



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

2018 MARYLAND AMERICORPS STATE CONCEPT PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

**Notice of Intent for all Applications due
Tuesday, August 29, 2017, 5:00 p.m. (EST)**

**Concept Paper Applications due
Monday, September 11, 2017, 5:00 p.m. (EST)**

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Attachments (in Concept Paper Outline)

These attachments are worksheets only located separately in the Concept Paper Outline.

A. Theory of Change Logic Model.....	
B. Performance Measure.....	
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D. Detailed Budget Instructions for Cost Reimbursement.....	
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NOTICE FROM THE MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE ON SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM

Authority

The Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSV) acts as the State Service Commission and state funding agency for federal funds awarded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in accordance with the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. §§12571-12595) to eligible entities for the purpose of operating an AmeriCorps program.

Corresponding Regulations

The *2018 Maryland AmeriCorps State Concept Paper Instruction* should be read together with the 2018 CNCS Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR Sections 2520 – 2550, which can be found on the AmeriCorps website <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>.

The following instructions are for new applicants and previous applicants that have reached the end of their three-year cycle and must re-apply as new. While you must use these instructions to prepare your Concept Paper, you should note that CNCS has not yet released the 2018 AmeriCorps Application instructions. This process is moving forward based on previous guidance from CNCS and GOSV will make applicants aware of any changes as they are formalized. As a result, applicants will need to remain flexible and be able to respond to changes in these instructions. The full application instruction will be available to applicants that are invited to submit a full AmeriCorps application.

Method of Submission

The Concept Paper must be submitted via email, to Sarah Kim at sarahy.kim@maryland.gov. The Concept Paper narrative **cannot exceed the character limits in each section**. The proposal must follow the order outlined in the instructions.

Concept Papers must be received by the GOSV by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, September 11, 2017.

Postal and hand-delivery are not acceptable.

If you are a Continuation Applicant, concept paper submission is not required unless you are making significant changes in your program design. However, you are required to submit the Notice of Intent by August 28, 2017 via email to Sarah Kim, grants Coordinator, sarahy.kim@maryland.gov.

Universal Identifier and SAM

Applications must include a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with the System for Award Management (SAM). The DUNS number is an identifier that helps the federal government to improve statistical reports on federal grants and cooperative agreements. The DUNS number does not replace your Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by applying online at www.dnb.com.

The System for Award Management (SAM) is the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/the federal procurement system and the catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. In order to apply for CNCS funding, you must register in the SAM and maintain a valid registration, which must be renewed annually. You can register online at www.sam.gov.

It is recommended that applicants **finalize a new SAM registration or renew an existing one at least two weeks before the application deadline**. This should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise. It typically takes seven - ten days to finalize www.sam.gov registration. To complete the registration process, you will need to submit detailed information on your organization in various categories relevant to federal procurement and financial transactions:

- General Information, such as organization name, EIN, DUNS, location, income, and number of employees.
- Corporate Information, such as organization type (i.e., state government, nonprofit).
- Financial Information, such as financial institution, bank account numbers, and credit card information.
- Point of Contact Information, such as primary and alternate points of contact.

Specific requirements and detailed instructions on how to register are available in the SAM User's Guide https://www.sam.gov/sam/SAM_Guide/SAM_User_Guide.htm. You should review the guide before you begin the registration process as it identifies the required fields and will aid you in gathering the necessary information.

Agency Contact

Inquiries about this funding opportunity should be directed to Sarah Kim, grants coordinator, Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism, sarahy.kim@maryland.gov. **All inquiries must be made via email**; the subject of the email should be "2018 AmeriCorps Concept Paper Question <Applicant Name>."

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. Through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund, CNCS has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

Through all its programs, CNCS seeks to expand economic opportunity – helping Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment. By helping more Americans graduate, pursue higher education, and find work, national service can provide immediate and long term benefits by expanding individual opportunity, building family stability, and creating more sustainable, resilient communities.

PURPOSE OF AMERICORPS FUNDING

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that members can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

Applicants for AmeriCorps funding must address one or a combination of the CNCS Focus Areas and Funding Priorities, as identified below. In addition, priority will be given in AmeriCorps funding decisions for programs that address and have a strong track record in meeting the national performance measures. Performance measures are specific program goals and benchmarks that must be established, tracked, and reported during the AmeriCorps program and grant year. For most measures, CNCS will offer a standard definition of program structure, level of interaction required, and other criteria to meet the measure.

