external evaluation report, or does it mean that 2, but not more, external evaluations are required to qualify for Moderate? [New 10.12.2016]

Yes, Moderate/Strong evidence based programs must submit *up to* two external evaluations. The only way you can qualify for Moderate or Strong evidence is to submit *up to* two evaluation reports from external entities that is of your own program/intervention. If it's not your program, but rather one that you replicate with fidelity, you would want to review the "Preliminary with Replication" evidence tier.

G5. If we studied two aspects of our program within one formal evaluation, does that count as one or two studies? The terms "study" and "evaluation" are used in the Moderate explanation—are you referring to the same thing? [New 10.12.2016]

Your program evaluation would be one study since it is all in the same report. If you are required to submit this evaluation report anyway (i.e. end of 3-year evaluation cycle), you may submit up to two more external studies/reports of your program/intervention (for a total of up to three). Study, evaluation, and research seem to be used interchangeably.

G6. In the intro to the Evidence Based section, item 3 requires that the "entire body of evidence" be presented. In the sub-descriptions of the Evidence Based categories, there's a request for up to two studies. Can you clarify what the "entire body of evidence" means? [New 10.12.2016]

What this is referring to is describing other evidence/data that supports your entire program. You may be submitting your evaluation or other external studies to qualify for Moderate or Strong evidence for certain parts of your program, but you may also need to explain any evidence to support other parts of your program. You will not submit those reports, but it helps to build the case for your intervention. Please also make sure that you are addressing the requirements of evidence tiers lower than what you think you qualify for. CNCS may not rate you the same way and will be looking for whatever evidence/data you should have provided.

Use this tool to help determine your evidence base:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7FUCNVwAN3tWGhPVDFFMVpQa3c/view?usp=sharing>

G7. Looking at the Additional Doc Checklist, it asks us to submit our Evaluation and up to 2 reports to support our EB. If we are submitting our Evaluation, does this still count as one of the two? Also, we have two parts of our LM to support, can we submit 2 articles, reports for each? Basically, I want to submit our evaluation and one resource for each program area for a total of 3. [New 10.13.2016]

You will only submit reports/evaluations on your own program. Peer reviewed journal data (or similar) should be described and cited but not submitted.

Nearly all applicants in the past have submitted up to two peer-reviewed journals or other reports to qualify them as Moderate or Strong; however, after reviewing the feedback on evidence levels for the 2016-17 competition, it is important to understand what CNCS means by the terms "report" and "study" in regards to the Moderate and Strong evidence tiers. They are only interested in the external evaluations conducted on your specific program using a quasi-experimental, randomized control, or experimental design. Any peer reviewed journals or other reports that you find that help to back up your evidence base should be described and cited but not submitted.

Common feedback for the justifications of evidence tiers and why it's so important to present the data you have effectively:

No Evidence

- The applicant did not provide data collection that was done on their program to track components of own logic model, which is the requirement to meet Pre-Preliminary Tier. Because the applicant did not present own data, this Evidence Tier was assessed as "No Evidence."

Pre-Preliminary Evidence

- The applicant has collected systematic data to track some components of their logic model.
- The applicant submitted two studies for review; although the studies were of programs that may be *similar* to the applicant, the studies were not of the applicant's program and therefore did not meet the criteria for review [Preliminary with Replication].
- The applicant did not describe data collection methods; therefore, quality and rigor could not be determined.
- The applicant cites a significant body of research literature [on intervention].
- The applicant describes two studies similar to the program; however, they did not provide detailed information on the study methods to accurately assess replication with fidelity.

Preliminary – Outcome Study

- Applicant discussed its external evaluation. Since it included data collection for pre/post tests to measure outcomes, it is an outcome study of the applicant's own intervention and goes beyond data for routine program measurement.

Preliminary – Replication

- The applicant meets the requirements by submitting a RCT study of the program to be replicated with fidelity. The applicant fully described the program components to be replicated and the process which were very closely matched to the applicant's intervention.

