



## 2020-21 AmeriCorps Grant Review Tool

New or Recompete Applications

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

| Application Section  | Score |
|--|-------|
| Program Design (50 points maximum)                         |       |
| Organizational Capability (25 points maximum)              |       |
| Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points maximum) |       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE (100 points possible)</b>                   |       |

**Overall Recommendation:**

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strongly</b><br>recommended<br>for funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended<br>for funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for funding<br>with reservations or concerns | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly <b>NOT</b><br>recommended<br>for funding |
|--|---|---|--|

**Overall Comments/Concerns/Questions:**

## Referenced Document

Applicants are required to complete applications for funding in accordance with the [2021 Serve Kentucky Request for Proposals Guidance-Formula.](#)

## Application Scoring

A maximum of 100 points may be awarded to each proposal. The average of the reviewers' scores will provide a rank-ordered list of programs, which will then be used by Serve Kentucky staff and Commissioners for selection purposes.

### Important Notes:

- **Comments are required for all sections; indicate strengths and weaknesses in each section.**
- Comments should be as specific as possible.
- The minimum number of points that may be awarded is 1.
- Please only use whole numbers (no fractions).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While no points will be assigned to this section, reviewers will be asked to examine whether or not the applicant followed the required format below, as described in the NOFO.

"The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [service activities the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)]. The CNCS investment of \$[amount of request] will be matched with \$[amount of projected match], \$[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and \$[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding. "

**Executive Summary does not deviate from required format:**  Yes  No

Comments:

## RATIONALE AND APPROACH/PROGRAM DESIGN

### Theory of Change and Logic Model (24 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_

The Theory of Change shall address:

- The proposed intervention is responsive to the identified community problem.
- The applicant's proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant's intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change.
- The expected outcomes articulated in the application narrative and logic model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem identified by the applicant.
- The rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver the intervention(s) is reasonable.
- The service role of AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.

The Logic Model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
  - Locations or sites in which members will provide services
  - Number of AmeriCorps members who will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
  - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
  - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week)
  - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served, types and number of activities conducted.) If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention. If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Note: The logic model is a visual representation of the applicant's theory of change. Programs may include short, medium or long-term outcomes in the logic model. Applicants are not required to measure all components of their theory of change. The applicant's performance measures should be consistent with the program's theory of change and should represent significant program activities.

In the application narrative, applicants should discuss their rationale for setting output and outcome targets for their performance measures.

Rationales and justifications should be informed by the organization's performance data (e.g., program data observed over time that suggests targets are reasonable), relevant research (e.g. targets documented by organizations running similar programs with similar populations), or prior program evaluation findings. Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one chart which incorporates each intervention.

## **Evidence Base**

The assessment of an applicant's evidence base has two parts. First, the applicant will be assigned to an evidence tier (see the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.) Second, the quality of the applicant's evidence and the degree to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

### **Evidence Tier (12 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

The assessment of an applicant's evidence base has two parts. First, the applicant will be assigned to an evidence tier (see the Mandatory Supplemental Information.) Second, the quality of the applicant's evidence and the degree to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

In 2020, the evidence tiers of successful AmeriCorps State and National applicants that were competing were as follows: Strong 26%, Moderate 18%, Preliminary 24%, and Pre-Preliminary 32%. As these figures indicate, CNCS values and funds programs at all points along the evidence continuum and expects programs to progress along the evidence continuum over time. Thus, applicants should not be deterred from applying for funding due to their current evidence level.

Applicants who have outcome or impact evaluation reports of the same intervention described in the application (see Mandatory Supplemental Information for a definition of "same intervention") may submit up to 2 of those reports, plus (if applicable) the evaluation report from their last three-year grant cycle, to qualify for the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tier. In order to qualify for consideration, the intervention evaluated in the submitted report(s) must match the intervention proposed by the applicant in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention, including all key components and activities
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

In the Evidence Tier section of the application narrative, applicants must (1) summarize the study design and key findings of any outcome or impact evaluation report(s) submitted and (2) describe any other evidence that supports their program, including past performance measure data and/or other research studies that inform their program design. Applicants who submit evaluation reports for consideration must also describe in the Evidence Base section of the application narrative how the intervention described in the submitted reports is the same as the intervention described in the application (see [Mandatory Supplemental Information](#)).

