



2018 WV AmeriCorps State Formula Grant

Notice Launch FAQs

January 30, 2018

Q: If I have a question after today's meeting, what do I do?

A: Please e-mail questions to Cassandra.L.Argo@wv.gov. Questions will be addressed in weekly FAQs that are uploaded to our Volunteer West Virginia website. Questions will also be addressed during scheduled Technical Assistance calls: February 5, February 20, March 6, and March 20.

Q: What technical assistance opportunities are available?

A: Volunteer West Virginia has scheduled three technical assistance opportunities for all applicants: Technical Assistance Meeting/Calls, Theory of Change/Logic Model webinar (tentative), and Theory of Change/Logic Model Feedback.

- Technical Assistance Meeting/Calls: 10 am on February 5, February 20, March 6, and March 20. To join the call, dial 866-453-5550 then enter pin 3730200#. These calls are the best opportunity to ask Volunteer West Virginia staff questions about the Notice, the application, program design, etc.
- (Tentative) Theory of Change/Logic Model webinar: Volunteer West Virginia is working to finalize details on a webinar to provide additional training on strong Theory of Change/Logic Model creation with an external trainer.
- Theory of Change/Logic Model Feedback: Applicants have the option to submit a draft of their Theory of Change/Logic Model sections to Cassandra.L.Argo@wv.gov by February 26. Volunteer West Virginia staff will review and provide feedback to applicants by March 5.

Q: When is the full grant due in eGrants?

A: The full grant is due in eGrants by 5 pm on March 26.

Q: What is eGrants?

A: eGrants is the online grants management system of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Q: What do I do if eGrants stops working before I can submit my application?

A: As soon as you encounter an issue with eGrants, please contact the eGrants Help Desk via their online link then e-mail Cassandra.L.Argo@wv.gov to explain the issue and confirm a Help Desk ticket has been opened. Volunteer West Virginia will ask individuals experiencing an eGrants issue to submit a Word version of their grant for the review process.

Q: If I can't meet the application submission deadline, what do I do?

A: Applicants must follow the guidelines on "Late Applications" on page 11 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) prior to the deadline. Early requests will not be approved.

Q: What happens after I submit my application and additional documents?

A: After your application is submitted, Volunteer West Virginia staff will review your application and any additional documents for compliance with the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), clarity and completeness, strengths, and areas for improvement. External Peer Reviewers will review the revised applications for clarity and completeness, strengths, and areas for improvement. Final approval for funding is at the discretion of our Board of Commissioners.

Q: Will we really know funding decisions on May 21?

A: Dependent on the finalization of a federal budget, funding decisions will be announced by May 21.

Q: If we are awarded funding on May 21, can we offer service opportunities to members at that time?

A: Applicants who have been awarded funding can offer member service opportunities at the time of the award notification; however, the offers must include language indicating that the extended offer is tentative until the applicant receives an official grant award letter in July.

Q: Where can I find the CNCS focus areas?

A: CNCS focus areas can be found on page 5 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Q: Where can I find the funding priority areas?

A: The funding priority areas can be found on page 6 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Q: What is the rural intermediary category?

A: A full definition of a rural intermediary can be found on page 11 of the [Mandatory Supplemental Guidance](#). A rural intermediary is essentially an organization who serves as the main administrator of an AmeriCorps program who places members at sites within the organization's service area.

Q: How competitive will this application process be?

A: Volunteer West Virginia expects this application process to be very competitive.

Q: If I am awarded funding, how long is my grant period?

A: Grant periods typically run for three years. Budget periods are one year with a shorter application required in years 2 & 3.

Q: What is the difference between a cost reimbursement grant, a fixed amount grant, and an education award program?

A: Below are the descriptions of each grant type copied from the [Mandatory Supplemental Guidance](#):

Cost Reimbursement Grants: These grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances, with flexibility to use all of the funds for allowable costs regardless of whether or not the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a budget and financial reports.

Fixed Amount Grants: These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. Organizations use their own or other resources to cover the remaining costs. Programs are not required to submit budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. However, CNCS provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Programs can access all of the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Professional Corps programs applying for operational funding through a Fixed Amount Grant must submit a budget in support of their request for operational funds.

- *Full-Time Fixed amount grants:* Fixed amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members or less than full-time members serving in a full-time capacity only. Professional Corps may only have full-time members. Programs can access funds under the grant based on enrolling the full complement of members supported under the grant.
- *Education Award Grants (EAP) Fixed amount grant:* Programs apply for a small fixed amount per MSY, can enroll less than full-time members, and use their own resources to cover all other costs. Programs can access funds under the grant based on enrolling the full complement of members supported under the grant. As with full-time fixed amount grants, there are no specific match or financial reporting requirements for EAP fixed amount grants.

Q: Am I eligible for a full-time fixed amount grant?

A: Only currently funded AmeriCorps State and National grantees and organizations with current, strong experience with AmeriCorps State and National grant management (within last 3 years).

Q: Do you think a full-time fixed amount grant would cover personnel costs?

A: It is allowable to include personnel costs in your budget. However, typically a full-time fixed amount grant does not provide enough funding to cover all the expenses associated with running a program.

Q: What is the benefit of a full-time fixed amount grant?

A: The main benefit of a full-time fixed amount grant is the elimination of the financial management and financial reporting requirements.

Q: What are the minimum and maximum thresholds for member requests for new applicants?

A: The minimum member requirement is 5. There is no stated maximum; however, we would be unlikely to approve more than 20 full-time members in a brand new application.

Q: Do I need to include headings in the eGrants application?