For extensive information on CNCS funding goals, performance objectives, strategies, and priority measures, you can find the CNCS Strategic Plan at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan>. In addition, applicants should thoroughly review the detailed instructions on CNCS performance measures at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2016/2017-performance-measures-instructions>.

CNCS Focus Areas (in alphabetical order)

In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, CNCS has the following focus areas:

Disaster Services

Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters. Grantees also have the ability to respond to national disasters under CNCS cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

Economic Opportunity

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help

economically disadvantaged people, including youth identified in My Brother's Keeper to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students prepare for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

Environmental Stewardship

Grants will provide support for increased individual behavioral change leading to increased energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and communities. Grant activities will decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems; and/or increase green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems.

Healthy Futures

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by CNCS-supported programs; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

Veterans and Military Families

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS-supported programs.

2018 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

In addition, CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

- Disaster Services - improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity - increasing economic opportunities for communities by engaging opportunity youth, either as the population served and/or as AmeriCorps members
- Education - improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics (STEM)
- Healthy Futures – reducing and/or preventing prescription drug and opioid abuse
- Veterans and Military Families – positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives
- Rural intermediaries- organizations that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure.

- Safer Communities – programs that focus on public safety, preventing and mitigating civil unrest, and/or partnerships between law enforcement and the community
- Evidence Based Intervention Planning Grants
- Encore Programs – programs that engage Americans age 55 and older

In order to receive priority consideration and three points for submitting an application within a *Notice* priority(ies), applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.

CNCS National Performance Measures

In addition to identifying priority service areas, CNCS has implemented national performances measures in order to better demonstrate impact in these areas. Programs are not required to fall into the above focus areas. However, CNCS will give priority to programs within these areas and to programs that opt into at least one national performance measure.

These measures were used in the previous grants process; it is not known what, if any, changes will be made in the upcoming process. By clicking the link below, you can find last year’s instructions for national performance measures for each focus area listed above.

Performance Measure Instruction: [https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#PM Instructions](https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#PM%20Instructions)

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including labor organizations; faith-based and other community organizations; schools or school districts; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; or partnerships and consortia of the above, including applicants that have never received funding from the GOSV or AmeriCorps, are eligible to apply. Intermediary organizations intending to re-allocate resources locally are also encouraged to apply for grants. Receiving funding previously from CNCS or another Federal agency is not a prerequisite to applying.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *Notice*. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act 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.

The same project cannot be funded by multiple AmeriCorps grants. If you have more than one application pending before the GOSV and/or CNCS for the same project, you must state this fact in each application. You will be required to withdraw all but one if two or more are approved for funding.

TYPE OF GRANT APPLICATION

AmeriCorps State Competitive and Formula Program Operating Grants

Existing Maryland AmeriCorps grantees and agencies that are new to AmeriCorps funding may apply for the Competitive or Formula Program Operating Grant. Applicants are required to match the federal funds. In conjunction with the 20 AmeriCorps member slots required for the Competitive Grant by CNCS, there is a 10 MSY minimum requirement in Maryland for the Formula Grant. Grants will be awarded on a cost reimbursement basis; no Fixed Amount Grants will be awarded by the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism.

Description of AmeriCorps Programs

This funding supports organizations (grantees) in implementing programs that recruit and enroll participants, called AmeriCorps members, in full-time or less than full-time service positions that address unmet community needs. The grantee administers a federally funded living allowance to the AmeriCorps members to cover living expenses while they are serving, and certifies the members' eligibility to receive federally funded education awards at the conclusion of their terms of service. The grantee creates a supportive team-based environment or individual placements in which the members can perform and reflect upon meaningful direct service that assists individuals in need, or improves the natural or urban environment and strengthens communities.

Description of AmeriCorps Member Benefits Member Living Allowance:

The proposed budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that is between \$13,732 (minimum) and \$27,464 (maximum) per member except as noted in the CNCS NOFO. A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage.

Education Award: Upon successful completion of a term of service, an AmeriCorps member is entitled to an education award commensurate with the service commitment the member fulfilled. Awards can be used to pay educational expenses or to pay existing student loans. A full-time member funded under this grant award in 2018 – 2019 will earn an award of \$5,815 with correspondingly smaller awards for less than full-time service; Education Award amounts are included in the CNCS NOFO. The education award is administered by a separate entity, the National Service Trust, and is paid directly to the educational or financial institution. Members have seven years from completion of their terms of service to utilize the education benefit. While a member is serving in AmeriCorps, qualified student loans may be put in Forbearance and the interest may be paid by the Trust. The value of the education benefit is not calculated into the program budget.

