

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FAQ

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers generated during the current and previous New York State AmeriCorps Request for Proposals process (updated 4/13/2017).

### **Q1: When are the applications for the 2017-20 Opioid-Heroin Epidemic RFP due?**

**A1:** All applications in response to the 2017-20 Opioid-Heroin Epidemic Request for Proposals are due on **April 26, 2017, at 5:00 p.m.** (See the “Calendar of Events” on page four of the RFP for all relevant deadlines.)

\*The application due date of May 10, 2017 on the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the CNCS website (<https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/2017-ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants>) **DOES NOT APPLY** to applicants responding to the 2017-20 Opioid-Heroin Epidemic RFP.

### **Q2: How do I access the Grants Gateway system to prequalify so that I can submit an application?**

**A2:** The Grants Gateway is available at [www.grantsreform.ny.gov](http://www.grantsreform.ny.gov). To access the Registration Form for Administrator, select “Grantees.” For the Grants Gateway Help Hotline, call 518-474-5595.

### **Q3: How do I access the VendRep System to enroll or update my existing online questionnaire?**

**A3:** The VendRep System is available at [http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/info\\_vrsystem.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep/info_vrsystem.htm).

### **Q4: Does the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire need to be completed by the time an organization applies or can it be completed at the time of receiving an award?**

**A4:** Confirmation of completing the vendor responsibility process must be submitted with your proposal. (Please see section 3.3 of the RFP starting on page 12.)

### **Q5: How do I access the eGrants system to prepare and submit my AmeriCorps application?**

**A5:** The eGrants system is available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants>. New users must create an eGrants account. (A tutorial explaining how to create and manage an eGrants account is also available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants>.)

You'll need to apply within the following prime application: AmeriCorps State, App. ID 17AC194828.

### **Q6: Where might I find past projects that were supported by your organization?**

**A6:** The Corporation makes information available on its website regarding applicants funded in previous competitions. Results of previous grant competitions are available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>.

**Q7: If an organization is awarded funding through AmeriCorps, is it possible to increase the funding request in year two or three? If so, is it common practice for organizations to do so, or would this be out of the ordinary.**

**A7:** Organizations may request additional funds or positions in continuation applications. However, the additional funding request is subject to many factors, including funding availability, funding priorities, and past grantee performance.

**Q8: Which Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) do I apply to in the eGrants system?**

**A8:** 2017 AmeriCorps State and National Grants – Targeted Priority.

**Q9: Will applications that are sent to CNCS but do not receive competitive funding be considered for New York State Formula funding?**

**A9:** As stated in the RFP: The Commission reserves the right to fund, through any other available sources of AmeriCorps funding, any proposals not selected for recommendation and/or not funded by CNCS. Should the Commission choose to do so, guidance will be issued as to whether and how applicants must resubmit or clarify their proposals. Funding is not guaranteed.

**Q10: What does cost per MSY mean? How is it different from a member living allowance?**

**A10:** Cost per MSY (Member Service Year) represents the cost to the Corporation of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is equal to one full-time term of service (1700 member-service hours). The cost per MSY is calculated by dividing the total amount of CNCS (federal) funds requested by the total number of MSY requested. The cost per MSY does not include costs for child care or the Segal Education Award that a member may earn.

\*Please note that the \$13,700 maximum cost per MSY in this RFP is a New York State maximum and that the maximum cost per MSY in the federal NOFO is a different amount.

\*Member living allowance is an amount provided to members to assist with supporting them during their service. It is one of the line items in the budget.

\*Please note that applicants responding to this RFP must apply for a minimum of 10 MSY.

**Q11: May an organization set its own rules for selecting AmeriCorps members?**

**A11:** Yes. A program can make rules about selection based on specific qualities relevant to the program or type of service, as long as the selection rules are consistent with AmeriCorps eligibility requirements and are not discriminatory.

**Q12: Do individuals under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) meet the citizenship requirements to be AmeriCorps members?**

**A12:** No. Individuals must be U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents to be eligible to serve in AmeriCorps.

**Q13: Are AmeriCorps members eligible for unemployment insurance in New York State?**

**A13:** AmeriCorps members are not employees. In accordance with the New York State Department of Labor's memorandum issued in 1995, AmeriCorps service is not covered employment. Therefore, AmeriCorps members are not eligible for unemployment insurance in New York State.

**Q14: Is an applicant required to use National Performance Measures as part of their application? Where can I access information about National Performance Measures?**

**A14:** The Corporation values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures. Applicants are not required to use National Performance Measures in order to be awarded funding. The Corporation is open to applicant-determined performance measures. The quality of a program's design is more important than the use of National Performance Measures. Information about National Performance Measures is available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/2017-ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants#performancemeasures>.

