



**AmeriCorps**

# **Frequently Asked Questions: AmeriCorps State and National Evaluations**

Office of Research and Evaluation  
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## Background

These FAQs are intended to explain the AmeriCorps State and National evaluation requirements and AmeriCorps' expectations for ASN grantee evaluations. Additionally, the FAQs provide information for ASN applicants and grantees/subgrantees to help them plan and conduct successful evaluations of their AmeriCorps-supported programs. The goal of this policy guidance is to help ensure that the evaluations conducted by ASN grantees/subgrantees are an effective and appropriate tool to help them improve their program interventions and build their evidence base. Unless otherwise noted, the guidance in this document is for competitive ASN grantees.

## Evaluation Requirements

### 1) Where can I find the evaluation requirements for AmeriCorps State and National grantees?

The evaluation requirements for AmeriCorps State and National grantees can be found in AmeriCorps Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 45 Subtitle B Chapter XXV Part 2522 Subpart E Evaluating Programs: Requirements and Procedures

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2522/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRd2f77502bdd0055>

### 2) What are the evaluation requirements for ASN grantees?

#### Formula Grantees

AmeriCorps state formula grantees are required to follow the evaluation requirements established by their respective state service commission. Applicants for state formula grants should contact their state commission for their grant evaluation requirements.

#### Competitive Grantees

If an ASN state competitive, national direct, or native nation grantee has received at least three years of competitive funding for a project, they are required to submit an evaluation plan summary form when they recompete for competitive AmeriCorps funding for the same project.

If an ASN state competitive, national direct, or native nation grantee has received at least six years of competitive funding for a project, they are required to submit an evaluation evaluation plan summary form and evaluation report when they recompete for competitive AmeriCorps funding for the same project.

The type of required evaluation depends on the size and type of competitive grant awarded.

AmeriCorps state competitive, national direct, and native nation grantees (with the exception of Education Award Programs) that receive an average annual AmeriCorps grant of \$500,000 or more as documented in the federal share of the grant budget, must conduct an

independent impact evaluation. For further information on the requirements for grantees in this category, see the [Large Grantee Evaluation Requirements](#) section below.

AmeriCorps state competitive, national direct grantees, and native nation grantees that receive an average annual AmeriCorps grant of less than \$500,000 as documented in the federal share of the grant budget, as well as all AmeriCorps Education Award Program and No Cost Slot grantees, are required to conduct either an internal or an independent evaluation, which does not need to be an impact evaluation. For further information on the requirements for grantees in this category, see the [Small Grantee Evaluation Requirements](#) section below.