Moderate Evidence

- The applicant conducted an external QED evaluation study of their own program in the location it is being implemented.
- The external evaluation yielded positive results.
- The results were not tested nationally, so it cannot count as Strong Evidence.
- The applicant submitted (not reviewed) and described two additional studies on similar programs.

Strong Evidence

We have not received feedback for an application that CNCS considers to have Strong Evidence. This would take an external national, regional, or statewide study, or would be based on multiple well-designed external QEDs or RCTs of their own program in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The findings would need to be consistently positive. It is possible to get here, but it will take multiple program evaluations.

Again, remember that the vast majority of applicants fall between No Evidence and Preliminary Evidence, and applicants in all tiers get competitively funded. The most important thing to keep in mind is to describe your data (performance measure data, process evaluations, output evaluations, impact evaluations) with enough detail that the reviewers are able to assess the strength of your program design. YOUR evidence is the STRONGEST evidence! It needs to be described in detail because your application is broken up into two reviews:

1 – CNCS staff reviews your application, budget, PMs.

2 – External reviewers review your evidence base section and applicable reports (i.e., program evaluations.) They do not get other portions of your application, they are instructed not to go to the source of the information, and they will not read reports that do not fit the criteria above and in the RFP, so make sure that you describe the body of evidence clearly (but succinctly).

G8. Is the Evaluation Plan section the only place that you will enter your evaluation plan and results, or is there anywhere else in the narrative where you include this? Do the reviewers score this (zero points assigned to this section)? [New 10.26.2016]

Yes, the evaluation results and plan (if applicable) are requirements every three years, and so they do not have any points assigned to them. You will describe your plan and results in the narrative field and submit any reports as a separate additional document. Unless you are using your evaluation results as evidence (and, thus, including it in the Evidence-Base section), you do not need to include it in any of the other narratives. Serve Wisconsin will send your evaluation report and plan as additional documents to CNCS in January.

G9. Is there a page limit for the Evaluation Plan section? [New 10.28.2016]

No, there is no page limit for this section, but it is limited to 10,000 characters. You will not be able to submit your application if you go over this character limit.

H. Fiscal & Budget Questions

H1. Does the maximum cost per MSY of \$13,830 include the overhead and administrative costs?

The maximum cost per MSY is the sum of your entire Federal request (administrative/indirect costs included) divided by the number of MSY (not members) your program is requesting.

H2. Do in-kind contributions from a project sponsor such as office, furniture, computers, phone and internet service, supplies, administrative overhead, etc., count towards the 24% match requirement?

Yes, in-kind contributions can count towards the 24% match requirement as long as they are not being matched for any other grants.

H3. How do we calculate the amount of the living allowance?

The minimum living allowance for full-time members and the maximum living allowance amounts for all service terms is detailed in the RFP in Section 1.5.2. page 11.

H4. Can we find out about using a different federal source for the match?

This is the only information that we know of that explains the allowance of matching certain Federal funds to Federal AmeriCorps funds:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Memo%20and%20Match%20Authorization%20letter%20to%20AmeriCorps%20grants.pdf>

Federal funds that may be approved for match include those from the Department of the Interior (Labor, Agriculture, etc.), Administration on Aging, and certain Department of Education funds.

You should use this information to request permission from your federal grant contact to request permission to use their funds as match to your AmeriCorps program. Include a copy of the approval with your Additional Documents packet.

H5. Are there ever instances where an organization can apply for both competitive and formula funding?

When applying through Serve Wisconsin, you are applying for competitive funding. We have a grant review and recommendation process (detailed in the RFP pp. 26-27). When applications pass this process, they are submitted to CNCS for competitive funding consideration. If CNCS does not fund them competitively, applications can be considered for state formula funding.

In rare occasions we will have a separate RFP for Formula funding. This only happens when we have more formula dollars than we have requests. **[Updated Answer 10.12.2016]:** Programs that do not meet the minimum threshold of requesting 20 or more AmeriCorps members will not be submitted to CNCS for competitive consideration, and will, instead, be held at the State level for Formula funding consideration.

H6. Where can I find information about child care reimbursements?