Child Care: Child care expenses for income eligible members are paid during a member's term of service. The cost of child care is not calculated into the program budget.

Health Care: AmeriCorps Grantees must provide health care benefits to full-time members who do not already possess health care benefits. The health care benefits must meet minimum guidelines. The cost of member health care is calculated into the program budget.

PROGRAM SIZE

Applicants must apply for a minimum of 10 full-time members (10 Member Service Years, or MSYs) or the equivalent number of part-time members. Applications requesting fewer than 10 MSYs will not be reviewed. AmeriCorps programs should be large enough to make a significant difference in communities; therefore, the GOSV strongly encourages applicants to request a minimum of 10-20 MSYs regardless of

whether members serve individually or in teams. A chart to calculate MSYs is included in the Concept Paper Instructions.

GRANT SIZE

Grant requests may vary in size depending on the type and scope of a proposed program. Applicants are allowed flexibility in developing their budgets within certain limitations. The maximum cost per MSY (full-time equivalent member) is **\$14,932**. Individual program cost effectiveness will be assessed against the federally-established target.

GRANT AND PROGRAM OPERATING PERIOD

AmeriCorps funding is provided as a 12-month grant, August 15, 2018- August 14, 2019, with the option for renewing two times (three years total) before a program must re compete. The program may operate for fewer than 12 months but must fall within the 12-month grant period.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREPARING A STRONG AMERICORPS GRANT APPLICATION

AmeriCorps grant competitions are fierce; each year, there are significantly more applications than available funding will support. It is extremely important that the grant application is thoroughly completed and well-presented. Below are ideas to help you present your project in the best way:

- **Make your grant easy to read.** Follow the application instructions and outline exactly. The grant reviewer score sheet will follow the instructions and outline exactly. Do not change headings or categories. Put the sections in the correct order, and CAPITALIZE headers to help break up the narrative. If a section does not apply to your application, write N/A.
- **Lead from your program strengths and be explicit.** Do not make the mistake of trying to stretch your program to fit each strategic initiative, special consideration, and priority articulated in the AmeriCorps Regulations or the CNCS *Notice*.
- **Be clear and succinct.** Reviewers are not interested in jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. Avoid overusing acronyms. Reviewers are interested in learning precisely what you intend to do and how your project responds to the selection criteria presented in the following section.
- **Avoid circular reasoning.** The problem you are addressing should not be described as the lack of the program you are proposing.
- **Explain how.** Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
- **Don't make assumptions.** Even if you have received funding from the Corporation or the GOSV in the past, do not assume your reviewers know anything about you, your program, your partners, or your beneficiaries. The application must stand alone and give the full picture of what you aim to achieve with this funding request.
- **Use an impartial proofreader.** Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the project narrative.

- **Carefully proofread and edit your grant for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.** Poorly written grant applications will receive lower scores in the review process.
- **Follow the instructions and discuss each criterion in the order they are presented in the instructions.** Use headings to differentiate narrative sections by criterion.

2018-2019 AMERICORPS GRANT PROCESS

The GOSV suggests that applicants should take the AmeriCorps Regulations and Terms and Conditions into consideration when planning the program and preparing the application. These documents are available at the links below: Click [HERE](#) for AmeriCorps Regulations, Click [HERE](#) for AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions

The Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism uses a multi-step application process. This process includes:

- 1) Submitting a Concept Paper - The purpose of the Concept Paper is to allow applicants the opportunity to present their proposed program, its potential community impact, and their organizational capacity to manage an AmeriCorps Program. The attached set of instructions applies to the Concept Paper only.
- 2) Peer Review
- 3) GOSV Staff and Commission Review
- 4) Invitation to submit a full application - Full application proposal and process will include:
 - a) Editing and clarifying program details for Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) compliance.
 - b) Expanding the 10-page Concept Paper to a 15-page narrative that will be considered for submission to CNCS.
 - c) Submitting the application via eGrants, the electronic grants management system used by CNCS. Technical assistance is provided by GOSV staff for this process.
- 5) GOSV Staff Review of Full Applications
- 6) Submission of Full Applications to CNCS for competitive grants process.
- 7) GOSV Commission Board Review of Full Applications for Formula Award

Please note:

- 1) Submission of a Concept Paper does not always result in an invitation to submit a full application.
- 2) An invitation to submit a full application does not guarantee submission to CNCS.
- 3) An invitation to submit a full application does not guarantee funding.
- 4) Funding for this grant is contingent on allocation of funding to state of Maryland from CNCS.

