

## **VWV Competitive Grants Process FAQs**

**October 15, 2018- November 5, 2018**

**1.) Do you have a time frame on the 15th?**

**And can people going to this who are on staff (and paid through our current AmeriCorps grant) count hours for this from that grant or does the time also need to be charged to nonfederal sources?**

- The time is tentative, but we are thinking of a start at 9:00am. It will be a full day of training.
- You cannot bill time for future application development to the current AmeriCorps grant.

**2.) Are there any planning grant opportunities?**

- Planning grant opportunities are part of the formula process which is in the Spring

**3.) Is there a way that I could participate in the November 15 training remotely? We have webinar software and I could send someone with a web camera to use if needed.**

- Yes, you can attend remotely. Please keep in mind that you will need to bring your own software and/or web camera and be responsible for set up and recording of the training. Also, we are planning to include more small group activities and work sessions this year, so if you attend remotely you won't be able to participate in that portion of the training.

**4.) I understand that we need to have a draft completed before the training.**

- The national applications are not due at the time of our training. They will be due in eGrants by 12/14/18 by 5pm and our training will be on 11/15/2018 from 9:00am- 5:00pm.

**5.) We should submit this form if we intend to apply for competitive funding, not formula, correct?**

- Yes, that is correct.

**6.) Since we are state formula in our first year, I am assuming we can stay in formula funding next year and not apply for competitive funding?**

- Correct

**7.) For our intent, would our federal budget request be \$800 per member if we are doing the education award program again? Also, do I use the number of members or the MSY for the total budget requested?**

- Amount of money per member is determined by member type. A FT member equals \$800.
- Total budget = # of MSY x Cost per MSY

**8.) Since this is a competitive grant that we are applying for this time, would our match still be 50% since we have had formula grants?**

- There is a chance of going back to 24% if the project is considered a new project by CNCS, but if they are continuing the same project, even an adaptation of the same project, they would remain at 50%.

Please see the CNCS guidance below:

“If an applicant is 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. CNCS will consider a project to be new if there is a meaningful difference between it and previous projects in a comparison of the following characteristics, among others: the objectives and priorities of the projects; the nature of the services provided; the program staff, participants, and volunteers involved; the geographic locations in which the services are provided; the populations served; and the proposed community partnerships. (§ 2522.340). Requests to be considered a new project should include information about how the new project differs from the previous project in the characteristics noted above. The request should also include the proposed name of the new project. CNCS staff will review the request to determine if the proposed project does represent a meaningful difference from the previous project or if the proposed project is an example of natural program evolution over time. If it is determined that the project is new, the Program Officer will create a new project in eGrants.”

**9.) Would we be eligible to request an alternative match schedule given that the majority of our sites are in rural or severely economically distressed communities?**

- You can apply. CNCS awards alternative match

**10.) When should a program apply for competitive funding?**

- The final decision to apply for competitive funding is made by the program.

**11.) Who pays for the \$56.00 that goes towards the background check?**

- The program pays for that. You can put it under federal share or cost share. Basically, it needs to be in your program budget.

**12.) Do we have to pay the state provider one fee for the state and FBI check? Is it possible to separate the state and FBI fees? What about members that are continuing and do not need to the background check again? *Pending answer, will update soon.***

**13.) Would the total be \$87.55 for the NSOPW, State and FBI Check? Does this include site supervisors?**

- Yes, that is correct. Yes, it does include site supervisors.

**14.) I noticed that Capacity Building removed the performance measure Volunteer Management. Does this mean that we must change our strategies for data collection?**

- This performance measure, formally called Volunteer Management, has been broadened but is still represented within the output and outcome designated for Capacity Building. You should not have to change implementation or data collection.

**15.) To confirm, for the focus area Capacity Building, the program cannot create applicant determined outputs and outcomes?**

- Yes, that is correct.

**16.) Will changes in this NOFO be carried forward into the next years?**

- Our best guess is that the change will remain in place and possibly additional changes will be added next year. The CNCS Transition Plan may also inform the grants process.

**17.) Do we count time on conference calls and in-person training as AmeriCorps time?**

- Yes. Both are allowable AmeriCorps activities and can be logged in the training category. However, writing a grant for future federal funding is not an allowable activity under AmeriCorps time.