This isn't something the program provides. Eligible full-time members will go through the process of receiving child care benefits with the Corporation's child care provider.

H7. What is the maximum amount we can use for travel reimbursement in this grant?

The maximum mileage you can claim is the federal rate, which is \$0.54/mile.

H8. We anticipate that our program budget will increase this cycle [recompete]. We plan to request an increase in the CNCS share to be met with an increase in match funding. We currently provide 67% of the program cost in match. Are we allowed to decrease our percent of program funding if we increase the amount of match funding and still meet or exceed the required percentage? [New 10.12.2016]

You may request an increase from CNCS as long as you have a good justification for it, not to exceed the maximum cost per MSY of \$13,830. Please refer to the RFP regarding requests for expansions.

You only need to provide the amount of match that is required based on the number of years that your program has been operating (see pages 9-10 of the RFP). You should provide a justification for any changes to the budget, including a reduction in match.

H9. If the grant is awarded but CNCS does not grant a request for increased funding, are we allowed to change our performance measure targets submitted in our [recompete] application? [New 10.12.2016]

In the event that CNCS does not approve your request for increased funding, you would know during the clarification period (late March/early April). It is unlikely that they would approve a reduction in the performance measure targets unless there is very good rationale. If they do not approve an increase in funding and/or a decrease in PM targets, you could request to be funded with State Formula funding for 2017-18. If we have the funding to support your program, we could fund you up to the maximum cost per MSY.

H10. Is it required or just suggested that we have a lower cost per MSY from the current/previous year for our recompete grant application? [New 10.26.2016]

It is a suggestion, and a competitive advantage to have a lower cost per MSY from previous funding years, but it is not a requirement. You can request anywhere up to the maximum cost per MSY, but any increases from previous years must be justified in the narrative.

I. Serve Wisconsin/Wisconsin National and Community Service Board & CNCS

Questions

11. What is the typical reimbursement time for a Cost Reimbursement program?

This is dependent upon your timeliness of submitting periodic (monthly or quarterly) expense reports. Once you submit them (usually by the 20th of the following month), the WI Dept. of Administration has 30 days to pay.

12. Would you consider an earlier start date? Our corps receive training before the school year starts, so they usually start late July or first week of August.

Unfortunately, we only allow programs to begin between August 15 and September 1 each year due to the Commission's Prime application, which starts August 15th. We require all programs to begin on these dates. If you have training or other service that will happen prior to August 15th, this cannot count towards a member's term of service.

13. Is there any specific guidance on what the presentation to the [Committee] must include?

All applicants (including New, Recompete, and Continuation) must give a 5-minute presentation to the Board's Program and Evaluation Committee on December 7, 2016, in Madison. In general, your presentation should explain your program, what you hope to do, what has worked in the past, any changes you've made to your program, etc. The Committee will have a summary of your program and application in a recommendation that is created by Serve Wisconsin staff, but it is good to give them an overview of your project. The Committee may ask clarifying questions on any part of your proposal, your performance score, or any items that were unclear in the staff's recommendation. Be sure to have someone who is able to speak about your project attend.

Frequently Asked Questions from Prior RFPs

Eligibility & General AmeriCorps Questions

FAQ 1. Are schools and school districts eligible to apply for AmeriCorps*State funding?

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.

If your school/school district is part of the state board of education, it is classified as part of a government entity, and thus eligible to apply.

FAQ 2. Are the minimum and maximum living allowances stated in the RFP flexible? If we provide more match, can we have a higher living allowance than the maximum?

No, these amounts are set by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and are not flexible. Members serving in any term less than full-time do not need to be paid a living allowance; however, the maximums still apply.

FAQ 3. What is a “significant” number of participants aged 55 or older in an EnCorps program?

There is no guidance from CNCS on what constitutes a “significant” number of participants aged 55 or older. Applicants should be prepared to make their case as to why they consider whatever portion of the program that engages this type of member to be significant if it is not inherently apparent in the program design.

B. RFP Content Questions & Additional Documents

FAQ 4. Why are the point values doubled on Appendix A: Application Peer Review Form from the points listed in the RFP?