Special Instructions:

- 1) CNCS requires that AmeriCorps programs receiving over \$500,000 conduct an independent evaluation of their program. All other AmeriCorps programs must conduct an internal evaluation. All applicants invited to submit a full application should be prepared to provide information on evaluation plans in the full proposal. Please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/planning-evaluation> for more information.
- 2) For organizations that are proposing a tutoring program, AmeriCorps Regulations define the minimum requirements that a member must meet in order to qualify as a *tutor*. See 45 C.F.R.

§§2522.900-2522.930 for more information.

3) Under the Serve America Act, State Competitive and National Direct applicants are considered in the same review process. Therefore, organizations applying for both state and national direct funding must demonstrate that the two applications are not supporting the same project.

a) CNCS will consider two projects to be the same if CNCS cannot identify a meaningful difference between the two projects based on a comparison of the following characteristics, among others:

- i. The objectives and priorities of the projects;
- ii. The nature of the services provided;
- iii. The program staff, participants, and volunteers involved;
- iv. The geographic locations in which the services are provided;
- v. The populations served; and
- vi. The proposed community partnerships.

b) GOSV has the ability to further define these characteristics to ensure diversity among AmeriCorps programs in Maryland.

TYPES OF AWARDS

The GOSV AmeriCorps programs receive funding from one of two sources: Competitive or Formula Awards. Programs submit a single proposal to apply for both types of awards. Regardless of Competitive or Formula funding, all AmeriCorps programs are required to follow the AmeriCorps Regulations, Terms and Conditions, and GOSV's Addendum to the Terms and Conditions.

Competitive Award

Competitive funds are awarded by CNCS through GOSV. The GOSV selects Full Applications to submit to CNCS for review in competition with proposals from all single- and multi-state applicants. The Corporation runs a Peer and Staff Review to make funding determinations. Programs that are not selected for a Competitive Award will be considered for Formula Awards.

Formula Award

Formula funds are awarded to programs by the GOSV. Formula funds are given to the GOSV based on the federal allocation for AmeriCorps and Maryland's population. The amount of funds the GOSV has available to award each year to new and re-applying programs depends on the allocation from CNCS and the number of Formula-funded programs in continuation (year one or two of the three-year grant cycle). Full applications that are not selected for submission to the Corporation for national competition and those not awarded Competitive funds by CNCS will be considered for Formula funding.

**TIMELINE FOR 2018 MARYLAND
AMERICORPS STATE GRANT PROCESS**

The timeline is dependent on the CNCS Notice of Funding Opportunity and deadlines and is subject to change.

August 7, 2017	Release Concept Paper instructions
August 22, 2017	AmeriCorps State Technical Assistance Webinar for New/Recompete Applicants (mandatory), 3:00- 4:00 PM
August 29, 2017	Notice of Intent due to the GOSV
September 11, 2017	Concept Paper submissions due by 5:00 p.m.
October 10, 2017	Peer Review Consensus Meeting of Concept Papers
October 19, 2017	Recommendation to Commission on Concept Papers
October 31, 2017	Notification of Status
November 7, 2017	AmeriCorps State Technical Assistance Webinar for Continuation Applicants 10:00- 11:00 AM
November 2017	Invited Applicants work with the GOSV on drafts
December 5, 2017	All Applications due to GOSV
December 21, 2017	Selected Applications (except for Formula Continuation Applications) entered in eGrants
Early January 2018	GOSV submits applications to CNCS for Competitive
January 30, 2018	Formula Continuation Application entered in eGrants
May 2018	Notification of Competitive Award
Mid May/ Early June 2018	Commission vote
June 2018	Notification of Formula Award
July /August 2018	Distribution of grant award packets and programs launch; dates vary depending on CNCS funding and award processes and AmeriCorps program design (no member may be enrolled prior to award date)

**AMERICORPS PROGRAM OPERATING
GRANT APPLICATION: REVIEW AND SELECTION**

In evaluating applications for funding, reviewers will assess program design, organizational capability, cost-effectiveness, and budget adequacy. Please see the CNCS NOFO and the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2522.420–2522.448, for additional detail regarding these criteria and what reviewers will assess in each category.