A: Yes. eGrants has overall set headings; however, eGrants does not include all the headings from the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#). Applicants should manually type the headings from the NOFO in all CAPS at the beginning of each section. Applications that do not include the headings typically do not score well during the External Peer Review process.

Q: Where can I find the points for each section?

A: The points for each section can be found in the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) beginning on page 15.

Q: Do I really write “see budget” in the narrative?

A: Yes. The Corporation has changed the requirements for this section, so no narrative is required.

Q: What’s the difference between new, continuation, and re-compete?

A: A new applicant is an applicant who has not received CNCS funding during the previous three years or an applicant that is proposing a project that is significantly different than past projects. A continuation applicant is an applicant who is in year 2 or 3 of their funding cycle. A re-compete applicant is an applicant who has received CNCS funding in the previous three years and has completed their 3 year funding cycle.

Q: Where do I find the continuation instructions?

A: Continuation Instructions can be found on page 13 of the [Application Instructions](#).

Q: If I am funded, what are the reporting requirements?

A: There are a variety of reporting requirements that funded applicants will be required to complete. Some of these reports include a bi-annual Grantee Progress Report (GPR) that documents progress on performance measure targets, monthly Periodic Expense Report (PER) and invoice submission to request reimbursement for actual expenses, and submission of member documents for review and approval. All reporting requirements are discussed during the annual kick-off meeting in July.

Q: If I decide not to apply for a program of my own and partner with another organization to host AmeriCorps State members, what is the minimum and maximum?

A: This depends on the partner organization’s allotment of members and pre-existing site agreements. Interested individuals should reach out to individual programs to discuss the individual’s organization’s needs.

Q: I am interested in receiving bonus points for the afterschool priority funding. Am I eligible?

A: Only new applicants who are requesting a minimum of 5 members to serve in an afterschool program or existing grantees who will expand to serve at least 5 additional afterschool programs will be eligible to receive the funding priority bonus points for afterschool placements.

Q: Do continuation applicants need to submit an evaluation plan or report this year?

A: No. Only new and re-compete applicants are required to submit an evaluation plan or report as part of this year's application. Individuals can find more information in the Evaluation section of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Q: What advice do currently funded programs in the room have for new applicants?

A: Currently funded programs recommended new programs have at least one staff member fully devoted to program management, continually work on developing additional resources, and establish strong member policies and procedures very early in the grant process.

Q: What is the ability to add more members during a continuation year?

A: Applicants are always encouraged to ask for the number of members they believe they need; however, the Commission cannot guarantee that all requests will be awarded in full due to funding availability.

Q: Do we have to adjust our narrative in a continuation year?

A: No, continuations do not adjust narratives as part of their continuation application. Continuations should refer to the Continuation Instructions beginning on page 13 of the [Application Instructions](#).

Q: What happens if we go over the page limit?

A: Reviewers will not review any material over the allowable page limits.

Q: Where can I find the minimum and maximum living allowance amounts?

A: The minimum and maximum living allowance amounts can be found in a chart on page 12 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Q: It is possible to have more than one focus area?

A: While the Commission limits new applicants to a single, aligned performance measure, applicants are allowed to include more than one focus area in their application.

Q: If I am approved for funding, how do I recruit members?

A: There are several ways that approved applicants can recruit members. Some of these recruitment methods include: AmeriCorps portal, Service Year Exchange, online job boards, and career recruitment fairs.

Q: To qualify for bonus points, do all members have to be engaged in that activity/priority area?

A: For the geography bonus points, the majority of member activities should occur in one or more of the counties listed. For the afterschool placement bonus points, a minimum of 5 members must be focused on afterschool programming. To qualify for the education award program bonus points, an applicant must have an education award design which requires all members to receive only an education award.

Q: Is there any advantage to having a lower cost per MSY?

A: Yes. A lower cost per MSY makes an application more competitive because it allows the Commission to stretch resources even further. For example, two applications with identical scores, but different costs per MSY would be ranked differently. The applicant with the lower cost per MSY would be ranked higher than the applicant with the higher cost per MSY.

Q: How does the federal budget situation affect funding decisions?

A: The Commission fully anticipates an approved federal budget well before May 21; however, the Commission will follow any guidance provided by the Corporation as the announcement deadline approaches.

Q: If our program design includes less than full time members, is there a minimum living allowance amount we are required to provide members?

A: No. Applicants with less than full time members can decide the amount they will provide members based on their funding availability as long as the amount does not go over the maximum allowable living allowance listed on page 12 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Q: Am I required to provide healthcare to my members?

A: Applicants with full time members are required to provide members with ACA-compliant healthcare options. Applicants with less than full time members are not required to provide health care options to members.

Q: How will healthcare requirements change with the new tax bill?

A: We have not received any guidance on this subject from the Corporation. We will check into this situation and follow-up as soon as possible.

Q: Where can I find the Evidence requirements?

A: Evidence requirements can be found on page 16 of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) and on page 3 of the [Mandatory Supplemental Guidance](#).

Q: Do the articles for Evidence need to be from the national service website (clearinghouse)?

A: No. If there is an article on the clearinghouse that makes sense with your evaluation and program design, feel free to use it. If there is not an article on the clearinghouse that makes sense, please find an academic article that strongly supports your evidence narrative and program design.

Q: Do we need to submit our questions in advance?

A: No. You are free to submit questions in advance to Cassandra.L.Argo@wv.gov or wait to ask on one of the four technical assistance calls.



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 via e-mail to Cassandra.L.Argo@wv.gov 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.