**Q15: Can organizations that are currently receiving funding from CNCS submit an application for this special priority funding?**

**A15:** Yes. However, organizations that are currently receiving funding from CNCS, or that have received funding in the past, need to request that a New Project be created in eGrants in order to apply as a Targeted Priority Applicant. Instructions for existing Directs and Single-State Applicants are available at [https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Instructions\\_for\\_existing\\_Commissions\\_National\\_Directs\\_and\\_Subs.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Instructions_for_existing_Commissions_National_Directs_and_Subs.pdf).

**Q16: If multiple organizations will be working together and applying as one program, does each organization need to create an eGrants account?**

**A16:** No. Only the lead organization, which will be submitting the application, assuming responsibility for the grant award, and contracting with OCFS, is required to create an eGrants account and submit an application.

**Q17: If an organization is applying as an intermediary, do each of its partner organizations need to submit a letter of support?**

**A17:** Yes. Regardless of the intended MSY at a partner organization, all partner organizations are required to submit a letter of support from each partner organization via email to [AmeriCorps.RFP@newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov](mailto:AmeriCorps.RFP@newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov) by the application deadline (4/26/17). Letters of support should include what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant's AmeriCorps members and what activities would not happen without the AmeriCorps members. (See page 25 of the RFP.)

**Q18: Is funding available for personnel to manage AmeriCorps members?**

**A18:** Yes. Please see the 2017 Application Instructions when building your budget. (A link to the Application Instructions is on Page 29 of the RFP in Section 5.2 Key Concepts.)

**Q19: How do programs recruit members and staff?**

**A19:** Applicants are expected to develop/propose a recruitment plan with the submitted application. Corporation recruitment resources are available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/recruitment>.

**Q20: Are AmeriCorps members allowed to work on policy, or are members restricted to direct service? Can AmeriCorps members participate in capacity building or advocacy?**

**A20:** AmeriCorps members may participate in outreach or educational activities at an organization, but they are prohibited from any political advocacy, such as lobbying or protesting, during their service hours. AmeriCorps members may spend up to 10% of their service hours on fundraising activities, if it is directly related to their programs. Political advocacy is not allowable. Members may advocate for service for individual clients, as long as that advocacy does not enter the political realm. For more information on prohibited activities, see **Q38** or follow this link: <http://www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov/docfiles/AmeriCorps%20Prohibited%20Activities.pdf>.

**Q21: Is there an evaluation requirement for this special priority funding?**

**A21:** The regulations on evaluation for AmeriCorps grantees are available at [45 CFR §§ 2522.700-740](#) and on page 26 of the RFP.

**Q22: What are acceptable sources of match? Can programs use funds from other federal agencies as match?**

**A22:** The matching requirement may be met with any combination of applicant contribution to the project, including financial and/or in-kind contributions. Organizations may use funds from a different federal agency as match; however, applicants must obtain written approval from that federal agency before using the funds as match.

**Q23: Is the match requirement of 24% for each program year or the total of the three-year grant cycle (8% per year)?**

**A23:** The match requirement for new programs is 24% each year. The match percentage increases in year four to 26% and increases 4% each year thereafter, topping at 50% in year 10. More information about AmeriCorps matching requirements are available at [https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/moodle/fm\\_key\\_concepts\\_of\\_fgm/view6596.html?id=3201&chapterid=2030](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/moodle/fm_key_concepts_of_fgm/view6596.html?id=3201&chapterid=2030).

**Q24: Is the match amount included in the minimum budget requirement (\$137,000)?**

**A24:** No. The \$137,000 baseline budget stems from the NYS requirement to apply for at least 10 MSY's at no more than \$13,700 per MSY of federal AmeriCorps funds. The federal funds can account for no more than 76% of the total budget.

**Q25: Do applicants have to specify how they are splitting the MSY in their application?**

**A25:** Yes. The budget requires that applications designate the number and type of members that will be recruited. The split should be consistent with the program designed as explained in the narrative. You should explain what each category of members will be doing. (See the Application Instructions in Section 5.2 of the RFP.)

**Q26: Are programs required to have 10 members serve each program year?**

**A26:** Programs are required to apply for a minimum of 10 Member Service Years (MSY) and a minimum of 10 members per program year. However, programs may have more than 10 members serve during a program year if some members serve less than full-time terms.

**Q27: Which benefits for the AmeriCorps members are included in a program's operational budget? Is healthcare and childcare for full-time members included in the budget? Is the education award included in the budget?**

**A27:** AmeriCorps member living allowance, health insurance (for full-time members), FICA and worker's compensation insurance must be included in the budget. In New York State, unemployment insurance is NOT included. Child care and Segal Education Awards are other member benefits, which are not included in the budget.

**Q28: What are the requirements for AmeriCorps members and staff regarding criminal history checks?**

**A28:** All employees, participants, and others who receive a salary, national service education award, living allowance, or stipend under CNCS grants, even if the activities don't involve service with vulnerable populations, must undergo criminal history checks prior to beginning employment or service. Information on AmeriCorps criminal history check requirements are available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/criminal-history-check>.

