

**2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Funding)
And 2015-2016 Continuation Requests**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

RFP Specific Questions 2
General 3
AmeriCorps Program 5
Funding Opportunities 8
Funding Priorities & Selection Criteria 9
Application Process 10
Program Design 13
Sampling..... 13
Evaluation Requirements..... 14
Performance Measures 15
Budget & Match Requirements 23

Prepare and submit your AmeriCorps application through the federal eGrants system: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers generated during the 2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Formula Funding) and Formula Continuation Requests New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals process, as well as previous proposal processes. The questions are organized by issue area starting with specific questions received after the 2015-2016 RFP was issued.

The Corporation for National and Community Service CNCS has posted their 2015 Notice of Funding Opportunities. *However, the federal NOFO is not the Commission's RFP, nor is the NOFO binding in any way on the Commission, except as the Commission determines within its discretion. Your proposal must respond to this New York State RFP, and must meet all the minimum requirements, deadlines and criteria called for in our RFP.*

QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO NEW ROCHESTER ANTI-POVERTY FUNDING (RECEIVED AFTER THE RFP ISSUANCE):

- Q. *Are the applicants restricted to those in the Rochester area only or can any organization in New York apply?*
- A. Any organization in New York State can apply; however, the service activities and recipients are limited to the geographic borders of Rochester and/or Monroe County.
- Q. *Does the amount of available funding shown on the grant opportunity profile in Grants Gateway - \$438,000 include both the Rochester Anti-Poverty proposals and the continuation funding?*
- A. No, the amount of \$438,000 is the amount available for new funding for Rochester anti-poverty programs.
- Q. *If part-time, can an AmeriCorps volunteer have a 2nd job?*
- A. An AmeriCorps member is required to serve the minimum number of hours for his/her specified term within a calendar year. Service is not a "job," however. Any AmeriCorps member, whether full- or part-time, may hold a job provided it does not interfere with his/her service and ability to complete his/her term.
- Q. *Will the local AmeriCorps office provide assistance in recruitment of AmeriCorps volunteers?*
- A. There are no "local" AmeriCorps offices. As a grantee, your organization will be expected to conduct its own recruitment activities and to fully recruit your program. The Commission can offer some technical assistance and there is a Corporation for National and Community Service national database from which to draw recruits.
- Q. *What are allowable expenses other than the living stipend (e.g. percentage of rent, utilities, etc.)?*
- A. In addition to the required expenses of living stipend, FICA and other fringe, health care and workers compensation insurance, programs may, and in most instances, should,

budget for staffing, supplies, equipment if applicable, travel, training and certain administrative costs.

- Q. *Is there a method by which potential applicants can find out who else is considering applying so that we could collaborate?*
- A. The Commission has received permission to post the organizational affiliation and phone number of all those who registered for the April 14, 2015 Bidders' Conference. Please visit our website, www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov, for this information.

QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO CONTINUATION REQUESTS (RECEIVED AFTER THE RFP ISSUANCE):

- Q. *Is there a separate technical assistance call for applicants outside of Rochester?*
- A. No.
- Q. *Do I have to change my priorities if last year's focus area is not listed as a funding priority for applicants moving into their second or third year of funding?*
- A. No.
- Q. *I see the living allowance for full-time but not the living allowance for 900, 450, and 300 hour positions. Where is it? Which formula should I use to determine it?*
- A. There is no required living allowance for less than full-time AmeriCorps members; however, should you choose to pay a living allowance, you must observe the maximum limitations as specified on p. 12 of the RFP.
- Q. *Are Continuation applicants required to create a new Logic Model?*
- A. No.
- Q. *What additional documents do continuation applicants have to submit along with the eGrants application?*
- A. In addition to the eGrants application, there are a number of required documents for New and Continuation funding that are marked with the tag: "Email Submission Required." These documents must be emailed to the following address no later than 5:00 PM EDT on May 4, 2015: AmeriCorpsRFP@NewYorkersVolunteer.ny.gov. Use the subject line "2015 AmeriCorps Formula RFP."
- Q. *Applicants must make at least one attempt to submit via eGrants no later than Friday, May 1, 2015. I don't understand, you state that the due date is May 4. Please clarify which deadline we should consider to be the deadline for the application?*
- A. The deadline for submission is May 4, 2015. The Commission expects that we will receive all applications in any form by that deadline. We recommend that any entity submitting via eGrants test its ability to submit by May 1, 2015. This will allow applicants who encounter difficulties to overnight the materials to the Commission and meet the deadline as described in the RFP. The decision as to when to submit and when to test is entirely the applicant's, but we will not review applications that arrive after the stated deadline.

GENERAL

Pursuant to the New York State Division of Budget Bulletin H-1032, dated June 7, 2013, New York State has instituted key reform initiatives to the grant contract process which

require not-for-profits to register in the Grants Gateway and complete the Vendor Prequalification process in order for proposals to be evaluated. All applicants MUST register and prequalify within the New York State Grants Gateway System (GGS) to submit a proposal for consideration. Registration forms are available at the GGS website: www.grantsreform.ny.gov. Complete information on Prequalification is available in Section 1.13 Contract Readiness, of the RFP.

- Q. *When are the 2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Funding) And 2015-2016 Continuation Requests applications due?*
- A. All applications in response to the 2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Funding) and 2015-2016 Continuation Requests are due no later than **5:00 pm, EDT on May 4, 2015** to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service.