The reason why the point values are doubled on the Peer Review Form is because they only review half of the proposal (the Program Design). We keep the values equivalent to CNCS, but in order to get to 100 total points, we have to multiply these points by 2. The one exception you will note is in the points assigned for evidence base—we spread these out more evenly to give applicants a better chance of getting points in this section.

FAQ 5. Are there any rules on the type of referencing they want in the narrative (APA format, etc.), particularly in our evidence base section?

CNCS does not have any rules on citing sources. You have a very limited amount of space, so you should provide only as much information as would be needed to find the article, website, report, etc. you are referencing, including name/source and year. More specific guidance about citing reports that will prove the evidence base of your intervention can be found in the RFP.

FAQ 6. Are the organizational capacity and budget adequacy sections part of the 15 page limit?

The 15-page limit includes:

- SF-424 Facesheet
- Executive Summary
- Program Design
- Organizational Capacity
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

It does not include the evaluation plan, logic model, performance measures, budget, or budget narrative. Please see the RFP for more information.

FAQ 7. If we are using the same Federal match as last year, do we need to resend our approval letter?

Yes, all documents on the additional document checklist must be submitted by the deadline (November 2, 2016 @ 4:30 PM Central) even if you sent them last year and are a Continuation applicant.

FAQ 8. Do we refer to your agency as “Serve Wisconsin” at any place we might mention you throughout the grant application?

Yes, you can refer to us as “Serve Wisconsin”—CNCS is most familiar with this name, and it’s shorter than the Wisconsin National and Community Service Board.

FAQ 9. Can we create an additional logic model that can be sent with our additional documents?

No, you will enter your logic model directly in eGrants. We won’t review anything that is not requested in the instructions or additional document checklist. Please remember that your logic model cannot exceed three (3) pages as it prints from eGrants.

Continuation Applicant Questions

FAQ 10. If I request an increased cost per MSY, will it put my continuation funding at jeopardy?

No, requesting an increase in CNCS share or an increased cost per MSY wouldn't jeopardize your chance for continued funding. At worst, CNCS would deny your request and you would need to remain at your current funding level or cost per MSY. This is why a detailed rationale for an increased request is required.

FAQ 11. What if our Competitive funding isn't continued?

We don't know of an instance of this happening, but if it does we will use the Formula Funding Process to assess whether or not you will be funded through Formula. This will include being eligible (being a nonprofit registered in the State of Wisconsin) and meeting the 80% performance threshold based on the last 3 complete years of performance data. The Committee and Board may also consider your peer review score from the year you were competitively funded and your program's fit in Wisconsin's portfolio.

FAQ 12. The application instructions for Continuations states that the page limit for the Continuation Changes field is 6 pages as the pages print from eGrants. Is this page limit just for Year 3 continuation changes, or does it also include year 2? (Application Instructions & Attachments)

This page limit is for both Years 2 and 3, so you may need to edit or remove some of the old information from Year 2 changes. Make a note in Year 2 that you removed or abbreviated certain sections.

Application Instructions

FAQ 13. To whom should letters of recommendation or endorsement be addressed?

General letters of recommendation (up to 2) can be addressed to Serve Wisconsin.

Letters of endorsement/commitment for the Governor/Mayor Initiative, and Memoranda of Understanding for the Multi-Focus Intermediary should be addressed to you as the applicant, since they are pledging their commitment to be part of your consortium/initiative. These will be part of your additional document packet, due in the Serve Wisconsin office by 4:30 pm on November 2, 2016.

FAQ 14. Do I create a system account or individual account for our organization in SAM?

You will create an individual account.

FAQ 15. If we present what we believe to be "moderate evidence" but the reviewers decide it is not enough evidence to merit the points, will we lose all points for that section?

The reviewers will determine the evidence base of your proposal based on the criteria listed in the RFP. While they may or may not agree that your evidence is as strong as you propose, you will not lose all of the points for that section if they find your evidence base to be lower. They will give you the appropriate number of points based on the evidence provided, which is why it is important to include evidence from all tiers.

eGrants Questions

FAQ 16. I started my application in eGrants, but can't find it.