**Q29: Can an individual who has been convicted of a crime serve as an AmeriCorps member?**

**A29:** Individuals who have been convicted of either murder or a sexual offense are ineligible to serve as AmeriCorps members. Those are the only two convictions that explicitly prohibit an individual from serving as an AmeriCorps member. Individuals who have been convicted of offenses other than murder or sex offense may serve as AmeriCorps members. Grantees must develop policies specific to their organizations regarding individuals who have been convicted of other crimes. If an AmeriCorps member is charged with a violent felony, or with the sale or distribution of a controlled substance, during his or her term of service, he or she will be suspended without a living allowance and without receiving credit for hours missed. The member may be reinstated if he or she is found not guilty or if the charge is dismissed. If an AmeriCorps member is charged with a crime, cleared of the charges, but unable to complete his or her term of service within one year, he or she may accept a pro-rated education award as long as he or she completed at least 15% of his or her service.

If an AmeriCorps member is convicted of a violent felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during his or her term of service, he or she must be terminated for cause from the program. He or she would not be eligible for any portion of an education award.

**Q30: If an organization has somebody on its staff who works part-time, can that person also serve in a part-time capacity as an AmeriCorps member?**

**A30:** The Corporation has a long-standing practice of advising against an AmeriCorps participant being simultaneously employed by the organization with which the participant is serving. AmeriCorps members are, by definition, not employees of the organizations with which they serve. To allow a member, even in the member's free time, to perform paid work begins to chip away at the wall between "employment" and "service." The program would be presented with a challenge in distinguishing between time that the individual is a participant, and time that the individual is an employee. This is particularly problematic if the program is operated by a faith-based organization where there may be issues related to prohibited activities.

Although it may be possible to structure a relationship in which an individual, during non-AmeriCorps service hours, performs paid work for the same organization, in which the individual's duties as a participant are entirely distinct from the individual's duties as an employee, the Corporation's general stance is that the risk for confusion is insurmountable.

**Q31: Can organizations with headquarters outside of New York State apply for funding?**

**A31:** Yes. Organizations with headquarters outside of New York State may apply for funding. However, only programs that will operate and provide service solely within the geographic borders of New York State are eligible for funding.

**Q32: What are the educational requirements for AmeriCorps members?**

**A32:** The AmeriCorps regulations (45 CFR § 2522.200) state that self-certification of high school diploma or its equivalent is sufficient. The program need not require any further documentation as long as the member certifies under penalty of law that he or she has a high school diploma or its equivalent, or agrees to obtain their high school diploma or otherwise meets the requirements of 42 U.S.C. §12591(a)(4).

**Q33: Will there be a clarification period following the submission of applications?**

**A33:** Yes. Applicants must be available May 8<sup>th</sup> and May 9<sup>th</sup> to provide clarification to the Commission on questions that may arise during the review of their applications. The Corporation for National and Community Service may conduct an additional clarification period independent of the Commission's at a later date.

**Q34: What is the expected amount of grant awards? Is there a maximum amount for the proposed budget?**

**A34:** The expected amount of grant awards is unknown. Grant awards are determined by the member of MSY requested. Applicants are required to request a minimum of 10 MSY. There is no maximum amount; however, the amount requested should be based on an organization's capacity. It is recommended that a new program apply for no more than 50 MSY. You may be asked by either the Commission and/or the Corporation to amend your application to reflect a budget different than originally submitted.

**Q35: Can you explain how the contracts awarded in response to this RFP will consist of three 15-month periods but not exceed 39 months?**

**A35:** Contract periods overlap. The second contract period begins during the first contract period, and the third contract period begins during the second contract period. Although each contract period is 15-months, the total length of time for the contract will not exceed 39 months.

**Q36: How should the amount for living allowances be determined?**

**A36:** Please see Applications Instructions on page 29 of the RFP for budget instructions.

**Q37: Can an organization apply for a Fixed Amount Grant in response to this RFP?**

**A37:** New applicants who have not administered an AmeriCorps program are eligible to apply only for Cost Reimbursement and Education Award Program (EAP) grants; they are not eligible to apply for Full Time Fixed Amount grants. Existing sub-grantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement grantees that can demonstrate a successful history and current capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

**Q38 Are there any restrictions on the activities AmeriCorps members can perform?**

**A38:** 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 § 2530.65):

- 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.

\*Please also note that an AmeriCorps member is prohibited from performing any clinical duties which require a New York State certification if that member is uncertified.

**Q39: Where can I find more information about AmeriCorps State and National guidelines?**

**A39:** AmeriCorps State and National Policy FAQ are available at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/policy%20FAQs%207.31.14%20final.pdf>.