Respond to this RFP ONLY if you are proposing a new AmeriCorps program that will operate and provide services solely within the geographic borders of the City of Rochester or Monroe County.

OR if you are submitting a continuation request to operate an AmeriCorps grant program in New York State ONLY.

- Q. *How many NEW grants are being awarded ?*
- A. The Commission will award between one to three NEW grants of no less than \$135,000 and no more than \$438,000 that will operate and provide service solely within the geographic borders of the City of Rochester or Monroe County.

Approximately \$4.722 million will be used to fund current formula programs continuing into their second or third year of operation.

- Q. *What type of NEW grant is being awarded?*
- A. All programs funded through this RFP MUST be Cost-Reimbursement Grants which fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances; have flexibility to use all of funds for allowable costs; include a formal matching requirement (the share of a project's total cost that a grantee must meet with its own resources, also known as grantee share; and require submission of a budget and financial reports.

- Q. *Do I need to submit a proposal to the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP if I am a current grantee with Formula Funding?*
- A. Current Formula funded AmeriCorps programs completing their first or second year of operation within a three-year grant cycle must submit a proposal for Continuation funding.

- Q. *How do I access the eGrants system to prepare and submit my AmeriCorps application?*
- A. The eGrants system can be accessed here: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp> New users must first create an eGrants Account. When submitting an application using eGrants, the Corporation for National and Community Service's integrated, secure, web-based system for applications, New applicants for operating grants must select New York as the State to which they are applying.

- Q. *Which Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) do I apply to in the eGrants system?*
- A. Applicants responding to the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP may only apply to the following Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) in the eGrants system.

NOFA: FY 2015 AmeriCorps State Commission (New and Continuations)

Summary: This application is for the State Commission applicants that are new or continuations (Year 2 or Year 3 in their grant cycle.)

- Q. *Which required documents must New and Continuation applicants submit in addition to the Application Narrative, Budget, and Budget Narrative?*
- A. The 2015 New York State AmeriCorps Application Review Process APPLICATION COMPLETENESS CHECKLIST is at the very end of the RFP. Please use the 2015 checklist to determine your program's application completeness.

AMERICORPS PROGRAM

- Q. *What is AmeriCorps?*
- A. AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps is made up of three main programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). To find out more about the differences between these three programs visit: www.americorps.gov/about/programs/index.asp.
- Q. *What is AmeriCorps State and National?*
- A. AmeriCorps State and National is a broad network of grant-funded AmeriCorps programs. It provides financial support to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including hundreds of faith- and community-based organizations, higher education institutions, Indian tribes, and public agencies. These groups recruit, train and place thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. For the remainder of this document, AmeriCorps State and National will be referred to as AmeriCorps.
- Q. *What is a State (or Territory) Service Commission?*
- A. A Service Commission is a governor-appointment entity responsible for administering national and community service programs in its State (or Territory). Funding for AmeriCorps programs operating within one state or territory is administered through the local service commission.
- Q. *What is an AmeriCorps member?*
- A. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in intensive service to address pressing community problems. AmeriCorps members serve through nonprofits, public agencies, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribes, and faith-based organizations to tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters, among other activities. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of their term of service. Some AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance to support them during their term of service.
- Q. *Is an AmeriCorps member the same as a volunteer?*

- A. No. An AmeriCorps member is an individual serving in an approved national service position for a pre-determined term of service. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award and might receive a living allowance and other benefits such as health insurance and childcare. Additionally, there are limitations on the types of activities in which an AmeriCorps member can engage. Volunteers are not eligible for a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, and typically do not receive compensation or have a pre-defined term of service. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members might serve side-by-side and AmeriCorps members often recruit and manage volunteers.
- Q. *What are the living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members?*
The living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members vary by grant type. Detailed information on the living allowance requirements can be found in the 2015 NY State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals (RFP).
- A. The Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance chart on p. 12 of the RFP provides the Maximum Total Living Allowance for full-time, one year half time, reduced half time and quarter time members. Cost reimbursement programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service, however programs may budget for a living allowance that does not exceed the maximum amount listed for each service term.

Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance

Service Term	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Total Living Allowance
Full-time	1700	\$12,530	\$25,060
One-year Half-time	900	n/a	\$13,265
Reduced Half-time	675	n/a	\$9,950
Quarter-time	450	n/a	\$6,635
Minimum-time	300	n/a	\$4,420

- Q. *Does CNCS recruit and train the AmeriCorps members?*
- A. No. While CNCS has an online recruitment system that AmeriCorps programs can utilize, each program is responsible for recruiting its own AmeriCorps members. Additionally, AmeriCorps programs are entirely responsible for training their AmeriCorps members. In your application you must describe how you will recruit, orient and train the AmeriCorps members you are requesting.
- Q. *Must an AmeriCorps member serve for a certain amount of time?*
- A. Yes. An AmeriCorps member may serve either a full-time term of service, which requires a minimum of 1700 hours of service within a one-year period of time; or a part-time term, which can range from 300 hours to 900 hours. In your application, you must specify the terms of service you are proposing for your AmeriCorps members.

