

2018 WV AmeriCorps State Formula Grant

General FAQs

January 26, 2018

Q: What are the key dates and overall timeline for this grants process?

A: The overall timeline including key dates can be found on page 2-4 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#).

- January 24, 2018 NOFO released opening the 2018 Formula Grants Process
- January 30, 2018 In-Person Notice Launch (4 pm at the Holiday Inn – South Charleston)
- February 5, 2018 Technical Assistance Calls begin (days/times/call-in information in NOFO)
- February 16, 2018 Tentative Theory of Change/Logic Model Webinar
- February 26, 2018 Optional Theory of Change/Logic Model Draft Submission deadline
- March 26, 2018 Full Application and Additional Documents due
- March 26, 2018 Clarification process begins
- May 21, 2018 Award Notifications

Q: What is the purpose of AmeriCorps State funding?

A: The purpose of AmeriCorps State funding is to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities.

Q: Who provides the funding for AmeriCorps?

A: The Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) is the federal agency that provides funding for National Service programs including AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. AmeriCorps has three branches: AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and AmeriCorps State and National.

In each state, a Governor-appointed Commission administers funds for the AmeriCorps State program. In West Virginia, this agency is Volunteer West Virginia.

More information about CNCS, each AmeriCorps branch, and Senior Corps can be found at www.nationalservice.org.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for AmeriCorps State funding?

A: The following entities are eligible to apply: Indian tribes; Institutions of higher education; Local governments; Non-Profit organizations; and States. Please review the Eligibility document located here <http://volunteer.wv.gov/Grants/Documents/Eligibility%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

Q: Can my organization apply even though we were once a planning grantee?

A: The Formula competition is open to all organization that meet the eligibility requirements in the previous question as detailed in the [NOFO](#).

Q: Where can I find the Formula Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and other resources?

A: The NOFO, Application Instructions, and other resources can be found on our [website](#).

Q: Of the resources listed on your website, which is most important to the application process?

A: The first document applicants should review and continue to review throughout the application process is the [2018 WV Formula Grant NOFO](#). The NOFO provides applicants with all the narrative requirements, page limits, and the approved application format. Applications that do not include all narrative requirements and/or do not follow the application format tend to score lower than those who comply with the NOFO.

Q: What are the Application Instructions?

A: The [Application Instructions](#) should be reviewed after the NOFO and provide step by step instructions for completing the application in eGrants. They also include many helpful checklists for completing various pieces of the grant. For instance, budget instructions are found in this document.

Q: What is the minimum number of members required?

A: Volunteer West Virginia applicants must request a minimum of 5 members.

Q: Do the required 5 members need to be full-time members?

A: No. The 5 members can serve in any service term from full-time (1700 hours) to minimum time (300 hours). Member service term information may be found on page 12 of the [NOFO](#).

Q: What is the earliest date members can begin serving?

A: Members can typically begin serving on August 1, 2018; however, this date could be delayed due to a delay in award. Members cannot begin serving until CNCS issues Volunteer West Virginia an award letter. Upon receipt of this award letter, Volunteer West Virginia will notify programs with the first eligible date of service.

Q: Is there a page limit for the grant?

A: yes. The narrative section may not exceed 12 pages (15 for rural intermediaries) while the logic model cannot exceed 3 pages. More information can be found page 10 of the [NOFO](#).

Q: What is the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance?

A: The [Mandatory Supplemental Guidance](#) provides further definitions and explanations of key terms from the NOFO. Applicants must ensure that they are meeting all definitions provided in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance as they complete all sections of their application.

Q: What are the Performance Measure Instructions?

A: The [Performance Measure Instructions](#) can be used in determining the applicant's 2018 performance measures. Each applicant must include at least one, aligned performance measure in their application. A [Performance Measure Checklist](#) and [Performance Measure Template](#) has been provided on our website to assist applicants in selecting and/or creating a performance measure.