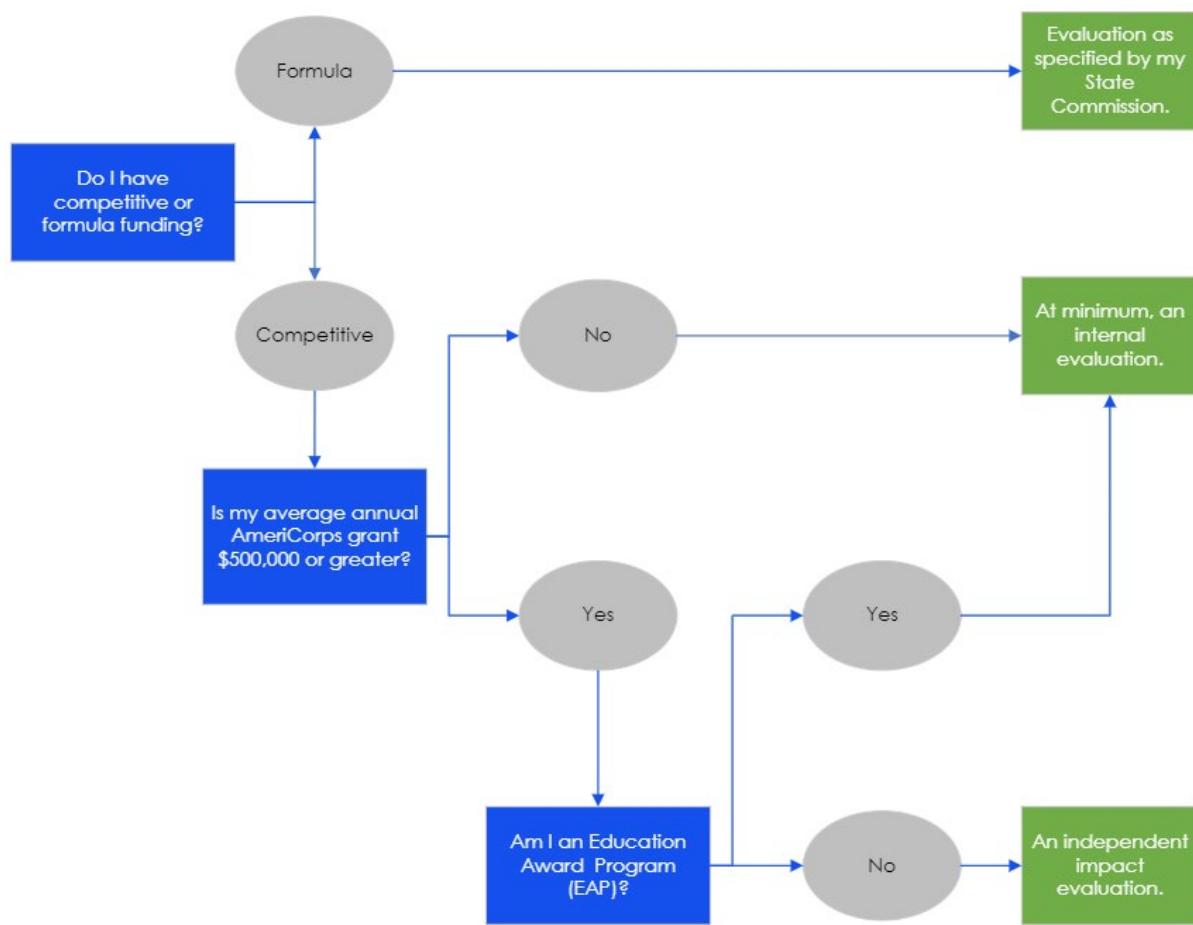


Figure 1: Flow chart describing evaluation requirements.

### 3) What time period must my evaluation cover?

Evaluations must cover at least one year of AmeriCorps-funded service activity for the same project. In this context, "one year" refers to activities that take place during one program year. Depending on the program design, these activities may or may not span a full 12 months.

The AmeriCorps-funded service activity covered by the evaluation can be from any time period. For example, a grantee may choose to evaluate data collected during a previous

competitive grant cycle for the same project. However, the evaluation report must be completed or published during the current grant cycle in order to meet the grantee's evaluation requirements for that cycle.

#### 4) How does AmeriCorps calculate the \$500,000 threshold for grantees?

The \$500,000 threshold is based on the average annual funding the grantee receives from AmeriCorps as documented in the federal share of the grant budget (the AmeriCorps share only, not the program's total budget with matching funds) during the three-year grant cycle in which the evaluation is conducted. When a grantee recompetes for funding, if the grantee is requesting \$500,000 per year or more from AmeriCorps in their recompete grant application budget, the grantee will be considered a Large grantee and will be required to submit an evaluation summary plan form that will meet the requirements for a Large grantee in the upcoming three-year grant cycle.

#### 5) Will changes in approved funding in continuation years affect the \$500,000 threshold?

If a grantee is awarded a different amount of AmeriCorps funding in years 2 and/or 3 of a grant cycle, it will affect the three-year average funding used to calculate evaluation requirements for that grant cycle. If the change will move the grantee above the \$500,000 average funding threshold, they will need to revise their evaluation plan summary form to meet the Large grantee requirements. If the change will move the grantee below the \$500,000 average funding threshold, the grantee will have the option of revising their evaluation plan summary form meet the Small grantee requirements.

### Large Grantee Evaluation Requirements

#### 6) What does AmeriCorps expect of grantees that receive an average annual ASN grant of \$500,000 or more and are required to conduct an independent impact evaluation?

AmeriCorps state competitive, national direct, and native nation grantees who receives an average of \$500,000 or more per year from AmeriCorps during a three-year grant cycle are expected to conduct an independent impact evaluation during that grant cycle.