## **VWV Competitive Grants Process FAQs**

**November 6, 2018 – November 19, 2018**

**I don't see an opportunity for a renewal of the formula AmeriCorps grant in eGrants. Am I doing something wrong? Or is it not available yet?**

- The formula grant renewal is not yet available in eGrants. Only the competitive grant should be available. If you are a formula program applying for competitive funding then you can access the competitive grant. However, if you wish to remain as a formula grant you do not need to complete a renewal until Spring 2019. It is optional for a formula program to apply for competitive funding.

**Can you all tell me what evaluation tier we fell in? Also, is there a way we can find out how we scored on each section?**

- You can review feedback from CNCS after your last successful recompetite application. The feedback is sent to Volunteer West Virginia from CNCS via email and then forwarded to your staff.
- No, there is not a way to find out how each individual section was scored. CNCS does not provide this information.

**Do programs that are applying for competitive continuation have to update performance measures?**

- Yes, continuation programs must follow the new NOFO instructions, which includes updating performance measures.

**Can I view the points that CNCS gives for each section of my competitive grant application?**

- No, you do not have access to the points that CNCS awarded for each section of your competitive grant application. However, CNCS does send feedback if you are competing in a new competitive grants cycle. It includes an evidence and evaluation review in addition to an overall feedback document and is sent via email.

**Am I submitting to competitive or formula when I participate in this application process?**

- This application process is for competitive funding. Formula funding is not submitted until March 2018. It is optional to submit for competitive funding. Please review the recommendation that you received from Volunteer West Virginia at the beginning of this process. The technical assistance and training, however, are applicable for both application processes.

**Will I have the chance to edit my application after the first deadline in December?**

- Yes, there will be a review and edit period before the final submission

**When we get feedback from the competitive process can we incorporate that into our formula submission?**

- No, if you do not receive competitive funding the first application you submitted in December is the version that will be entered into the Formula competition in the spring. You can not edit the competitive submission and resubmit to formula because that would give an unfair advantage over other formula applicants.

**How do we request an alternative match?**

- To request an alternative match, submit all documents to Volunteer West Virginia. The documents for alternative match are submitted at the time of the first submission date in December. We will then submit to CNCS. You will need to budget for the required match and then submit a budget modification if you are awarded the alternative match.
- You will need to provide justification for the alternative match. Please see the 2019 ASN Application Instructions, starting on page 37, for more information.
- Per Attachment G: Alternative Match Instructions in the 2019 ASN Application Instructions “The alternative match requirement will be in effect for whatever portion of the three-year project period remains or if applying as a new grantee, for the upcoming three-year grant cycle.”

**How do I show that I serve economically distressed sites if my program’s main office is in Charleston?**

- You will need to list the sites that are economically distressed by finding the Beale Codes or that the site meets the requirements for ‘severely economically distressed county’ as outlined in the Attachment G: Alternative Match Instructions in the 2019 ASN Application Instructions.

**Additional Notes:**

- We are working on posting the PowerPoint slides from the November 15 training to the website. Our trainers would like to review them beforehand and will get us the final slides in the next several weeks.
- Several questions were repeated after our last call. Please see the last FAQ for Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> – Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> posted on our website under the Grants Section, Competitive Grants Process.
- The competitive NOFO is now open on eGrants.

## **VWV Competitive Grants Process FAQs**

### **Budget Call**

**November 20, 2018**

**Do we have to pay the state provider one fee for the state and FBI check? Is it possible to separate the state and FBI fees? What about members that are continuing and do not need to the background check again?** *Revisited from FAQs October 15<sup>th</sup>- Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>*

- Currently, WV is using the Idemia platform (The CNCS approved repository is the West Virginia State Police who has a contract with Idemia). Idemia combines the State and FBI checks, so the cost is combined. Volunteer West Virginia is not aware of a way to separate the cost through Idemia.
- Information given in the NOFO/ Application Instructions state programs are to budget funds for every covered position. This would include continuing members.

