

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Serve Washington Request for Grant Applications
AmeriCorps State Competitive Grant
Federal Fiscal Year 2017
CFDA 94-006

Information current as of October 28, 2016 – FINAL PUBLICATION

Q&A from September 12, 2016

1. ~~In the RFGA, under “Creating Your Application in eGrants,” the NOFO and Prime Application numbers say TBD. Why is this?~~

~~Serve Washington is awaiting the federal opportunity to be opened in eGrants. At this time eGrants is not yet set up to accept new submissions. This should occur shortly. In the meantime, applicants are encouraged to begin reviewing all materials and may begin creating their application outside of eGrants.~~

The opportunity is now open in eGrants as noted in the amended RFGA.

2. What is the difference between the Competitive grant opportunity and the Formula grant opportunity?

The fall “Competitive” process is the current process for this Request for Grant Applications. It is the process where applicants in Washington State apply for AmeriCorps funding through the Serve Washington Commission. Serve Washington reviews these applications and identifies which projects should move forward to the national competition. At that point, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) evaluates the applications and determines which will be funded. This competition is a good fit for large programs (20+ MSYs), programs that meet the national priorities, programs that propose to operate in one single focus area, and/or programs with strong evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions.

In contrast, the spring “Formula” process is the local state competition. The applications in the Formula competition only compete against applicants in our state (they are not forwarded on to compete against other programs across the nation) and funding decisions are made by Serve Washington. The Formula process, however, has a much smaller allocation of money to draw from. The Formula competition is a good fit for smaller programs (15-25 MSYs), programs that meet local priorities, programs that propose to operate in single or multiple focus areas, and/or programs that are building their evidence-base.

To sign up for information about the Formula process, you can [register](#) on the Grant Information page of Serve Washington’s website to receive e-mail notification of future grant opportunities.

Serve Washington cannot guarantee an annual competition for Formula funds; the next Formula opportunity is projected to be held in the spring of 2018 for fall 2018-19 project periods.

3. My organization only wants one or two AmeriCorps members. Should I apply for this Request for Grant Applications?

No. This grant solicitation is only for programs that propose to engage a team of 20 or more Member Service Years in their program. A Member Service Year (MSY) is similar to the concept of a Full-Time Employee (FTE). For example, two half-time members are equal to one full-time MSY.

If your organization is interested in hosting less than 20 MSYs, for example a single independent placement AmeriCorps member or a smaller AmeriCorps team, you may wish to contact an AmeriCorps program in your area or a statewide intermediary to determine if a partnership may be feasible. Refer to the [AmeriCorps Program Directory](#) for a listing of programs in your county. If your organization is looking for AmeriCorps VISTA opportunities, please refer to the [CNCS VISTA](#) website.

4. Page 5 of the NOFO states the practice is to award at least 20 member positions (slots), is this different than Serve Washington's RFGA requirement for at least 20 MSYs?

Yes. Slots refer to "bodies" or number of members no matter if the member is full-time or less than full-time. Serve Washington holds a higher standard requiring teams total 20 MSYs or greater. The 20 MSYs can be a total of 20 slots serving full-time or a combination of slots serving less than full-time equating to 20 MSYs. For example, 40 half-time members are equal to 20 MSYs.

5. Is the 20 MSY requirement over the course of the 3-year application period, or is the requirement for 20 MSYs per year?

Serve Washington requires that grant applications be a minimum of 20 MSYs per program year.

6. In the NOFO there is an encouragement to submit a letter of intent. As an applicant, am I required to submit a letter of intent to Serve Washington or to the Corporation for National and Community Service?

No. Applicants are not required to submit letters of intent or concept papers to Serve Washington or to CNCS.

7. Can we submit letters of support to help strengthen our application?

Generally, No. Serve Washington will *only* accept letters of support for new/recompete applications in the Governor/Mayor Initiative and Multi-Focused Intermediary categories as directed in the NOFO and Supplemental Guidance. Applicable letters should be sent to servewa@ofm.wa.gov, DO NOT send letters to the CNCS inbox referenced. Letters from general applicants will not be considered and will not be returned.

8. Can you speak further to the role of a multi-focus intermediary?

This is a program design question that must be addressed at the program level. Programs must self-determine if their program design meets the definition of a multi-focus intermediary. The definition can be found in the Supplemental Guidance, page 6.

9. For my project award period, should I consider anything beyond the start date and end date for my members?

Yes. The project award period is one full year, generally the 1st of the month through the last day of the 12th month. Within that year, the start and end dates for members may vary. It may be appropriate to have a buffer before and after members' terms of service.

- Project Period Example: August 1, 2017 – July 30, 2018
- Member Service Year Example: August 15, 2017 – June 30, 2018

10. What is the earliest or latest date a project award period can start?

The earliest project award period allowed is August 1, 2017 – July 30, 2018.
The latest project award period allowed is January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018.

11. What is the difference between CNCS Focus Areas and CNCS Funding Priorities?

The CNCS [Strategic Plan](#) outlines the strategy for addressing the six focus areas identified in the Serve America Act: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families. These focus areas are also outlined in the NOFO, beginning on page 1.

CNCS funding priorities are determined annually based on special initiatives. These priority areas are also outlined in the NOFO, beginning on page 2.