An evaluation is considered independent if it uses an external evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in, the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program being evaluated.

An impact evaluation is designed to provide statistical evidence of how well a program works and what effect it has on service recipients and/or service participants compared to what would have happened in the absence of the program (i.e., evaluations that include a comparison or control group). In addition, high-quality evaluations must be designed to provide evidence of a causal relationship between program activities and outcomes ([45 CFR § 2522.700](#)). Grantees must use an experimental or quasi-experimental design. The evaluation method should match the size, scale, and purpose of the program.

An impact evaluation should be guided by measurable and clearly defined research questions that identify the effect of program participation on program service recipients and/or service participants for specific outcomes. These outcomes should be included in the grantee's theory of change and/or logic model.

## 7) Are Large grantees required to conduct an impact evaluation in every grant cycle?

Large grantees that have already conducted an impact evaluation for the same project can request an Alternative Evaluation Approach using the Evaluation Plan Summary Form to conduct a different type of independent evaluation. Refer to the AEA Guidance in the NOFO page for details about what must be included in this request. The subsequent independent evaluation activities should build on the findings from the impact evaluation to strengthen the evidence base for their program and make continuous improvements to the program.

## 8) I am a Large grantee who has not conducted an impact evaluation at my own project site(s), but I am implementing an intervention/program model that has already been rigorously evaluated at other sites. Do I still need to conduct an impact evaluation?

Large grantees who are replicating an evidence-based intervention with fidelity can request an Alternative Evaluation Approach using the Evaluation Plan Summary Form to conduct a different type of independent evaluation. Refer to the AEA Guidance in the NOFO page for details about what must be included in this request. If AEA approval is granted, the grantee is strongly encouraged to conduct a well-designed implementation study.

## Small Grantee Evaluation Requirements

### 9) What does AmeriCorps expect of grantees that receive an average annual AmeriCorps grant of less than \$500,000, or that receive an Education Award Program (EAP) or No Cost Slot grant, and are required to conduct either an independent or internal evaluation?

Grantees with an average annual grant under \$500,000, as well as those that receive Education Award Program (EAP) or No Cost Slot grants, are required to submit an evaluation that may be conducted by either an internal or an independent evaluator.

An evaluation is considered internal if it is conducted by an individual from the grantee's own organization or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates. Small grantees are not required to work with an independent individual or entity, such as a university or research firm, to conduct their evaluation. However, grantees are encouraged to use evaluators with training and/or experience with rigorous evaluations and may use an independent evaluator, if preferred.

While AmeriCorps encourages Small grantees to use the most rigorous evaluation design feasible, they are not required to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation. When selecting a study design, grantees should consider the various options and select the

design most appropriate for the program. Grantees may opt for a process, outcome, or impact evaluation. However, AmeriCorps strongly encourages grantees to build on outcome data collected through existing performance measurement efforts and implement a design that includes assessment of program outcomes and a study comparison group, which can help to determine whether outcomes can be attributed to the program.

## Timing of Evaluations

### 10) When should evaluations be completed and/or submitted?

AmeriCorps competitive grantees must:

- submit an evaluation plan summary form with each recompete application after their initial three years of competitive funding;
- conduct an evaluation during their subsequent three years of competitive funding; and
- submit a report of the findings from their evaluation when recompeting for funding again.

First time applicants for AmeriCorps funding are not required to submit an evaluation plan summary form with their application and grantees are not required to conduct an evaluation during their initial three-year grant period. However, it is highly recommended that grantees begin the evaluation planning process during their initial three-year grant cycle so that they have a strong evaluation plan and are prepared to conduct a high-quality evaluation if selected for funding during a subsequent grant award period.

Competitive cycle	Submit with application:	Activities during awarded grant cycle:
First	Nothing related to evaluation requirements	Prepare to submit an evaluation plan summary form that will meet your evaluation requirements
Second (or having received three years of competitive funding)	First evaluation plan summary form	Conduct your evaluation according to your plan, and draft your second evaluation plan
Third (or having received six years of competitive funding)	First evaluation report and second evaluation plan summary form	Conduct your second evaluation according to your second plan, and draft your third evaluation plan
Further years of competitive funding	Follow the pattern above	Follow the pattern above

## 11) I have already completed an evaluation for my program. Do I have to keep conducting new evaluations during every grant cycle?