**To clarify, the new background check is \$87.00 for every covered position. Does this include positions that do not need a background check?**

- Yes, that is correct. Programs should budget \$87 for every covered position. This is a requirement from CNCS. We understand that many programs will not need to spend all of the funding budgeted for this purpose.
- You will need to show this in your budget but can submit a budget modification after awarded. When creating your budget think about where you can move the money in the future and leave that budget line open. All modifications must abide by CNCS guidelines.
- If a position is listed in the budget, it will need a background check. If the position is not listed in the budget, a background check will not be required.

**Are we allotted a certain amount for project supply, or do we need to supply an itemized list? Can it be allocated per project?**

- You must give an itemized list if the amount is over \$1,000.
- Make sure that your gear states specifically 'logoed gear' to eliminate the need for clarification from CNCS

**What is the correct NOFO selection on eGrants?**

- It will show FY 2019 AmeriCorps State and Territory Commission (New and Continuations)

**If we are applying for the alternative match, we submit the budget as if you don't have the funds. Afterwards if you are awarded the alternative match you adjust the budget?**

- Correct

**Have you seen any movements to restrict in-kind?**

- No, we have not. It does have to be allowable and have proper documentation which includes receipts and affidavit. If you want to look at audit trends you can review the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports via <https://www.cncsoig.gov/news/semi-annual-reports> . The reports are specific for CNCS audits.

**Do you see any issue for budget modifications in certain sections?**

- Budget modifications are allowed between Sections 1 and 2 as long as they do not exceed 10% of the total grant budget (CNCS +Grantee Share)
- Budget modification requests that exceed 10% of the total budget must be approved in advance by Volunteer West Virginia and then CNCS and require changes in eGrants. These types of amendments are rare and take more time. Grantees should carefully consider whether this type of amendment is really necessary and prudent.

**Additional Notes:**

- Use the budget checklist to review your budget. The checklist only applies to cost reimbursement not fixed amount grants.
- Fieldprint and TrueScreen usage is heavily encouraged by CNCS and that is why it is requested that those services are reflected in the budget. At this point Volunteer West Virginia is not asking programs to use those services. We are currently reviewing it And will let grantees know prior to the enrollment of 2019-20 AmeriCorps members.

## **VWV Competitive Grants Process FAQs**

**November 21, 2018- December 4, 2018**

**When we are entering information on the eGrants MSYs/Member Tab can we list our program-wide focus areas / objectives, with all our MSY allocated, but then only list performance measure for one part of it?**

- Yes, you can. You will allocate 100% of MSYs to focus areas and objectives, but you will not need to assign 100% of MSYs to performance measures. Please see further guidance under Application Instructions, Attachment A: Performance Measure Instructions, MSYs/Members Tab, p. 17.

**How do I delete our previous performance measures in the eGrants MSYs/Member Tab section?**

- To edit a performance measure click the 'Edit' button. To delete a measure, click 'Delete' To create a new performance measure, click the 'Add New Performance Measure' button. Please see further guidance under Application Instructions, Attachment A: Performance Measure Instructions, Home Page, p 16.

**I'm reading over the questions on the website from October 15, 2018-Nov. 5, 2018. I'm not sure what Question 7 is referring to. Are they applying for an education award program only?**

- That answer was for an Education Award Program Fixed Amount Grant. The Maximum Cost per MSY table for different grant types is on page 10 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

**Are we able to edit the program title by deleting recovery from Energy Express AmeriCorps-Recovery?**

- This is not a recovery application. Please do not select that title.

**Do we need to have a secondary focus area?**

- No, it is not required to have a secondary focus area
- Please see Objectives Tab pg. 16-17 of the Application Instructions for further guidance

**Under Performance Measures- We have entered data on all tabs with the exception of the summary tab? Does this indicate an error on our part?**

- The performance measure tab has 5 sections. Make sure to answer every box until screen is green and frequently save your work. eGrants does not autosave. Look for the scroll bars to allow the screen to move to the right.
- The summary is used to validate performance measures and is not a box to fill with text.
- Please see the eGrants tutorial documents, which are located on our website and have been sent to you via email.

**On the eGrants application section of the grant "new" is checked and we need to change it to "new/previous grantee" How do we do that?**

- You do not need to change that information on your application. It will not affect your application.
- However, if you want to change the category from "new" to "continuation/renewal" you can do that by starting a fresh application which will provide you with previously submitted grant text.