Table 1: Basic Selection Criteria: Categories and Respective Weights

Category	Points	Sub-Categories
Part 1: Program Design	50 Points	Need- 2 Points Intervention- 3 Points Theory of Change and Logic Model- 19 Points Evidence Base- 12 Points Notice Priority- 3 Points Member Training- 4 Points Member Supervision- 2 Points Member Experience- 3 Points Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification- 2 Points
Part 2: Organizational Capability	25 Points	Organizational Background and Staffing- 10 Points Compliance and Accountability- 15 Points
Part 3: Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	25 Points	Cost Effectiveness- 18 Points Budget Adequacy- 7 Points

Section 2522.450 of the AmeriCorps Regulations addresses the types of programs or program models that may receive special consideration in the selection process. Section 2522.455 addresses how you can find out about additional priorities governing the selection process. Section 2522.470 addresses other factors or information CNCS may consider in making funding decisions.

NEW AND RECOMPETING PROGRAMS: APPLICATION RESOURCES

Use these instructions in conjunction with the 2016 CNCS *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice)*, and the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550. **The *Notice* includes deadlines, eligibility requirements, submission requirements, maximum amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY),¹ and other information that is specific to the grant competition.**

The AmeriCorps Regulations include pertinent information (see Table 2, below). The *Notice* can be found at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2017/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2017>. The full regulations are available online at www.ecfr.gov.

Table 2: Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Topics	Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations
Member Service Activities	§2520.20 - §2520.55
Prohibited Activities	§2520.65
Tutoring Programs	§2522.900-2522.950
Matching Funds	§2521.35-2521.90
Member Benefits	§2522.240-2522.250
Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	§2522.485
Performance Measures	§2522.500-2522.650
Evaluation	§2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740
Selection Criteria and Selection Process	§2522.400-2522.475

If there is any inconsistency between the AmeriCorps Regulations, the *Notice*, and the Application Instructions, the order of precedence is as follows:

1. AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550 take precedence over the
2. Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity/Notice of Federal Funding Availability, which takes precedence over the
3. Application Instructions.

¹ One MSY is equivalent to at least 1,700 service hours, a full-time AmeriCorps position. The CNCS cost per MSY is determined by dividing the CNCS share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested in the application. It does not include childcare or the cost of the education award.

AMERICORPS STATE CONCEPT PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR THE CONCEPT PAPER

Your Concept Paper will be submitted via email. Please make sure to complete/submit each of the following components. Please note that all attachments will be submitted as part of your application.

- I. Maryland AmeriCorps Concept Paper Cover Sheet
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Program Narrative (character limits by section)
- IV. Uploaded: Logic Model Worksheet
- V. Uploaded: Performance Measurement Worksheet
- VI. Uploaded: Budget
- VII. Uploaded: Authorization, Assurances and Certifications
- VIII. Additional Required Information:
 - a. Attached: Organizational Chart
 - b. Attached: Most recent audit (A-133, if applicable)
 - c. Attached: Proof of eligibility, 501(c) 3 letter or MD Certificate of Tax Exemption (ST-2 or ST-4)

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Concept Paper narrative must be submitted via email, to Sarah Kim, grants coordinator, Maryland Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism, sarahy.kim@maryland.gov. The Concept Paper narrative **cannot exceed the character limits in each section**. The proposal must follow the order outlined in the instructions.

Concept Papers must be received by GOSV by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, September 11, 2017. Postal and hand-delivery are not acceptable.

NOTE:

- Any application that fails to meet all Concept Paper submission requirements **will not be reviewed**.
- Any application that does not request the minimum number of MSYs **will not be reviewed**.
- Please do not submit supplemental materials such as brochures, newsletters, etc. These materials **will not be reviewed**.

Type your answers directly into the Concept Paper outline. Do not delete the original outline, questions, etc. You may find a Word document (version 1997 – 2003) of the outline with the Concept Paper Attachments (A-G) at GOSV.maryland.gov. Page limits are indicated at each element below.