Yes. Grantees who continue to recompete for funding must continue to submit evaluation plan summary forms for each grant period, as well as evaluation reports documenting the results of their most recent evaluation, with their recompete applications. AmeriCorps expects that each subsequent evaluation will be developmentally appropriate for the program's lifecycle and will build on the findings from previous evaluation efforts in order to strengthen the evidence base for the program and make continuous improvements to the program.

## 12) How should I implement my evaluation during my three-year grant cycle?

There is no one way a grantee should implement an evaluation, as each evaluation is different. Some grantees may need to develop and pilot data collection instruments, whereas others may use previously validated data instruments or use data from a previous year of AmeriCorps-funded service activity. Some grantees may have made connections with an external evaluator during their first competitive grant cycle, whereas other grantees may be starting outreach once they are in their second grant cycle.

Regardless of where you are in executing your evaluation, you must allot enough time to hire an evaluator (if needed), develop and pilot data collection instruments (if needed), collect data for at least one year of AmeriCorps-funded service activity ([see above](#)), analyze the data, and write the evaluation report with your findings in time to submit the report with your next recompete application. Please note: this means grantees do not have three full years to complete evaluation activities.

If the outcomes being studied in the evaluation require longer-term measurement that will extend beyond this timeframe, grantees may request an AEA on the basis of timing.

## 13) What happens if a grantee does not conduct an evaluation that successfully fulfills the AmeriCorps evaluation requirements by the end of their second three-year grant award?

If a grantee has not completed an evaluation that fulfills their AmeriCorps evaluation requirements, they should detail in the application narrative the evaluation activities that they have carried out to date along with any evidence that they have gathered on the impact of their program when they submit a recompete application. The grantee should also provide an evaluation plan summary form with their application that details their evaluation activities in the next grant cycle. The evaluation plan must be designed to fulfill the evaluation requirements.

Recompeting grantees should keep in mind that evaluation reports and evaluation plan summary forms are a required part of the AmeriCorps funding process. If a grantee that is required to submit an evaluation report and/or evaluation plan summary form fails to do so, AmeriCorps will take this into consideration in making funding decisions. AmeriCorps

reserves the right to not consider an application that does not include the requisite evaluation report.

## Alternative Evaluation Approaches

### 14) What if my program can't meet the evaluation requirements as established?

Grantees may be eligible to apply for approval of an AEA. An AEA effectively changes the type of evaluation you can conduct and still meet your evaluation requirements. For example, a Large grantee is required by the regulations to conduct an independent impact evaluation. However, an AEA may allow for a Large grantee to conduct an independent non-impact evaluation instead. Refer to the AEA Guidance in the NOFO page for more information about eligibility.

### 15) What types of AEAs are available?

Refer to the AEA Guidance in the NOFO page for AEAs currently available to grantees.

### 16) How do I request an AEA?

You must complete and submit the Evaluation Plan Summary Form. Any AEA requests submitted without using this form will be denied. Requests submitted outside of the recompete grant application process may be considered. Such requests must be submitted as email attachments to [EvaluationPlans@americorps.gov](mailto:EvaluationPlans@americorps.gov). Refer to the AEA Guidance in the NOFO page.

### 17) How will I know if my AEA request is approved?

AmeriCorps will notify you via email about whether your AEA request is approved or denied. Please retain AEA approval notifications as grant records. If AmeriCorps denies your AEA request(s), you must conduct an evaluation that meets the established evaluation requirements for your grant.

### 18) I was approved for an AEA during my current competitive grant cycle. Can I continue using the same AEA for my next competitive grant cycle?

AEA approvals are for one three-year grant cycle only. You must submit a new AEA request the next time you recompete for competitive funding.

## Submission of Evaluation Plan Summary Form

The Evaluation Plan Summary Form should be completed with the most accurate information available at the time of application regarding the program plans to evaluate at least one year of project activities. **By signing the form, the applicant acknowledges compliance with their evaluation requirements, including the need to submit a report at the end of the three-year grant cycle.**

The form includes a section to request an Alternative Evaluation Approach if applicable [see section below].

