2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***The Evidence Tier discussion in the NOFO references the evidence checklist, but I am unable to find it. Can you please let me know where I can locate it? [Updated 11/16/17]***

   The Evidence Checklist is now available on the NOFO page.

2. ***As a Tribe, do we need to apply through our state commission or may we apply directly to CNCS? Additionally, if our tribal seat is located in one state but the funds would be used for a program in another, which commission should we apply to?***

   Tribal applicants normally apply directly to CNCS, but may apply through a commission. If you apply through a commission, you would need to do so in the state where your program plans to operate (not where you are based). We will also have a separate 2018 Tribal Notice of Funding Opportunity that will be released later in the year with the applications due in the spring. That competition is open only to Federally-recognized Indian Tribes (as defined in 2 C.F.R. §200.54) and tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by Indian Tribes. You are welcome to submit your application to either the general competition with applications due in January or the AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants competition with applications due in the spring.

3. ***The Notice, Application Instructions, and Mandatory Supplemental Guidance were amended on October 6, 2017. What are the changes made to the documents?***

   1) 2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity: Corrected link on page 19.
   Deleted link:
   https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.pdf
   And replaced it with:
   https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Alternative-Evaluation-Approach-Guidance-FINAL-5.17.17.pdf

   2) 2018 Mandatory Supplemental Guidance: Correction on page 20. The highlighted language in the original passage below was corrected to reflect the 15 page limit for Rural Intermediaries.

   Rural Intermediaries:
   CNCS recognizes that severely under-resourced communities may have limited capacity to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, due to the size and organizational capacity of eligible applicant/host site organizations or the lack of available matching funds in these communities. Thus it may be effective for a single eligible applicant (intermediary) to develop an application and oversee the implementation of an AmeriCorps program that engages multiple grassroots non-profits/eligible applicants (referred to as a consortium) that, individually, do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program. Given the desire to address community needs holistically, the nonprofits/eligible applicants that make up the consortium may have, but are

not required to have, different focus areas (including the non-focus area capacity building) and thus the non profit/eligible applicant intermediary will be multi-focused.

Applicants seeking consideration under this priority must demonstrate that they will be serving in rural severely under-resourced communities; that their application represents a consortium, that the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs; and that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortium. Applicants seeking consideration under this   priority may submit a narrative that does not exceed 18 pages. Applicants should refer to the *Page Limits* section in the *Notice* for information specific to Multi-focus Intermediary requirements.

3) 2018 Application Instructions: The highlighted text below was deleted, as continuation applicants may not request funding and/or slot increases during the continuation process.

IV. Performance Measures (Performance Measures Section)
Your performance measures are copied from your previous year's application into your continuation request. If you made changes to your program, such as adding or changing grant-funded activities, or requesting additional slots or MSYs, you may need to revise your performance measures. To revise performance measures, "View/Edit" the performance measures that copy over from your original application, or add new performance measures (see Attachment A). Note in the Continuation Changes field that you have updated your performance measures. If you are proposing to significantly increase or decrease output or outcome targets for existing performance measures, provide a justification for this change.

4. **In 2018, continuation applicants are not able to request expansions. Can a continuation applicant submit both a continuation application <u>and</u> a new/recompete application for the same program in order to have an expansion request considered? [Added 11/9/17]**

   No. An organization may not submit multiple requests for identical projects to the same competition. Guidance regarding new/same project appears below:

   - If an applicant is applying for a different program model (a new project), they should apply as New. Current and previous grantees need to get approval from their Program Officer to be considered a new project. CNCS will consider a project to be new if there is a meaningful difference between it and previous projects in a comparison of the following characteristics, among others: the objectives and priorities of the projects; the nature of the services provided; the program staff, participants, and volunteers involved; the geographic locations in which the services are provided; the populations served; and the proposed community partnerships. (§ 2522.340).

   - Requests for approval to be considered a new project should include information about how the new project differs from the previous project in the characteristics noted above. The request should also include the proposed name of the new project. CNCS staff will review the request to determine if the proposed project does represent a meaningful difference from the previous project or if the proposed project is an example of natural program evolution over time. If it is determined that the project is new, the Program Officer will create a new project in eGrants.

5. **We are applying for Alternative Match. Do we submit the budget with the required match amount or the requested amount? [Added 11/9/17]**

Applicants need to submit the budget at the required rate. If the Alternative Match request is approved, then they would resubmit at the lower rate.

6. **Can we apply for funding under multiple focus areas in a single program? [Added 11/9/17]**

Yes, a single program can encompass more than one focus area.

7. **How does CNCS measure the term "significant" in relation to priority funding areas? [11/9/17]**

There is no set minimum percentage with respect to the Funding Priority areas. Applicants should make a compelling case in their applications that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and includes a high quality program design.

8. **We are currently a Partnership Challenge grantee. Are we eligible to apply for the 2018 AmeriCorps State & National Competition? [Added 11/16/17]**

Partnership Challenge is not specifically referenced in the 2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity. However, programs funded via the Partnership Challenge competition in 2015 may submit an application to the 2018 AmeriCorps State and National Competition and can apply under the grant type that best suits their program model and available resources. To help understand the various grant types that are available as part of this competition: https://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/2017/2018-categories-americorps-grants Please ensure that your proposed program meets the requirements articulated in the NOFO for that particular grant type; for example, organizations that propose to operate in only one state must apply through the Governor-appointed State or Territory Commissions, while organizations that propose to operate AmeriCorps programs in more than one State or Territory apply directly to CNCS (see p. 5 of the NOFO).