**In the Cost Efficiency/Budget Adequacy section the application directions say to enter “see budget”. On page 8 of the application directions, where page numbers are discussed, it states what is included in narrative pages and lists the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section as a narrative page. This is referring to where we are to enter “see budget” correct?)**

- That is correct

**If we are applying for a new three-year grant, are we a continuation or a new/previous program?**

- If you are recompeting (in the final year of a competitive funding cycle and applying for a new grant cycle), select Continuation/Renewal or New/Previous grantee. Please see further guidance under Applicant Info, p. 5 of the Application Instructions.

**Since we are not doing anything with labor unions I need to select N/A on the eGrants application?**

- Correct

**For our evidence base we self-assign an evidence tier and then CNCS reviews and assigns their own evidence tier?**

- Correct

**We just have one performance measure. Should we have more than one?**

- We do not encourage more than one performance measure. The requirement is one aligned performance measure which can be applicant determined or a national performance measure. You can include additional data in your narrative.

**Do you know why we haven't been able to qualify for alternative match? Can we request feedback from CNCS?**

- We will ask our CNCS program officer and see if they can supply feedback

**Can we see a copy of previous program letters for alternative match that were successful?**

- You will need to contact that specific program to get permission to view the letter

**Can we modify our evaluation plan for this grant cycle?**

- You can revise your evaluation plan from the past three years.

**Additional Guidance:**

- First, you want to look at the evaluation plan checklist to make sure you are meeting the minimum requirements for your plan
- Also, this year *funded* applicants are *receiving clarification requests* on their evaluation plan to have the plans approved by CNCS. This means that you will be required to make updates to your plan while working with your evaluator. This may occur in a short time frame after you have been notified that your application is being considered for an award. Please make sure that you are aware of who your evaluator will be and that the money for evaluation services is in the budget.
- The evaluation plan is up to the program to implement. The evaluation report is generated after you implement the plan. The report is used to provide evidence in the narrative of your next renewal application. The report helps document evidence for your intervention which will give you additional points in the evidence section.

**Can we send a draft to Volunteer West Virginia for our alternative match request letter?**

- Yes, we can review that. Please submit and we will give our response during the feedback period.

**Additional**

CNCS has new outcome studies with either moderate or positive impact for national service interventions. You can find those studies on the CNCS Evidence Exchange.

## **VWV Competitive Grants Process FAQs**

**December 5, 2018- December 11, 2018**

**In the detail instructions / definitions it says to count as "organizations" non-profit and local/state gov't. Does that mean we cannot count our federal gov't sites as organizations? Can we still count all of our members as contributing to capacity building (including those at federal sites) but we just don't count those sites in our target numbers? What if the members contribute for a part of their time to associated organizations such as friends groups, that are not their assigned site but are part of the service duties?**

(We are working to provide an answer to this question. For now, please count all sites.)

**What is the best method to select research studies for the evidence base section in the grant application?**

- You can provide up to two research studies that CNCS will review as part of your evidence base.
- The only types of research studies that will be reviewed and counted are studies that closely match your program.
- Studies that do not meet qualifications for evidence section can be referenced in Theory of Change. You can also use your own program's statistics or data from a community partner in this section.
- If you are using a research study with an intervention doesn't match the characteristics explained in the NOFO, make sure to explicitly state why the intervention is relevant by writing a sentence for each of the five bullet points listed below.
- The following areas must match the research studies:
  - Characteristics of the beneficiary population
  - Characteristics of the population delivering the information
  - Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
  - The context in which the intervention is delivered
  - Outcomes of the evaluation
- Please see p. 14, Evidence Base of the Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for additional guidance.

**What is allowable for in-kind donations of housing?**

In-kind cannot include housing unless it is necessary for program design. For instance, if your program runs a summer camp which requires overnight stays, lodging for that camp is allowable.

**What rate can I collect for in-kind professional services?**

You can collect the individuals professional hourly service rate, including specialist rates for attorneys, auditors, land management professionals, etc. As long as that person isn't paid from another federal source, given proper documentation. The services would need to be approved in your budget and allowable expenses for your CNCS grant.