### 19) When do I submit my Evaluation Plan?

You no longer submit an evaluation plan. You submit an Evaluation Plan Form that summarizes your plan to evaluate your program.

### 20) How do I request an AEA?

If you are requesting an AEA at the time of application submission, then the Evaluation Plan Form has a section to submit a request for AEA. After awarding, if there is a change in your grant or evaluation plan that requires a new AEA request, then you should submit the form to [evaluationplans@americorps.gov](mailto:evaluationplans@americorps.gov)

### 21) When will the forms be reviewed?

If you are asking for an AEA at the time of application, you will receive a decision post-award. If you are asking for an AEA after awarding, you will receive a decision once you submit the AEA request and the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation reviews the request.

### 22) Will I receive an approved form?

No, only if an AEA is requested will the grantee receive the form back with determination.

### 23) Will I receive any feedback at all?

No, the form's purpose is for compliance and fulfills the requirement of submitting a summary of your evaluation plan to AmeriCorps.

### 24) When is the form due?

It is due by the NOFO deadline date as part of the grant application process.

### 25) Who receives the forms?

The AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation receives and keeps track of submissions for compliance purposes and reviews/approves AEA requests as applicable.

### 26) Are there any changes to who submits the form?

No, grantees should continue submitting applications and their complementary forms per usual.

### 27) When do I need to submit an updated AEA form?

If a change to your grant or evaluation plan requires a new AEA request.

## Submission and Review of Evaluation Reports

### 28) What should be included in my evaluation report?

Evaluation reports should include:

- an introduction to the project;
- the research questions;
- a description of the evaluation design and methods; and
- a section on the findings and results of the evaluation.

If the grantee conducted an experimental or quasi-experimental design, the report should also include statistical evidence of the effect of the program compared to what would have happened in the absence of the program (i.e. p-values, confidence intervals).

Evaluation reports should include a title page with the AmeriCorps grant number(s) for the project(s) that was/were evaluated, the name of the project(s) evaluated, the evaluator's name, the evaluator's organization name, and the report's completion date.

### 29) What will AmeriCorps do with evaluation reports submitted with grant applications?

Expert evaluators will assess the quality of the evaluation design and implementation, the strength of its findings, and whether the evaluation met AmeriCorps requirements. These assessments may be used to inform AmeriCorps' consideration of the selection criteria and for the purpose of assessing the quality and outcomes of your program ([45 CFR § 2522.740](#)). Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for additional information on how evaluation reports will be used during the review process.

AmeriCorps will provide feedback on required evaluation reports for all applicants.

### 30) What happens if a grantee that is required to submit an evaluation report does not submit it by the due date?

Evaluation reports are a required component of the AmeriCorps competitive application process. If a grantee that is required to submit an evaluation report fails to do so by the application due date, AmeriCorps will take this into consideration when making funding decisions. AmeriCorps reserves the right not to consider an application that does not include the requisite evaluation report.

### 31) How are evaluation reports used post-award?

Evaluation reports should be used by organizations to strengthen their program and their impact. Not only can evaluations measure the impact on participants and beneficiaries, but they can also provide feedback on the extent to which program implementation aligns with the program model and whether impacts differ for different aspects of the program or for different populations. These findings should guide program improvement, adjustment, and future action.

Evaluation reports are used by AmeriCorps staff in three ways: First, to identify training and technical assistance needs to foster continuous improvement and identify programmatic areas that need attention. Second, to identify and share promising practices and models that merit replication. And third, to strengthen the evidence base for the impact of national service. AmeriCorps posts grantee evaluation reports on the [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange Catalogue](#) in order to share best practices and promote the use of evidence-based program models.

### 32) What happens if a grantee's evaluation report shows null or negative findings?

Evaluation findings are one way that applicants can demonstrate evidence of a program's impact, and as such may be used in consideration of the selection criteria and to assess the quality and outcomes of a proposed program model. However, applications with evaluations that show null or negative findings will not automatically be excluded from competitive consideration. Applicants should use relevant sections of the application narrative to demonstrate how they have learned from the evaluation findings and made program improvements to address weaknesses or unexpected findings. Applicants should also develop evaluation plans for the coming grant cycle that will build on the findings from the previous evaluation and help the program continuously improve. Grantees are encouraged to work with an experienced evaluator or use AmeriCorps evaluation technical assistance resources to identify how the evaluation findings can be used as a learning tool.