9. **If we are planning to transition from one grant type (fixed-price) to another grant type (cost-reimbursement), how would this affect our grantee status for the 2018 NOFO? [Added 11/16/17]**

In completing the SF-424 worksheet and listing applicant information, if you are applying for a different grant type (e.g., a cost reimbursement grant rather than a fixed amount grant), you should select New. However, per the definition of "Same Project" in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance, two projects will be considered the same if they address the same issue areas, address the same priorities, address the same objectives, serve the same target communities and population, or utilize the same sites.

10. **What should a continuation grantee do if one or more of their National Performance Measures is no longer present in the Performance Measure Instructions? [Added 11/16/17]**

Continuation grantees may continue to use deleted National Performance Measures through the end of their current three-year grant cycle. If the grantee submits a new or recompete application, the grantee must follow the National Performance Measure selection rules specified in the updated Performance Measure Instructions.

11. **We have a commission grantee who was awarded a grant with all full-time members, but historically converted some slots to less than full time. For their continuation application, can they request the same number of MSYs (and CNCS share) with a different slot configuration or do they have to continue to request full-time members (and convert as needed)? [Added 11/16/17]**

Since continuation applications cannot include expansions, the request should not exceed the number of MSY and slots that were previously approved. Please ensure that any slot reconfigurations by the program after the grant is awarded are consistent with the commission policy related to program slot conversions.

12. **We were funded in 2017 under the competitive Targeted Priority NOFO and had fewer than 20 members in our program design. We are applying as a continuation application in 2018. Does the 20 member minimum apply to us? [Added 11/16/17]**

The 20 member minimum does not apply to continuations, so the program can submit the 2018 continuation application with the same number of member slots they were approved for previously.

13. **The definitions of various outcomes as detailed in the logic model template fit programs that work directly with participants/individuals. Are there other definitions you can share that help an environmental program ensure they put outcomes in the correct columns of the logic model? [Added 11/16/17]**

The definitions that are provided in the logic model are examples for a typical program. If they do not fit your program design, you can modify which columns you put the outcomes in as long as they accurately tell the story of your program design and its intended community impact. For example, you can have change in condition as either your short-term, medium-term, or long-term outcome depending on the specific program design. What is important is the relationship between the outputs and different level outcomes, rather than whether your intended outcomes fit within the provided definitions in short-term, medium-term, or long-term columns.

14. **Will the learning memo that is required to be submitted by recompeting applicants be included in the evidence base assessment? [Added 11/16/17]**

Per the *Notice of Funding Opportunity*, any applicant required to submit an evaluation report in order to comply with CNCS evaluation requirements must also submit a learning memo that describes how they are using the evaluation to improve and to inform their activities in the next funding cycle. This Learning Memo will **not** be included in the two-part assessment of an applicant's evidence base, which consists of the assignation of an evidence tier and an assessment of the applicant's evidence

and overall capacity to collect and use data. Content that an applicant intends to include for assessment as part of the evidence base should be included in the Evidence section of the application and/or in submitted evaluation briefs, reports and/or studies, as applicable to the evidence tier.

15. **When trying to select Teacher Corps Performance Measures, I get a validation error that will not allow me to continue. What should I do? [11/16/17]**

Applicants selecting Teacher Corps measures currently receive an error message in the Performance Measure Module that reads: "You must select ED12 and ED13 as outputs and ED14 and ED17 as outcome. You must also select either ED1 or ED2 as output."
Per the 2018 Performance Measure Instructions, New/Recompete applicants should no longer use ED13 and ED14. A technical fix has been requested to remove this validation error, but this fix may not be completed prior to the time applicants are working in the Performance Measure Module. If you are a Teacher Corps program and you receive this validation error, you may use the workaround detailed below:

- Select the measures required by the system, including the discontinued measures ED13 and ED14. Per the 2018 Performance Measure Instructions selection rules, ED1 should not be included in the same aligned measure as ED12 and ED17, so you should create a separate measure that uses ED1 (to avoid eGrants error messages, do this prior to creating the Teacher Corps measure). Do not select the discontinued measure ED2.
- For those measures required by eGrants but which you do not intend to use, including discontinued measures ED13 and ED14, enter "1" as the Target.
- For those measures required by eGrants but which you do not intend to use, including discontinued measures ED13 and ED14, enter "NULL" in the "Described Instrument" field.

When a technical fix has been enacted, we will initiate corrections to the measures for those applicants/grantees impacted.

16. **For commissions, does the $18,000 cost/MSY maximum for formula apply to each individual formula prime or to the aggregate of primes? [12/6/17]**

The maximum applies to the aggregate of formula primes.

17. **Is there a limit on the number of applications an organization may submit? [Added 12/6/17]**

No, there is no limit as long as applications are not submitted for the same projects (see the definition of "Same Project" in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance).

18. **Section I. A under Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding of the RFA states that AmeriCorps members must be high school graduates or GED recipients or be working towards a diploma or GED. If we are interested in enrolling individuals with developmental disabilities as AmeriCorps members, would a certificate of completion or proof of aging out of Special Education High School be sufficient enough for eligibility? [Added 12/6/17]**

The applicant should consult with their state Department of Education to determine whether a certificate of completion from a Special Education High School would be considered a high school diploma or equivalent. If it is not a HS diploma or equivalent, then the guidance from policy FAQ B.14 would apply (https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/policy%20FAQs%207.31.14%20final%20working%20hyperlink.pdf). The applicant should explain in the application its plans to ensure that the program model would meet member eligibility requirements.

19. **Under the updated Performance Instructions, can we include applicant-determined outputs, without associated outcomes as secondary measures? [Added 12/4/17]**

No, output-only measures only apply to National Performance Measures. Applicant-determined outputs must be accompanied by relevant outcomes.