Applicants should provide citations for the studies they describe, if applicable; however, reviewers will not review any documents external to the application other than evaluation report(s) submitted in accordance with the Notice instructions.

Applicants must meet all requirements of an evidence tier in order to be considered for that tier.

**Evidence Quality (8 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

After the applicant’s evidence tier has been assessed, the quality of the applicant’s evidence and the extent to which it supports the proposed program design will be assessed and scored.

For applicants who are assessed as being in the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tiers, reviewers will score the submitted evaluation reports using the following standards:

- The submitted reports are of satisfactory methodological quality and rigor for the type of evaluation conducted (e.g., adequate sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, appropriate use of control or comparison groups, etc.);
- The submitted reports describe evaluations that were conducted relatively recently, preferably within the last six years;
- The submitted reports show a meaningful and significant positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest.

For applicants who are assessed as being in the Pre-Preliminary evidence tier, reviewers will score the narrative provided in the Evidence Base section of the application using the following standards:

- The applicant uses relevant evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to inform their proposed program design;
- The described evidence is relatively recent, preferably from the last six years;
- The evidence described by the applicant indicates a meaningful positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest.

**Member Experience (6 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the programs operate.
- The applicant will foster an inclusive service culture where different backgrounds, talents, and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and effective service delivery.

| <b>Program Design Heading</b>    | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Points Awarded</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Theory of Change and Logic Model | 24                     |                       |
| Evidence Tier                    | 12                     |                       |
| Evidence Quality                 | 8                      |                       |
| Notice Priority                  | 0                      |                       |
| Member Experience                | 6                      |                       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>               | <b>50</b>              |                       |

**Program Design (50 points): Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

Program Design Comments:

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

#### **Organizational Background and Staffing (9 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

- The organization details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps program as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program.

#### **Compliance and Accountability (8 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

- The organization has a monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect non-compliance and enforce compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities and criminal history checks at the grantee, subgrantee (if applicable), and service site locations.

#### **Culture that Values Learning (4 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

- The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information, including performance data, for learning and decision-making.

**Member Supervision (4 points): Score \_\_\_\_\_**

- AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.

| <b>Organizational Capability Heading</b> | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Points Awarded</b> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Organizational Background and Staffing   | 9                      |                       |
| Compliance and Accountability            | 8                      |                       |
| Culture That Values Learning             | 4                      |                       |
| Member Supervision                       | 4                      |                       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>                       | <b>25</b>              |                       |

**Organizational Capability (25 points): Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

Organizational Capability Comments:

**COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (25 points): Score 25**

The Fiscal Team at Serve Kentucky will ensure the following before submission to CNCS/AmeriCorps.

This criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for "See budget" or "N/A."

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.
- The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year.
- The cost per MSY is equal to or less than the maximum cost per MSY.

Proposed budgets that contain MSY costs that exceed the maximum cost per MSY and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget screens:

- Current indirect rate cost if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project, including for Fixed Amount applicants.

Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash), the sources of these commitments, and if the commitments are proposed or secured.

### **EVALUATION PLAN (0 POINTS)**

Evaluation plans are approved by CNCS/AmeriCorps after funding decisions are made. There is a separate process if revisions are required. Reviewers do not need to read this section, but the criteria from the NOFO is provided for reference.

- If the applicant is competing for the first time, please provide a data collection plan in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field that includes the following:
  - A description of the applicant’s data collection system and how it is sufficient to collect high quality performance measurement data during the first three years of the grant. If the applicant does not yet have a data collection system, describe the plan and timeline for developing a high quality system.
  - A description of how the applicant will use performance data (including CNCS performance measures and other process and outcome measures if applicable) to improve its program in the first three years of funding.
- If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time, the program must submit its evaluation plan in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” field.
- If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report as an attachment, and must also submit an evaluation plan for the next three-year period.

Evaluation plans must include as much information as possible for each of the following:

- A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome(s) of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation
- Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes
- Proposed research design for the evaluation including a rationale for the design selected, an assessment of its strengths and limitations, and a description of the main components;
- Description of the data sources, sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures that will be used in the evaluation
- Analysis plan that clearly describes the methodology/ies that will be used to analyze the collected data
- A timeline for the evaluation that describes how the evaluation will cover at least one year of CNCS-funded activity and will be completed within the three-year timeframe of the grant
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator
- The proposed budget