Q: How many performance measures are we required to have?

A: All programs are required to have one, aligned performance measure. First year applicants are encouraged to only select or create one, aligned performance measure while returning applicants will have the option to select or create more than one.

Q: Can we select a performance measure that is focused on member change instead of client change?

A: Yes, applicants may choose a performance measure that is focused on member change. Please use the [Performance Measure Instructions](#) to assist in selecting the right performance measure for your proposed program design. Applicants are encouraged to select a national performance measure to protect the quality of the measure, however, this is not a requirement and some applicants may find that designing your own performance measure is the best fit. No applicant should design a measure that is similar to an existing national performance measure.

Q: If we plan to have members hosted at various sites throughout the community/state, do we need to have a different performance measure for each site/member?

A: No. It is our recommendation that you select one, aligned performance measure that most of your members are spending most of their time on.

Q: We have narrowed our performance measure options down to two. What do we need to keep in mind?

A: When selecting a performance measure, applicants should choose the performance measure that best aligns with their program design and which includes activities that most of their members will complete. Applicants should make sure that the performance measure output they choose has an aligned outcome. Most National Performance Measure outputs come with an aligned outcome; however, several outputs require the applicant to create their own outcome. Applicants need to ensure they can meet each of the requirements/definitions for the chosen aligned output and outcome as described in the [Performance Measure Instructions](#).

Q: Can Volunteer West Virginia assist us in selecting a performance measure?

A: Yes. We can discuss the selection of individual applicant performance measure(s) on any upcoming technical assistance call. We can also work with individual programs during the clarification process.

Q: Is it okay to eliminate or change performance measure(s) with the new application?

A: Yes. The Commission highly recommends that applicants choose the strongest, aligned performance measure to include in their new application.

Q: Is it okay to have multiple outcomes for a single output?

A: Yes. Some national performance measures require multiple outcomes for a single output.

Q: If we want to create our own applicant determined performance measure, what should we keep in mind?

A: All performance measures must be aligned. To learn more about this requirement, please review the [NOFO](#) and the [Performance Measure Instructions](#). Any applicant determined performance measure must be significantly different than any CNCS national performance measure. When creating an application determined performance measure, please review your measure against the [Performance Measure Checklist](#).

Q: What are the functions of the Program Budget?

A: The [program budget](#) becomes part of the grantee's contractual obligation, serves as a blueprint for the activities supported under the grant, ensures conformance to provisions and regulatory restrictions, monitors and measures progress towards match requirements, and monitors budget to actual expenses.

Q: What is an effective budget?

A: An effective budget is realistic, consistent, and flexible. The budget reflects expected program revenues and expenses as well as the capacity to carry out program activities. The budget is aligned with the applicant's proposed goals and objectives. The budget is created to adapt to changing financial and operating circumstances while maintaining compliance with state and federal financial regulations.

Q: Why is a good budget design essential?

A: A good budget design establishes a realistic scope, ensures all details are covered, creates a highly competitive application, complies with all requirements, serves as a solid guide for program execution, and defines expectations.

Q: Are there budget resources available to assist in preparing our budget?

A: Yes. In the [Application Instructions](#), the following resources are available: Detailed Budget Instructions (Attachment B – page 22), Budget Worksheet (Attachment C – page 27), and Budget Checklist (Attachment F – page 34). On the [CNCS website](#), there are several financial management resources and online courses available.

Q: What is the difference between direct and indirect cost types?

A: Direct costs are directly attributable to meeting the goals and objectives of the program such as travel reimbursement, AmeriCorps gear, and independent program evaluations while Indirect costs are general or centralized expenses of an organization such as general liability insurance, internal evaluations, and general legal services.

Q: What are some examples of unallowable costs?

A: Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to: lobbying, fines and penalties, alcohol, bands for member celebrations, etc.

Q: What are some key tips for ensuring that our budget meets CNCS cost guidelines?