Q. *Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?*

A. No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

Q. *Are there certain activities in which AmeriCorps members and staff cannot engage?*

A. Yes. While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing; Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- Providing a direct benefit to: (1) a business organized for profit; (2) a labor union; (3) a partisan political organization; (4) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (participating in partisan political activities or spending funds on lobbying and grassroots efforts in excess of allowable limits); and (5) an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, (unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities);
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Nonduplication

Corporation assistance may not be used to duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of a program. And, unless there is nondisplacement, Corporation assistance will not be provided to a private nonprofit entity to conduct activities that are

the same or substantially equivalent to activities provided by a State or local government agency in which such entity resides.

Nondisplacement

- (1) An employer may not displace an employee or position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, as a result of the use by such employer of a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
- (2) An organization may not displace a volunteer by using a participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance.
- (3) A service opportunity will not be created under this chapter that will infringe in any manner on the promotional opportunity of an employed individual.
- (4) A participant in a program receiving Corporation assistance may not perform any services or duties or engage in activities that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of the assigned duties of such employee.
- (5) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform any services or duties, or engage in activities, that—
 - (i) Will supplant the hiring of employed workers; or
 - (ii) Are services, duties, or activities with respect to which an individual has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures.
- (6) A participant in any program receiving assistance may not perform services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any—
 - (i) Presently employed worker;
 - (ii) Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;
 - (iii) Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;
 - (iv) Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency, or sick); or
 - (v) Employee who is on strike or who is being locked out.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Q. *What is a program implementation grant?*

A. A program implementation grant provides funding to support the operation of an AmeriCorps program. Grants are typically for a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time, contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. Grants include an allocation of AmeriCorps member positions and funds for allowable program expenses such as AmeriCorps member support costs (living allowance and benefits), staffing, training, travel for program oversight, and overhead. A grant applicant identifies a community problem, designs a program to address the problem through the service of AmeriCorps members and volunteers, and must demonstrate the capacity to administer and monitor a federal grant.

Q. *What are the eligibility requirements?*

A. AmeriCorps State grants are awarded to public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian

Tribes; labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and intermediaries that will operate solely in New York State.

The new State AmeriCorps formula grant(s) will be awarded to one or more of the following in the City of Rochester and/or Monroe County: a public or private nonprofit organization, including faith-based and other community organizations; an institution of higher education; a state agency or other government entity within New York State (e.g., cities, counties); an Indian Tribe; a labor organization; a partnership or consortium; or an intermediary that will operate solely in New York State and focus on the following focus areas identified by the SAA: Education, Healthy Futures, and Economic Opportunity. In order to maximize the impact of the public investment in national service, an application or applications will be selected for funding which demonstrate community impact and solve community problems using an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach (e.g. performance data, research, theory of change). The Commission encourages applications from a consortium of eligible agencies joining together to target a specific program area (you must designate a lead agency) or from intermediary agencies (see the RFP Glossary for definition).

Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *Notice*. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Action of 1995, an organization described in Section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

Current AmeriCorps grantees may apply for assistance. Receiving funding previously from the Commission, CNCS, or another Federal agency is not a prerequisite to applying under this RFP.

Q. *Where can I find the grant application materials?*

A. , Application materials can be accessed through the New York State Commission on National and Community Service website at www.NewYorkersVolunteer.ny.gov. Applicants responding to the State RFP must apply through the State Commission and meet the deadline of 5:00 pm EDT on May 4, 2015.

Q. *What is a State (or Territory) Service Commission?*

A. A State Service Commission is a governor-appointment entity responsible for administering national and community service programs in its State (or Territory). Funding for AmeriCorps programs operating within one state or territory is administered through the State Service Commission.

FUNDING PRIORITIES & SELECTION CRITERIA

Q. *What are the priorities for new funding defined through this RFP?*

A. This RFP will be reviewed by the Commission with two overall goals as guideposts:

That the agency or agencies selected by the Commission to establish and administer the anti-poverty program(s) will run a high-quality AmeriCorps program which will add value to New York State citizens and will achieve demonstrable results within the City of Rochester and Monroe County.

That the agency or agencies selected by the Commission are the best candidate(s) to establish and administer these anti-poverty programs, as identified by a specific set of criteria particular to the mission of the Governor's Rochester Anti-Poverty Task Force, as well as all applicable AmeriCorps and New York State statutes, rules, regulations and policies, see Section 1.12 Selection Process.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q. *How do I determine whether to select "Continuation/ Renewal" or "New" as an eGrants option when starting an application?*

A. If you are:

- Applying to AmeriCorps for the first time, have only received formula funding in the past, or are a former grantee (non-formula) whose last AmeriCorps grant was received more than five years ago, select New;
- A current grantee but proposing a new program, contact the New York State Commission which will have CNCS create a new program for your organizational record in eGrants.

Q. *If programs utilize the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) VendRep System to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire, do they also need to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire Form provided as an attachment to the Request for Proposal (RFP), or can they just submit a copy of their OSC VendRep summary page?*

A. Vendors are strongly encouraged to file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online through the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) VendRep System. If this method is chosen, only a paper copy of the OSC overview page which indicates the day the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire was certified with OSC needs to be submitted to the State Commission Office.

Applicants may view the OSC VendRep System Instructions and register for an account by clicking on the following link: www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep. Applicants that have an existing account may go directly to the VendRep System by clicking on this link: <https://portal.osc.state.ny.us>. For direct VendRep System user assistance, the OSC Help Desk may be reached at 866-370-4672 or 518-408-4672 or by email at helpdesk@osc.state.ny.us.