If you're sure you've started a new application (or have continued an existing application), from the Home page under "View My Grants/Applications" select "View All". Scroll through all of your applications to find the one that was created most recently. If you still can't find your application, please contact the eGrants Hotline (800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>).

FAQ 17. The RFP states that proposals cannot exceed 15 pages (including the SF-424 Facesheet) as they print out from eGrants. What are the page margins and font sizes for eGrants so we can work on it in Word?

The page margins, fonts, and line spacing are not easily identifiable; however, the following will give you a good idea as to how many pages your application will be once you enter it into eGrants.

Margins: Top (1.56"), Bottom (1.0"), Left (1.0"), Right (0.65")

Font: Georgia, 11 point, 1.5 line spacing

Note: You MUST review your application in eGrants prior to submission to ensure that none of your application is cut off. We will not review materials over the page limit.

FAQ 18. If we have only received Formula funding, do we select Yes or No to the following question in the Program Information section of eGrants? “My organization has previously received an AmeriCorps State and National Grant . . .”

You will select “Yes” because you have previous funding history with your State Commission (Serve WI).

FAQ 19. How do we fill out the funding/demographics portion of our eGrants application, specifically yes/no questions?

This is a unique flaw in eGrants—there are no check boxes in the section where you will note that your AmeriCorps members will wear AmeriCorps logo every day, that AmeriCorps members will create and deliver elevator speeches, and that the AmeriCorps logo will be proudly displayed on the front page of your website. To indicate **YES** in any yes/no question that doesn’t have a checkbox, enter **1**. To indicate **NO**, enter **0**. Please note that these questions aren’t asking for how many members will wear their service gear or how many websites the logo will appear on—it’s simply asking if you will do these things. Remember, those are requirements of receiving AmeriCorps funding. **(Note: This may now be fixed for the 2016-2017 application.)**

The rest of the funding/demographics section should be self-explanatory. Make sure that the numbers you enter for your request, match, and others are the same as on your SF-424 Facesheet, budget, and in your narrative.

Funding Decisions

FAQ 20. What will be the soonest we would hear something back from CNCS regarding whether our proposal was funded or not?

CNCS has a target date of May 15th to notify us as to whom they will fund competitively. As soon as we know who is and is not funded competitively, we will begin the Formula selection process. This will involve Serve WI staff looking at the pool of applicants and determining at what level we can and will fund programs. We make our recommendation to the Program Evaluation & Development Committee (likely in late May) who then make their recommendation to the full Board at their meeting (likely early June). Based on these recommendations, you may be asked to revise your application. CNCS sets a date for state commissions to submit their Formula applications—this past year it was June 24th.

FAQ 21. We are looking to put together our Host Site application and other programmatic things in February/March so if funding is approved, it will give sites plenty of time to recruit members, etc. How much do you think we should accomplish prior to funding decisions?

This is a great idea. It’s understandable that you do not want to put too much effort into recruitment of host sites and members before you’re sure you have funding, but it will only help your program and your host sites if you’re able to get the word out that the opportunity may be available in August/September. It’s up to you to determine how much time you have to put into next year’s recruitment, but it will help to start early.

FAQ 22. Will the presentation to the Program Evaluation & Development Committee in December decide whose projects then get sent to CNCS for competitive funding?

That determination is mostly based on your average peer review score, past performance, and getting a complete application and additional document packet submitted on time. This is why it’s so important to be timely and thorough in your submission, and to make sure to answer each portion of the narrative in full. The Committee will take your presentation and staff recommendation into consideration, but they rarely stop an application from going forward if they’ve met the minimum requirements.

FAQ 23. Who assesses the points for Organizational Capability, Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy?

Serve Wisconsin staff looks at your entire application and may request technical changes to any part, including Organizational Capability, Performance Measures, Budget, etc. CNCS reviewers score your proposal based on all of the criteria—a total of 100 points, with point values described in the RFP.