A: A few of our best tips include: reviewing living allowance amounts for each slot type to ensure the amount falls within the minimum and maximum amount outlined in the NOFO, confirming the budget meets the minimum match requirement, and that all the required cost components are included in the appropriate section of the budget.

Q: What are some common budget errors that we should keep in mind?

A: The most common budget errors are incorrect mathematical calculations, the numbers in the narrative not matching the numbers in the budget, and the budget being inefficient to meet the program’s outlined plan in the logic model and narrative. The best way to avoid these errors is to have an individual who is unfamiliar with your program/application review the full application for mistakes and inconsistencies.

Q: What are the match requirements?

A: The match requirements are indicated in the chart below (copied from page 13 of the NOFO)

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1, 2, 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

Q: Are there any requirements on how our required match is provided?

A: Sub-grantees are permitted to provide the required match either as cash or in-kind as long as the overall amount equals or exceeds the required match level. Cash includes any costs in which the sub-grantee expends funds such as personnel salaries, AmeriCorps gear, and office supplies while in-kind includes any costs in which the sub-grantee is being provided a service or item at no cost to their organization such as donated meeting space, donated food for a member/site supervisor training, and donated trainer services/time.

Q: What are the financial requirements at the startup of the grant cycle for a cost reimbursement grant?

A: For cost reimbursement sub-grantees, the organization applying for AmeriCorps State funding should have a minimum of two months of funding available to cover living stipends, salaries, and other costs associated with the AmeriCorps State grant. Programs incur the costs then request reimbursement through Volunteer West Virginia. This includes submitting an online Periodic Expense Report (PER) via OnCorps (online grants management system), a paper invoice signed in blue ink, and supporting documentation for each expense.

Q: I see that there is no longer a Budget Narrative section. Are we really supposed to only write “see budget” in this narrative field?

A: Yes. CNCS changed the format this year to remove the required narrative allowing the budget to speak for itself.

Q: What are the financial requirements at the startup of the grant cycle for an education award programs (EAP)

A: For an EAP, the organization will submit an online Periodic Expense Report (PER) via OnCorps (online grants management system) and a paper invoice signed in blue ink upon enrollment of all awarded members. The sub-grantee is responsible for the costs of completing all National Service Criminal History Check components.

Q: If we are a continuation applicant and have budget changes, can we make them now?

A: Yes. Please review the Continuation Request section (page 13) of the [Application Instructions](#) for the steps needed to change a budget during a continuation year along with any narrative requirements.

Q: If we are a continuation application and our match requirement has increased this year, do we make this change in the budget now?

A: Yes. You will need to make the changes to your actual budget in eGrants (official grants management system) and provide your justification for the change in the Continuation Narrative section of the application.

Q: As a continuation applicant, do we leave or remove the previous years' narrative?

A: You will leave previous years' and add a new Year 2 or Year 3 heading above the previous narrative. Under the new heading is where you will address this year's changes.

Q: As a continuation applicant, can we make changes to the narrative even though it isn't required?

A: No. Continuation applicants cannot make changes to the narrative unless there is a major change to program design, intervention, etc. that is needed. Continuation applicants should answer the questions found on page 13 of the [Application Instructions](#) and make any budgetary changes only.

Q: I am a currently funded formula program. How do I determine whether our program is in a continuation or a re-compete year?

A: You can reach out to Volunteer West Virginia for assistance if you are unsure whether you are in a continuation or re-compete year.

Q: How are applicants selected to receive funding?

A: Volunteer West Virginia staff and volunteers from the community review each new and re-compete application. Volunteer West Virginia will weigh the following factors in ranking applications: alignment with the State Service Plan, alignment with CNCS and Volunteer West Virginia Priority Focus Areas, past performance (re-compete and continuation applicants), and organizational capabilities among other factors. Commissioners have the final decision-making authority. Please review the [Formula Ranking Process](#) guide for more information on the selection and ranking process.