Q. *Are applicants required to become prequalified in the Grants reform website by the application deadline?*

A. **All not-for-profit applicants must be both registered and prequalified in the Grants Reform website by the May 4, 2015 application deadline.**

Q. *What does Cost per MSY mean?*

A. Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost to CNCS of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours in once calendar year). The cost per MSY is calculated by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if the application requests \$135,000 in CNCS funds and

10 MSYs, then the cost per MSY is \$13,500. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award a member may earn.

Q. *Is there a maximum Cost per MSY?*

A. **Yes, the maximum cost per MSY for AmeriCorps grants through the Commission (full-time equivalent member) is \$13,500 for a Cost Reimbursement grant. This maximum cost per MSY is a New York State limit. The maximum cost per MSY is not to be confused with the maximum living allowance. (See RFP Section 1.3 - B and C).**

Applicants applying for NEW funding under this RFP must apply for a total of 10 to 32 Member Service Years, or MSYs. The Commission will not review new formula applications for a total number of MSYs which fall outside of this range. The program design may include full-time MSY's, half-time MSY's or other member service terms.

Continuation requests must apply for a minimum of 10 MSYs or the equivalent number of part-time members.

Q. *Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?*

A. No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project, rather than general organizational expenses. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with grant funds. However, to a limited degree, you may capture indirect administrative costs related to your AmeriCorps program. The application instructions provide guidance on charging administrative costs to the grant.

Q. *Will I have to contribute matching funds?*

A. Yes. The money awarded as part of an AmeriCorps grant does not cover the full cost of running an AmeriCorps program. Cost reimbursement grants have a required minimum match and match documentation must be maintained. The match requirements are described in the RFP, 1.4 Match Requirements. There is a minimum match of 24 percent for the first three years. Matching rate increases over time to 50 percent in year 10.

Non-AmeriCorps federal funds may be used as match, with permission granted from the other federal agency.

In light of Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000) on —Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments, the Corporation will consider requests for waivers of match requirements from Indian Tribes in an expedited manner.

Q. *What are the AmeriCorps member health insurance requirements?*

A. Grantees must provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time each begins his/her term of service.

Q. *In New York State do AmeriCorps programs have to provide workman's compensation coverage for AmeriCorps members and if so how much does it cost?*

- A. In New York State, AmeriCorps members are covered under Workers Compensation Insurance. In order to contract with the State, the employer/vendor must have coverage through a current policy in order to be determined responsible. New York State Workers' Compensation Law requires that employers operating in New York State have workers' compensation coverage for their employees, with limited exceptions. Employers are required to obtain and keep in effect workers' compensation coverage for all employees, even part-time employees and family members that are employed by the company. Employers must obtain workers' compensation insurance with an insurance carrier authorized by the New York State Workers' Compensation Board.
- Q. *In New York State do AmeriCorps programs pay FICA on member stipends?*
- A. Unless exempted by the IRS, all AmeriCorps programs must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance, even when CNCS does not supply the living allowance. If exempted, please note in the narrative. In the first column next to FICA, indicate the number of members who will receive FICA. Calculate the FICA at 7.65% of the total amount of the living allowance.
- Q. *Does New York State have minimum requirements or required health insurance providers for AmeriCorps members/staff?*
- A. New York State does not mandate or recommend a specific health insurance provider to AmeriCorps grantees.
- Q. *How long is the grant period?*
- A. AmeriCorps program implementation grants typically have a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time. Continued funding during the course of the three years is contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. The budget submitted in the application is for a one-year period.
- Q. *What is a member service site?*
- A. A member service location is the site at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.
- Q. *Will applicants be able to select more than one Focus Area and, within the Focus Areas, more than one service activity?*
- A. Yes.
- Q. *Is the list of populations on the Performance Measures screen beneficiary populations or populations to be recruited as AmeriCorps Members?*
- A. Most of the items in the list refer to traditionally underrepresented populations that a program intends to intentionally recruit as AmeriCorps members (as outlined in the CNCS Strategic Plan). If any of these grant characteristics are selected the application narrative should reflect the intention to recruit the selected population(s).
- Q. *Are Native American Tribes required to consult with state commissions?*
- A. Native American Tribes are not required to consult with state commissions. However, to ensure effective use of national service resources and enhance coordination, Native American Tribes are encouraged to do so.
- Q. *Are we required to submit our application via the on-line eGrants system?*

- A. Applicants should make every effort to submit their proposal electronically utilizing the Corporation's web-based application system, eGrants, which can be found at the following link: <http://www.cns.gov/egrants/index.asp>. submitted. Applicants who are unable to use eGrants should see the 2015 State AmeriCorps RFP 2.2 Proposal Submittal Process for requirements for submissions outside of eGrants.