## Other Questions on Evaluation

### 33) What is the difference between performance measurement and evaluation?

According to the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) [performance measurement and evaluation glossary](#), performance measurement is "the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress towards pre-established goals." Evaluations, on the other hand, are "individual systematic studies conducted periodically or on an ad hoc basis to assess how well a program is working." While performance measures track whether a program has met its objectives, goals, or targets, program evaluations analyze a wider range of information, including important contextual information on the program, beneficiaries, and the external environment, than is feasible to track on an ongoing basis.

Performance measurement and evaluation both include systematic data collection, and performance measurement data may be included in analysis conducted for an evaluation. For example: a reading tutoring program identifies the need and a theory of change for addressing that need, e.g., students are reading below grade level and the tutoring program can help them achieve reading success. The program develops performance measures and identifies a primary outcome to measure their ability to address the need, e.g., the primary outcome is to have students reading at or above grade level by the end of one year. The program tests students' reading ability as part of their performance measurement activities and gathers evidence of the extent to which the students who participate in the tutoring program improve their reading ability and are reading at grade level after one year. The program then designs an evaluation that will allow them to compare the outcomes for the students who participate in the tutoring program with a matched group of students that does not receive the tutoring services. By comparing the outcomes for the two groups, the evaluation can determine whether the students' improved reading skills can actually be attributed to the tutoring program and not to other factors, such as regular reading improvement or classroom instruction. The greater the capacity of the evaluation to control for the differences between the students who receive tutoring and the comparison group and their experiences (outside of participation in the tutoring program), the stronger the case can be made that the improvement in tutored students' reading ability, when compared to the other group, was the direct result of the tutoring program.

Additional information on how evaluation differs from performance measurement can be found in the AmeriCorps regulations [45 CFR § 2522.700](#).

**34) Is it required that evaluations measure the impact of the primary service activity on the service beneficiaries or the community? May evaluations measure the impact of the program on AmeriCorps member development?**

Evaluations must measure the impact of one or more significant program activities, but not necessarily the primary service activity. AmeriCorps encourages grantees to conduct evaluations that will provide rigorous evidence of beneficiary impact and demonstrate that the program is an effective means to solve community problems. However, AmeriCorps also recognizes that the impact of program participation on AmeriCorps members may represent a significant component of a grantee's theory of change. For this reason, an evaluation focused on member outcomes is allowable.

If you are interested in evaluating members, please be sure to include member activities and outcomes in your theory of change and logic model.

**35) My program design has changed so much it's basically a new program. Am I still required to evaluate it?**

It may not be developmentally appropriate for grantees to conduct an impact evaluation if the program design has undergone considerable changes. In such cases, a Large grantee may request an AEA based on program structure. Large grantees whose AEA requests are approved will still be required to conduct an independent evaluation that is appropriate for the program's life cycle (e.g., a process or outcome evaluation). Small grantees that have

changed considerably are also required to conduct an independent or internal evaluation that is appropriate to the program's life cycle (e.g., a process or outcome evaluation).

When reviewing requests for an AEA as a result of changes in program design, AmeriCorps will assess whether the program submitted for competitive funding consideration satisfies AmeriCorps' definition of "same project" ([45 C.F.R. § 2522.340](#)). A program will be considered the "same project" if AmeriCorps cannot identify a meaningful difference between the two programs based on a comparison of the following characteristics, among others:

- The objectives and priorities;
- 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.

### [36\) Are multi-site grantees expected to evaluate all of their sites?](#)

AmeriCorps recommends that multi-site grantees evaluate a representative sample of operating sites, if not all of the sites. If a sample of sites are selected, the evaluation results should articulate how the results can be generalized to the other sites, and should describe any key elements of variation (e.g., operations, size, type of location, program activity) among the included and excluded sites. The most important factors are that the sites chosen for evaluation are appropriate within the context of the evaluation design and methodology and can serve as a representative sample for all of the program sites.