**Is the CNCS required evaluation a required document that we attach to our application? Specifically, would that be our external evaluator report?**

Yes, you will submit your external evaluator report using the guidance below, which was obtained from the NOFO and Application Instructions

*p. 8, VII. Documents of the Application Instructions:*

After you have submitted the documents via the guidance in the Notice, change the status in eGrants from the default “Not Sent” to the applicable status “Sent,” “Not Applicable,” or “Already on File at CNCS.”

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

F. Submission Instructions for Evaluations, Labor Union Concurrence, Other Required Documents, and Explanation of Federal Debt Delinquency, as applicable. Please submit the required documents to the email listed in the Notice using the naming convention and other instructions found there. This information must be received by Volunteer West Virginia by the deadline in the notice.

*p. 12, Submission of Additional Documents of the Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity:*

Additional Documents must be emailed to AmeriCorps@wv.gov with the labels outlined below. Emails should include the following information:

- Subject line: [Legal Applicant Name]– [Application ID number]
- Body of the email should identify:
  - The legal applicant name and its point of contact information
  - The application ID number
  - A list of documents that should be attached to the email
- Attachments to emails should include
  - Individually saved files that are clearly labeled
  - Each file should also include a header or title

**I believe only one grant characteristic applies to us and that is Geographic Focus-Rural.**

In the Grant Characteristics section, the instructions state to check any characteristic that is a significant part of the program. It is up to the program to determine which characteristics apply.

**Can you clarify the meaning of Professional Corps in the next set of answers you post?**

Please see the definition for Professional Corps below. This can be found on pg. 7, Professional Corps of the Supplemental Guidance. Volunteer West Virginia does not currently have a Professional Corps program in our national service portfolio.

Professional Corps: A Professional Corps is a program model composed of AmeriCorps members serving as professionals; i.e. teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, attorneys, or other professionals. The programs recruit and place qualified members in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Professional Corps members' salaries/compensation, including childcare, are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget request to CNCS. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the program seeks to place members. These grants are fixed price grants.

**On page 10 of the instructions, it says the use of non-CNCS federal funds as match is permitted, provided we discuss our intention with the other agency prior to submitting our application. Do we need to also discuss it with Volunteer WV, or if the other agency says it's okay, can we just include them as a Source of Match? What if we are awarded additional federal funds after submitting the application? Is there a process to revise our source of match to potentially include them?**

You do not have to discuss it with Volunteer West Virginia, but you must submit a letter from the other Federal Agency that gives you permission to use their funds as match for AmeriCorps. A copy of the letter must be kept by the program as part of the grant file and an updated approval letter has to be submitted to Volunteer West Virginia at the beginning of each program year.

If additional federal funds were awarded after start of program year, the same documents are required. The source of match in the application would not need to be corrected. However, federal funds used as match must be reported in WV's Federal Financial Report. Any federal funds claimed in monthly reimbursements must be flagged in the PER submission in OnCorps so that Volunteer West Virginia staff can identify the amounts used.

**Can we include cost for scholarships to K-12 and post-secondary students in the budget under Other Program Operating Costs? We are proposing CrossFit strength training scholarships for the K-12 students and merit scholarships for the post-secondary students. All the students would be enrolled in our AmeriCorps member supported evidence-informed interventions, and we believe the scholarships would contribute to an improvement in their academic engagement.**

Registration fees may be an allowable expense if proper justification is provided. All costs must be justified and related to your prescribed intervention.

**I noticed when I put our budget into eGrants it shows our match is back up to 50%. Do I need to send you the waiver information again or will you use what I sent you when we submitted the original grant request?**

Please send it again when you submit your application.

**How can we measure food security for a community using H12 when we know that individuals need access to food more than once?**

Guidance for H12 Outcome: May be able to count number of individuals who are fed daily to show access. Performance measure definitions include the words “access at all times” which may be defined to include daily access.

**What if we only use one performance measure but we want to collect other information?**

Programs can collect data on additional performance measure throughout the year and compare with current aligned performance measure. If the performance measures that were tested show better data than the current aligned measure, a program may choose to change the measure or add a measure in a subsequent year.

**Where can we get ideas about evidence?**

Programs can benefit from reviewing grant applications submitted by programs with similar program models, focus area(s) and research studies, including national programs operating out of state.