PROGRAM DESIGN

- Q. *Is it acceptable to have AmeriCorps members whose primary responsibilities are office-based computer work?*
- A. Allowable member service activities can be direct service or capacity building. Direct service activities must be designed to impact a documented compelling community need, should be evidence-based and lead to measurable impact. Capacity building activities must also be designed to impact a documented compelling community need and cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Capacity Building activities include:
- Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers;
 - Implementing effective volunteer management practices;
 - Completing community assessments that identify goals and recommendations;
 - Developing new systems and business processes or enhancing existing systems/processes.
- Q. *The Term of New York State Contract in the AmeriCorps RFP states that Applicants proposing a contract start date before October 1, 2015 must receive written approval from the State Commission. Are education/school year programs with a proposed starting date of September 1, 2015 generally able to assume this starting date will be allowable if their application is approved?*
- A. Applicants should enter the proposed start date for their program model on the SF-424 Form that is submitted with their application. The program start date and contract start date must align, as a program may not submit expenses for reimbursement that were incurred outside of the 15-month contract period. If an applicant proposes to start their program on September 1, 2015, the program and contract period will run September 1, 2015 – November 30, 2016. No program activity may occur or expenses be incurred outside of this period for any reason. This also requires all members to complete their term of service by November 30, 2015, in this scenario.
- Q. *If a current grantee becomes a host site for another program that is a new applicant organization, is that application still considered new?*
- A. A current grantee can serve as a partner for a new program without affecting the status of the new applicant as a first time grantee.
- Q. *Can a program have members serving in more than one focus area as long as a primary focus area is identified and the majority of members are serving in that area?*
- A. Yes, a program can have members serving in more than one focus area as long as a primary focus area is identified and the majority of members are serving in that area. Please note that the 2015-16 New York State NEW AmeriCorps funding specifies programming be in one or more of only three focus areas.

Sampling

- Q. *Under what circumstances is it ok for grantees to use sampling?*
 A. In performance measurement, sampling presents a tradeoff because it does not allow us to count all of the individuals who demonstrated the desired change (outcome) we are trying to measure. Methodologically speaking, sampling is appropriate as long as the grantee has a solid plan for ensuring that its sample will be representative. Practically speaking, we would want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population.
- Q. *When would CNCS not allow sampling?*
 A. CNCS will not allow sampling when it is reasonable to expect a grantee to collect data from the whole population. CNCS will also not allow sampling if the grantee's sampling frame is not sufficient or if the grantee's methodology will not result in a representative sample.
- Q. *How does a grantee set targets and outputs when it is planning to sample?*
 A. In most cases the grantee should be able to set targets based on the population as a whole. If a grantee's sampling methodology is sound and results in a representative sample, then the program can extrapolate their results to report on an outcome for the population as a whole. For example, a program reports an output of 1000 children served. The program selects a representative sample of 200 children. Of these, 180 students (90%) demonstrate the desired change. In this case, the program could report an extrapolated outcome of 900 students.
- Q. *If an existing program has not been sampling, can it switch to sampling now?*
 A. We want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population. If a program is currently collecting data from the whole population, they would need to make a compelling case for why they can no longer do so.
- Q. *Should sample data collection tables be included in the application? Where should they be placed?*
 A. eGrants will not allow you to submit tables. In the eGrants Performance Measures section you will describe your data collection strategy. Follow the instructions for entering the performance measures and enter this information in the Description of the Intervention field.

Evaluation Requirements

- Q. *If we applied for an extension of our evaluation report due date through an alternative evaluation request (current grantee), and the decision is still pending, how should we handle this in the application?*
 A. If the request is still pending or has been approved prior to the application date, note this in your application.
- Q. *Please provide more detail on how the evaluation report (required for current grantees) will be scored. If a grantee has applied for Alternative Evaluation Approach (specifically, for timing considerations) how will that impact this score?*
 A. The evaluation report will be considered as one source of information in determining the level of evidence for the proposed intervention. An applicant can offer other sources of evidence to support the intervention as outlined in the NOFO. To be considered as

having moderate or strong evidence, reports demonstrating that evidence must be submitted.

Q. *Where can I get more information on the evaluation requirements?*

A. CNCS has developed a *Frequently Asked Questions* document to help answer some common questions related to CNCS evaluation requirements:
<https://www.nationalservicerresources.gov/evaluation-amicorps>

Q. *Does the Evaluation Plan section count towards the page limit?*

A. No.

Q. *We have identified at least ten performance measures we would like to use in our application. Is that a good number?*

A. You are encouraged to use measures that reflect the most significant member activities. It is common for programs to track data that they do not necessarily report to CNCS. It is more important that they are aligned. There are some programs that have many measures, but it is not common.

Q. *Can you please clarify the MSY allocation requirements in the MSY Tab and in the Performance Measure Tab in the Performance Measure module of the application?*

A. The MSYs entered on the MSY tab must equal the number of MSYs budgeted. The purpose of the MSY tab is to show how all grant activity will be allocated across CNCS focus areas and objectives. The MSYs entered in performance measures do not have to equal the total MSYs for the entire grant, since applicants are not required to measure 100% of their activity. Applicants cannot, however, enter more MSYs in a performance measure or measures than they have allocated to the objective in which those performance measures fall.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Q. *What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?*

A. AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary intervention and aligns with the program's theory of change. You **MUST** choose at least one National Performance Measure.