### [37\) I am an organization that has both a national direct grant and one or more state subgrants, all of which are using the same program model. Can I use the evaluation of my national direct grant to cover the evaluation requirements for my state subgrants?](#)

State subgrants are legally distinct from national direct grants and so have separate evaluation requirements, even if they are utilizing the same program model or intervention. In order for an evaluation to meet the requirements for a particular grant or subgrant, the evaluation must cover activities that take place at site(s) supported by that specific grant/subgrant. Therefore, if the national direct evaluation includes sites supported by the national direct grant AND sites supported by a state subgrant, then the national direct evaluation can be used to meet the requirements for both grants. The evaluation report should state which sites are associated with the national direct grant and state subgrant(s) to ensure the report meets the requirements. Otherwise, the state subgrant must conduct a separate evaluation of its own site(s).

**38) For grantees, including multi-focus intermediaries, that serve as umbrella organizations for many different types of service activities (e.g., support mentoring, health, public safety, and environmental programs), what should they evaluate?**

Grantees that support multiple types of service activities are not required to evaluate every activity and should work with their evaluator to determine what to evaluate.

Several factors may be considered in deciding which type(s) of service activities should be evaluated and how they should be evaluated. For example, grantees may want to focus on the primary service activity as defined in the application. Grantees may also want to evaluate elements of the program's theory of change that are common to all the service activities, such as volunteer leveraging, capacity-building results, or the ways in which AmeriCorps members add value to operating sites or service locations. In addition, grantees should consider program maturity, preliminary evidence of effectiveness, and the feasibility of conducting a high quality evaluation for the different types of service activities.

**39) How much should I budget for evaluation?**

The cost of evaluations varies widely and will depend on the type of study design, the size of the study, the level of expertise and experience of the evaluator, and data collection expenses.

The more rigorous the level of evidence the evaluation is designed to provide or detect, the higher the evaluation costs are likely to be. For example, randomized control trials, which use an experimental study design, tend to be more expensive than other evaluations, but also tend to yield the highest level of valid and rigorous evidence.

Evaluation costs tend to be driven by the type and amount of data collected. For example, an evaluation collecting a large amount of new data from beneficiaries will typically cost more than an evaluation collecting a smaller amount of new data, or than one that uses existing or administrative data.

**40) Are organizations that receive AmeriCorps funding from more than one funding stream (i.e., ASN, VISTA, or AmeriCorps Seniors) required to conduct separate evaluations for each program?**

Organizations are required to evaluate each of their awarded projects in accordance with the evaluation requirements of the AmeriCorps funding stream that supports that project. Depending on the characteristics of the organization and programs, it may be possible for the grantees to develop a single evaluation design capable of meeting the evaluation requirements of more than one funding stream. In addition, it is possible that part of the evaluation requirements may be covered if the project has been included in a national or a statewide evaluation. If an individual organization receives more than one type of funding, grantees should work with their state service commission and/or AmeriCorps staff to determine if a separate evaluation is required for each funding stream.

#### 41) Are AmeriCorps grantees required to submit evaluation instruments to the Office of Management and Budget?

No. These requirements apply only to Federal Executive Departments and agencies, branches of the military and other establishments of the Executive Branch of the federal government. While not required, AmeriCorps encourages grantees to pursue institutional review board clearance for evaluations collecting data from human subjects. IRBs are tasked with reviewing evaluation and research plans to ensure that researchers protect the rights of subjects participating in the planned research. IRB clearance may be especially important if grantees seek to publish their work in academic journals. IRBs may be associated with universities, localities (e.g., a local government or school district), or independent research firms.

#### 42) How does the language in the regulations, which states that AmeriCorps may “supersede these requirements with an alternative evaluation approach, including one conducted by the Corporation at the national level” apply to evaluation requirements?

AmeriCorps’ Office of Research and Evaluation periodically undertakes national evaluations. We encourage programs to participate if invited to do so. State or national grantees who participate in these evaluations may meet their evaluation requirements through their participation. In order to meet requirements, grantees must request an AmeriCorps National Evaluation AEA. See the AEA Guidance for details.