12. My organization is in a continuation year, may we request additional members or additional funds?

Generally, NO. Serve Washington does not encourage currently-funded programs in a continuation year to request additional members or additional funds without first having a discussion with your Program Officer. Continuation requests for increases in CNCS funding are rarely approved. CNCS expects that the Cost per MSY for continuation applicants will decrease or remain the same. This expectation is clearly outlined in the Application Instructions for Continuation Requests, page 13.

13. Where can I find additional information and resources on theory of change, logic models, performance measurement, and evaluation?

Applicants can find additional resources on the CNCS grant opportunity [website](#), look under Performance Measure Instructions and Technical Assistance Information.

14. Our organization tracks more outputs and outcomes than are listed in our logic model and performance measures, how should we address this?

This is a program design question that must be addressed at the program level. However, it is noteworthy that the logic model represents the organization's total theory of change. Not all items listed in the logic model require an associated performance measure. Programs are only required to track one output and one aligned outcome within the total logic model.

15. Is an evaluation plan required for first-time applicants?

No. First-time applicants are not required to submit an evaluation plan. First-time applicants can select the "not applicable" option in eGrants for this question.

16. In the "Funding/Demographics" section of the application there is a question related to episodic volunteers and the number of ongoing volunteers generated by AmeriCorps members. Are these requirements of the AmeriCorps program?

Yes. AmeriCorps programs and members are expected to build community capacity through generating volunteers throughout the program year.

17. How do I know if I apply to the cost-reimbursement prime application or the fixed-amount prime application?

All NEW Serve Washington applicants must apply for a cost-reimbursement application. (Unless your program is a NEW Education Award Only Program (EAP) – EAP programs apply for the fixed-amount application.)

Recompeting applicants previously awarded under the fixed-amount model or recompeting applicants who have discussed switching to the fixed-amount model with Serve Washington may apply for the fixed-amount application.

18. The application instructions for fixed-amount grants state that we should list the number of members we are requesting under the "#w/o Allow" column. However, we are providing members with a living allowance. Can you explain why this is the case?

This has to do with the eGrants system. The system was created prior to the allowance of fixed-amount applications. Although contradictory, fixed-amount applicants should follow the instructions as is.

19. Page 28 of the Application Instructions under detailed budget instructions lists expected staff travel for State Commissions; are there similar expectations for subgrantees of Serve Washington?

Yes. While subgrantees are not expected to travel to Washington D.C. (that is the State Commission's role), program staff will be expected to travel to Serve Washington-sponsored technical assistance meetings.

Two primary in-person technical assistance meetings occur annually:

- Serve Washington Subgrantee Meeting: plan for a two-day meeting in the Olympia area; this meeting usually occurs in July.
- Pacific Region National Service Conference: plan for a full week conference; this conference rotates dates and locations within the western United States. Previous conferences have been held in Portland, Oregon; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Reno, Nevada. Rumor has it Phoenix, AZ, will be next in 2017.

20. Should we cite research using a bibliography page?

A bibliography page is not necessary and may use up valuable page limits. Serve Washington suggests citing all research directly within the text of the narrative. Cite the source directly, do not use URLs or web links.

21. I am having a technical difficulty in eGrants. What should I do?

For technical questions about eGrants, please contact the eGrants Help Desk at 1-800-942-2677 or by submitting a question to the CNCS Help Desk [here](#). From our experience, phone calls are often quicker than email submissions.

Q&A from September 27, 2016

22. What is the general percentage of new applicants applying to Serve Washington each year and how many of those applicants traditionally get forwarded to the national review?

It varies greatly year to year. The most important thing to note is Serve Washington traditionally does not forward every application for national review. CNCS expects Commissions to hold a competitive process and only forward the highest quality applications.

23. I see a funding priority area for STEM, is there corresponding National Performance Measures for this priority area?

While there is no required National Performance Measures (NPM) for STEM, STEM is mentioned in the NPM ED30. The program may find other NPMs applicable in the general area of Education or could create an Applicant Determined Measure (one output and one outcome).

24. Our program has had technical issues in the past setting up a recompetete application under the fixed amount grant model. Any updates?

Not at this time. Until Serve Washington is able to open primes grants in eGrants, we won't know the technical issues facing subgrantees. Should you experience problems, please contact Serve Washington or the eGrants Help Desk (800.942.2677) for assistance.

25. Can a National Direct program apply to the Commission under a new program design?

Yes. It is not unusual for the same legal applicant to have multiple grants from different funding sources.

26. In the Program Information section, under Populations Served, do we select the populations that are part of our program requirements or only those that we primarily serve?

Check all that apply to service recipients. For example, if every service recipient is required to be experiencing homelessness in order to access services, check "individuals who are homeless." If some of those individuals experiencing homelessness are also immigrants and refugees, also check "immigrants and refugees."

Q&A from October 4, 2016

27. When searching the CNCS website, I find information, such as Performance Measures and Instructions, dating back to 2013. Why is this?

The CNCS website has information for multiple funding years. Searching can cause confusion. Please only use the FY17 resources on the Serve Washington website and/or the current funding opportunity page on the CNCS website.

Serve WA: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/servewa/grant/default.asp>

CNCS: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2017>

Q&A from October 12, 2016

28. Is the required match a cash match or in-kind match?

Match can be any combination of cash or in-kind. Regardless of the statutory match requirement, programs must provide a substantial cash and/or in-kind match to operate a successful program. In some cases, this may be more than the required match. Federal AmeriCorps grants are not intended to fully fund program operations.

This concludes the FY17 FAQs.