Find them at:

http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN_PM_Instructions_2015_NOFO_1.pdf

Q. *What are National Performance Measures?*

A. CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives.

You MUST pick at least one or more of the following three focus areas for the 2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Funding):

Education

Healthy Futures Economic Opportunity

- Q. *What is a “self-nominated” or “applicant-determined” performance measure?*
 A. A self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and/or outcomes that will be measured, based on its intervention. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where CNCS pre-determines common outputs and, in some instances, outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

In response to this RFP, for the 2015-2016 Rochester Anti-Poverty Proposals (New Funding) you MUST select National Performance Measures

- A. In general, Performance measures should be consistent over the life of a three-year grant cycle so that progress can be measured over time.
- Q. *What should a continuation grantee who is measuring an output or outcome that has a changed definition do in the continuation application?*
 A. If the grantee is unable to measure the output or outcome as defined in the Performance Measures Instructions, the grantee should choose a different performance measure.
- Q. *When I select National Performance Measures, will I also have to create “applicant-determined” performance measures?*
 A. There are two circumstances in which your program will need to create self-nominated or applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the National Performance Measures.
- First, if your program selects National Performance Measures for activities that do not represent your primary intervention, then your program will also have to provide an aligned set of applicant-determined performance measures for your primary intervention because AmeriCorps regulations stipulate that a program must have an aligned set of performance measures that represent its primary intervention.
 - Second, if you select a National Performance Measure that does not have its own aligned outcome, you will need to create an applicant-determined outcome to complete the alignment. The need to create an aligned applicant-determined outcome measure is clearly stated in the National Performance Measures Instructions.
- Q. *What is an aligned performance measure?*
 A. An aligned performance measure is an output paired with an outcome. Most of our National Performance Measures include aligned measures, but in some cases you may need to create your own aligned applicant-determined outcome.
- Q. *How many performance measures should I propose?*
 A. Each program should have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) reflecting its primary intervention. It is appropriate to have additional aligned performance measures for other significant components of your program. Performance

measures reflecting non-primary activities should not be included in your application and will not be reported to CNCS, although you might still collect the data for your own purposes.

Q. *Is H12 limited only to education activities?*

A. H12 is not limited to activities that are educational in nature.

Q. *Must members counted in O14 and O17 be economically disadvantaged?*

A. Yes, members counted in all member development National Performance Measures must be economically disadvantaged.

Q. *Does ED14 measure individuals teaching during the term of service, or after the term of service?*

A. ED14 measures the number of individuals teaching during the term of service.

Q. *Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in the National Performance Measures?*

A. The National Performance Measures selected by an AmeriCorps program should reflect the expected result of the AmeriCorps program activities. The AmeriCorps members do not have to interact directly with the beneficiaries of the service, but they must provide direct support that makes the program's results possible.

Q. *Can I count the same people in more than one National Performance Measure output?*

A. Read the Performance Measures Instructions carefully. Unless otherwise specified, the same individuals may be counted more than once across different Measures for different services (interventions) they may be receiving. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once within any one specific National Performance Measure.

Q. *Can two or more National Performance Measure outputs have the same outcome?*

A. It depends on the program model. If the program model represents a continuum of care/services where participating leads from one level of service to another, then it makes sense to create an aligned measure of multiple outputs that lead to a single outcome. If there are two completely different interventions that lead to the same outcome, those should be reported with each output/outcome as their own aligned measure.

Q. *Can one National Performance Measure have more than one outcome?*

A. Yes. There may be more than one desired outcome for a single output. Aligned measures should only be configured this way if it is expected that all of the individuals counted in the output will potentially achieve the outcome indicated. If the outcomes are resulting from different populations being served, there should be multiple outputs.

Q. *Why is "economically disadvantaged" defined differently for the Economic Opportunity, Education and Healthy Futures performance measures?*

- A. The definition in each Focus Area is aligned with the relevant predominant government programs. For instance, AmeriCorps members working in the healthy futures focus area are likely serving populations that are eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP.
- Q *If I select a National Performance Measure that includes a specific definition for the beneficiary population, will I be required to prove that my program is serving that population?*
- A. Your application narrative should include a depiction of the need your program will address, including the beneficiary population, and documentation that the need exists for this population. The National Performance Measures you select should align with your application narrative. For instance, if you select an Education performance measure that defines the target population as students eligible for free or reduced lunch, then your application narrative might provide data to show that your AmeriCorps members will be serving at a school for which the majority of the population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. In this example, you would not be expected to collect and maintain eligibility data for each individual student served. Through your application narrative and the implementation of your program, you are expected to provide reasonable assurance that you are serving the intended population.
- Q *How do I indicate that I am selecting National Performance Measures?*
- A. Programs will select Focus Areas and National Performance Measures in the eGrants performance measure screens at the time of application. In addition, the Focus Areas, National Performance Measures, and proposed targets should be referenced in the application narrative and/or logic model as outlined in the NOFO and Application Instructions.
- Q *Am I allowed to allocate funds for collecting and analyzing data? If so, how much?*
- A. Costs related to measuring the performance of a program are allowable grant expenses. There is no standard recommended amount. As with all cost reimbursement grants, these costs must be reasonable, allowable for the proposed program, and properly allocated across grant activities.
- Q *We have similar reporting requirements and measures for another funder. Can I just report on that measure instead?*
- A. No. As the program is required to select National Performance Measures, it will need to report to CNCS on the Measure as it is defined.
- Q *What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?*
- A. They are the same as for program not using National Performance Measures. The reporting requirements are set forth in the RFP (Insert page #) and will be further delineated in the contract between selected applicants and OCFS.
- Q *Why does CNCS require applicants to provide information on the proportion of Member Service Years (MSYs) devoted to each Focus Area?*
- A. The Focus areas created in the Serve America Act create the expectation that CNCS will be able to report resources allocated by Focus area. Because many applicants direct their activities to more than one Focus Area, it is important for CNCS to collect expected MSYs devoted to each Focus Area.
- Q *How should I determine the MSYs allocated to each Focus area and strategic plan objective?*