AmeriCorps will notify grantees of such national evaluation efforts as they emerge. AmeriCorps has engaged grantees in Life Cycle Evaluations and Return on Investment evaluations. Due to resource constraints, most AmeriCorps evaluation studies will focus on certain types of programs. For example, AmeriCorps may be interested in conducting a study of mentoring programs, and only a nationally representative or random sample of programs conducting these activities may be asked to participate in the study.

#### 43) Where can I locate an independent evaluator and what should be the selection criteria for choosing one?

Universities are good sources for evaluators. Peers and state service commissions may be able to provide recommendations or a list of college and university contacts that have evaluation expertise.

National conferences such as those hosted by the Association for Research on Nonprofits and Voluntary Action, the American Evaluation Association, and other nonprofit organizations can also be excellent sources for referrals to evaluators. There are many entities dedicated to conducting program evaluations and these typically have the breadth and depth of expertise and resources to carry out rigorous evaluations. The American Evaluation Association website provides a list of research firms/evaluators available by state.

Evaluator qualifications are critical to a successful evaluation that will improve the program’s level of evidence. Here are some criteria to consider when selecting an evaluator:

- Years of experience;
- Successful completion of similar types of evaluations for similar social service; programs;
- Experience in evaluating similar types of programs in similar settings;
- Capacity and/or access to other resources necessary to manage the scale and scope of the evaluation (e.g., staff has the time to commit to the project, the organization has the resources to collect and analyze breadth of data needed);
- References from previous clients; and
- Absence of investment in the program to be evaluated (i.e., independence is essential to avoid potential or perceived bias on the part of the evaluator).

In planning for an evaluation, grantees should identify the qualifications required for the evaluator and then assess potential evaluators on the extent to which their previous experience and training provide them with the background necessary to meet those qualifications. When selecting an evaluator, grantees should also consider any potential conflicts of interest. For example, there is potential and perceived conflict of interest if the evaluator played a role in designing the program, or if the person supervising the evaluator is connected to the program in some way.

Grantees must follow all applicable federal and state procurement regulations when hiring an external evaluator. Refer to [2 CFR § 200.317 – 200.320](#) for more information.

#### 44) Where can I access additional information on evaluation?

Evaluation resources, including evaluation policies, the evaluation plan summary form, and AEA Guidance, will be available once the AmeriCorps website is reconstructed. State commissions, universities and the American Evaluation Association might also provide great, free-access resources.

#### For State Commissions

#### 45) Does participation in a statewide evaluation fulfill the evaluation requirements?

If a program participates in a statewide evaluation, that program may be exempt from the requirement to conduct their own internal or independent evaluation for the next grant cycle if the evaluation provides findings that fulfill the grantee's evaluation requirements.

The program should describe its participation in the statewide evaluation when presenting their evaluation plan summary form for that grant cycle. Results must be disaggregated by program to ensure consistency across the entire state portfolio, although individual results may not be made public due to reasons of confidentiality. Nevertheless, the program is

required to submit its evaluation results as part of its recompete application in order to meet the evaluation requirements.

#### [46\) Is a state commission required to submit evaluations for its formula programs to AmeriCorps?](#)

No. However, AmeriCorps is very interested in developing best practices in evaluation design and implementation. If a state commission has an example of a strong evaluation from a formula grantee that they would like to share with AmeriCorps, we encourage them to do so.

#### [47\) When a commission submits a former formula program to AmeriCorps as a state competitive application, is the application required to include an evaluation plan summary form and/or report?](#)

If the grantee has never received competitive funding, the grantee is not required to submit an evaluation plan summary form or report in the first competitive grant cycle.

If the grantee has received competitive funding in the past, requirements are determined as follows:

- If the grantee has received at least three years of competitive funding for the same project, an evaluation plan summary form is required.
- If the grantee has received at least six years of competitive funding for the same project, evaluation plan summary form and an evaluation report are required.

AmeriCorps recognizes that some grantees move from competitive to formula and back again. Commissions are encouraged to develop evaluation requirements for formula grantees that will keep them on track to meet competitive evaluation requirements.

## Resources

### Regulations

- Evaluation Requirements: [45 CFR § 2522.500 - .540 and .700 - .740](#)
- Same Project: [45 CFR § 2522.340](#)
- Procurement Standards: [2 CFR § 200.317 - 200.320](#)

### [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange Catalogue](#)