- A. A program requests a certain number of MSYs in order to meet particular needs in their community. Programs determine what needs are addressed by members serving in that Focus Area and strategic plan objective and assign the MSYs accordingly.
- Q. *Is my program expected to monitor member time to ensure that it corresponds to what is entered into the MSY charts for the Focus Areas and strategic plan objectives?*
- A. Grant applicants will enter MSYs into the MSY charts according to the distribution of time that members are expected to engage in each Focus Area and strategic plan objective. At the end of the grant year, grantees will report on how the members actually spent their time. CNCS expects the MSY amounts entered at the time of application and in the grantee progress report to be very close unless the program received permission to change the activities causing change in the proportion of time devoted to each Focus Area.
- Q. *In order to measure ED5, which is the number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math, may we propose to use state assessments because they are consistently available and are aligned with our goals of building student proficiency in ELA and math and helping schools to improve on the outcomes that are most meaningful to them?*
- A. Programs may request to use the state standardized test but need to demonstrate that it is appropriate for their circumstances. For all programs that propose to use the state standardized test, including Teacher Corps programs, please provide a justification that explains how the test is sufficiently tailored to the material taught, how the timeline for obtaining test data will meet national service reporting requirements, and why gains in the test are likely to be attributable, in part or in whole, to the efforts of national service participants.
- Q. *What is a theory of change?*
- A. A theory of change is a theory for how an intervention can address or solve a stated problem. A theory of change articulates a problem, a proposed intervention, and the change (outcomes) that is expected to result from delivering the intervention. Underlying the theory is a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, about why the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes. A Logic Model means a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally.
- Q. *Should sample data collection tables be included in the application? Where should they be placed?*
- A. eGrants will not allow you to submit tables. In the eGrants Performance Measures section you will describe your data collection strategy. Follow the instructions for entering the performance measures and enter this information as directed.
- Q. *On the logic model chart there are three levels of output (short, medium and long) being requested. The focus has been on understanding that outputs and outcomes in performance measures should be linked by a sound theory of change and evidence. Do you have any new guidance on linking outputs and outcomes and how they mesh given the new output structure?*

A. The logic model is a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally. A program may have a theory of change that is based on accomplishing a long-term change in conditions that is not measurable in the program year. However, there may be shorter-term changes that can be linked to this ultimate goal that are strong indicators that the long-term change is likely to happen. All of these outcomes may be included in the logic model, and grantees are not required to measure or report on all outcomes that appear in the logic model. For performance measurement purposes, outcomes must measure changes that can be measured within the program year. Not all programs will include all three types of outcomes – just those that are relevant to a solid understanding of their theory of change and the evidence of change that they will measure in the performance measures.

Q. *Does CNCS expect Continuation applications to submit a Logic Model?*

A. No.

Q. *What does CNCS consider to be economically disadvantaged? How is that tracked? Is this where the county level economic data comes in?*

A. “Economically disadvantaged” is defined/tracked slightly differently depending on what performance measures are being used by the applicant. You can refer to the performance measure instructions for more information about how economically disadvantaged participants/recipients are defined in different contexts. But county level economic data could be a useful reference to assess and describe the community/ies being served by a proposed project.

Q. *A FAQ answer states “you should only select performance measures for a particular activity if it can be considered a significant program activity/aspect of your program design.” Must a certain percentage of MSYs be allocated to the activity in order for it to be considered “significant?”*

A. “Significant” in this context refers not necessarily to the number of MSY devoted to a particular activity but to how important the activity is to a program’s theory of change or project design. This may or may not be directly correlated with the number of MSY assigned to that activity.

Q. *Is a logic model necessary for each performance measure?*

A. No, only one logic model should be submitted for each application. The logic model should reflect the Theory of Change for the application as a whole.

Q. *What age group is considered disadvantaged youth, according to AmeriCorps?*

A. “Disadvantaged youth” is defined in the National Performance Measure instructions for performance measure ED4A (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measures-instructions>) as follows:

Disadvantaged youth: “includes those youth who are economically disadvantaged and 1 or more of the following: (A) Who are out-of-school youth, including out-of-school youth who are unemployed. (B) Who are in or aging out of foster care. (C) Who have limited English proficiency. (D) Who are homeless or who have run away from home. (E) Who

are at-risk to leave secondary school without a diploma. (F) Who are former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency. (G) Who are individuals with disabilities.” (from SAA) It is the grantee’s responsibility to ensure the beneficiaries of service meet the eligibility requirements provided in the definition.

Economically disadvantaged: eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch; may or may not actually be accessing free/reduced lunch.

“Opportunity Youth” is defined in the NOFO as “economically disadvantaged individuals age 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months prior to service.” Opportunity youth are a sub-set of individuals who might be a good fit for the member outcomes performance measures.

Q. *Can our members be considered economically disadvantaged members who will receive financial literacy services?*

A. Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants (i.e. AmeriCorps members) are defined in the National Performance Measure Instructions for performance measure O12

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2014/2015-performance-measures-instructions> as follows:

Economically disadvantaged National Service Participants: Current National Service Participants who are receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance. However, the economically disadvantaged individuals counted under performance measure O1 and O9 as receiving financial literacy services should be service recipients/beneficiaries, not National Service Participants. AmeriCorps members may be counted under measures O12-O17.

Q. *Do all members have to work on the exact same activities or can the activities differ slightly, if they are all working toward the same performance measure targets?*

A. As long as the activities in which the AmeriCorps members engage are consistent with your program’s Theory of Change and align with the performance measure instructions for the National Performance Measures you wish to use, the activities do not have to be exactly the same for all members.

Q. *Is there a guide that we can print out that defines interventions listed under each performance measurement objective?*

A. CNCS does not have a list of interventions or a guide that describes them, as they are fairly generic under each objective, such as “training,” “tutoring,” etc. If the applicant does not see an intervention that describes their activity, they can always select “other.” You can also go to the web page for the eGrants Performance Measures tutorial located here:

<https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/online-courses/egrants-performance-measure-module-for-ameri-corps> and select the “National Performance Measures Chart” link. This shows which objectives and performance measures are linked in eGrants.

Q. *How do I enter MSYs in the performance measures section of the application?*

- A. The performance measures module collects information about MSYs in two locations: the MSY tab and within each performance measure.

MSY Tab

The MSY tab is intended to show how program resources are allocated to activities that serve program beneficiaries. The total number of MSYs entered on this tab must equal the number of MSYs requested in the budget. For each strategic plan objective selected, except the "Find Opportunity" objective and the "Teacher Corps" objective, enter the number of MSYs that will be allocated toward activities that address the objective.

The Find Opportunity objective addresses member development activities and is connected to national performance measures for member development. If you have selected Find Opportunity, enter 0 MSYs for this objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected. Teacher Corps programs, enter 0 MSYs for the Teacher Corps objective on the MSY tab and allocate your remaining MSYs to the other objectives you selected.

Performance Measures

MSYs entered at the performance measure level show the proportion of program resources allocated to achieving the outcomes of the performance measure.

MSYs may not be allocated to member development performance measures.

Information about MSYs allocated to member development activities is collected in the demographics section of the application.

MSYs should not be allocated to Teacher Corps performance measures. Enter 0 MSYs in the performance measure.

- Q. *Does the ED5 measure apply to adult education?*
 A. Education measures are for K-12, not adult education. Adult education is addressed by Economic Opportunity measures.
- Q. *What is the definition of "National Service Participant" for O13 and O16?*
 A. National Service Participant refers to the AmeriCorps members themselves. Because these measures apply to the members, programs that select them must also select additional performance measures that measure community impact. If a performance measure does not state that it is for national service participants, it refers to the beneficiary population being served by the AmeriCorps members (community impact).
- Q. *Will applicants be able to select more than one service activity within the focus areas?*
 A. Yes, applicants are able to select more than one service activity within a focus area.
- Q. *Are there changes to the Education performance measures in the 2015 competition?*
 A. The following changes were incorporated into the Education performance measures for 2015:

- 1) Clarified guidance to enhance quality of data collection and reporting:

- Split academic engagement measure ED27 into two separate measures, one focusing on attitude and the other on behavior.
- Created new output measures ED31 and ED32 for post-secondary students to pair with existing post-secondary outcome ED11 (earning a post-secondary degree)
- Required programs to measure both the number of students who start the program and the number of students who complete the program. (e.g., K-12 tutoring programs will need to report on both ED1 and ED2, not just one of those measures)
- Clarified directions in academic achievement measure ED5 around the use of standardized tests
- Required a pre-post assessment for school readiness outcome measures ED23-25
- Edited definition of economically disadvantaged to give programs more ways to assess students' status

2) Condensed or eliminated duplicative measures:

- Rolled existing outcomes related to student behavior, such as ED6, 7, and 8, into ED27B (the behavior-focused academic engagement measure).
- Deleted academic achievement measure ED15 under the Teacher Corps objective, which was duplicative of measure ED5 in the K-12 Success objective

3) Expanded subject-area scope of academic performance measures

- Added a new academic achievement measure ED30 to measure gains in subjects other than literacy and math. Subject areas include foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and also include subjects that are considered STEM disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, and computer science.

Q. *We have identified at least ten performance measures we would like to use in our application. Is that a good number?*

A. You are encouraged to use measures that reflect the most significant member activities. It is common for programs to track data that they do not necessarily report to CNCS. It is more important that they are aligned. There are some programs that have many measures, but it is not common.

Q. *Can you please clarify the MSY allocation requirements in the MSY Tab and in the Performance Measure Tab in the Performance Measure module of the application?*

A. The MSYs entered on the MSY tab must equal the number of MSYs budgeted. The purpose of the MSY tab is to show how all grant activity will be allocated across CNCS focus areas and objectives. The MSYs entered in performance measures do not have to equal the total MSYs for the entire grant, since applicants are not required to measure 100% of their activity. Applicants cannot, however, enter more MSYs in a performance measure or measures than they have allocated to the objective in which those performance measures fall.

Budgeting & Match Requirements

- Q. *Are there any sample budgets available from successful programs that we could review?*
- A. CNCS does not provide sample budgets, but the Knowledge Network website has resources on how to put together a budget: <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/>