Name of Legal Applicant (organization, parent company, etc.)	
Address	
Website	
Executive Director	
Executive Director Phone	
Executive Director Email	
Contact for Concept Paper Review Process (if different than above)	
Contact Phone	
Contact Email	
Federal Identification Number/EIN	
DUNS Number	
SAM Registration (Specify Expiration Date)	
Areas Affected by the Project (Provide name of specific city, county, or region, or identify project as state-wide)	
Delinquent on Any Federal Debt	Yes/No
	If yes, provide an explanation:
Name of Proposed AmeriCorps Program (if different than Legal Applicant)	
Identify <i>One</i> National Focus Area Addressed in Proposal (listed on pages 5 above; select only one issue area)	

A. Executive Summary (No character limit - 0 point)

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from the template below.

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.

*If the program is not operating in a CNCS focus area, omit this sentence.

Fixed Amount grant applicants (EAP, Fulltime Fixed, and Professional Corps Fixed) should list their Other Revenue (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program. CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications on www.nationalservice.gov in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

B. Program Design (50 points)

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

1. Need (3,500 character limit, 2 points)

- The community problem/need is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and has been well documented with relevant data.

2. Intervention (3,500 character limit, 3 points)

- The proposed intervention is clearly described.
- The proposed intervention aligns with the identified community need.

3. Theory of Change and Logic Model (6,500 character limit, 19 points)

The Theory of Change shall address:

- The applicant's proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, 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 theory of change should be either evidence-informed or evidence-based, meaning that the proposed intervention is guided by the best available research evidence that supports its effectiveness, as described in the *Evidence Base* section below.
- The proposed outcomes articulated in the application narrative and Logic Model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community need identified by the applicant. Applicants should provide rationale for selecting output and outcome targets. Note, recompeting applicants proposing to significantly increase or decrease output and outcome targets from their previous grant must provide a justification for this change.

- The applicant’s 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/need outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
 - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services C
 - Number of AmeriCorps members that 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.) 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.

Programs may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the Logic Model. While performance measure outcomes should be consistent with the program’s theory of change, programs are not required to measure all outcomes that are included in the Logic Model. See Attachment B for the Logic Model.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention. Logic model content that exceeds the three pages will not be reviewed.

4. Evidence Base (3,500 character limit, 12 points)

Applicants will be awarded up to 12 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the logic model. Applicants shall provide a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge, and should describe how this evidence places them in one of the five evidence levels listed below. Applicants must fully describe how they meet the requirement of that level, using results from studies and evaluations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the evidence that supports the strongest evidence tier, and all relevant evidence presented must be included in this section. This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments.

For each report cited, include the date of the report, a description that shows its relevancy to the proposed program model, the methodology used in the study, and the strength of the findings (e.g. confidence level).

For current grantees that are required to submit an evaluation report: The evaluation report will be considered as part of the evidence base of the program. Grantees may opt to include that evaluation report as one of the two studies, or submit two separate studies in addition to the evaluation report. In the latter case, all three studies will be reviewed against this criterion.

The five tiered evidence levels are:

No evidence (0 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

Pre-preliminary evidence (1-2 point) means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking. An example could be gathering feedback from program participants following their receipt of the intervention.

Preliminary evidence (3-6 points) means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program's contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence base consists of at least one non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program beneficiaries over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track program beneficiaries through a service pipeline and measure beneficiaries' responses at the end of the program; and 2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether beneficiaries have improved on an intended outcome.

Moderate evidence (7-9 points) means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence. The evidence base consists of one or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR two or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR one or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention. Examples of research that meet the standards include: well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e. a similar population that does not receive the intervention).

Strong evidence (10-12 points) means the applicant has demonstrated that the intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well implemented QED or RCT. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive. Findings from the RCT or QED studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Applicants classifying their evidence as **Strong** must submit up to two evaluation reports from external sources or evaluations published in peer-reviewed articles as separate attachments.

Current CNCS grantees are required to submit an evaluation report of their CNCS funded program. The CNCS-required evaluation report may count towards one of the two studies required for Strong evidence tier or may be submitted in addition to this. In the latter case, all three studies will be considered against the review criteria.

If the applicant is not a current grantee, then more than two studies will not be considered.

5. Notice Priority (3 points)

- The applicant proposed program fits within one or more of the 2017 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined in the *Funding Priorities* section and more fully described in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.
- The proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed in the *Funding Priorities* section and in the Mandatory Supplemental Guidance.

6. Member Training (3,000 character limit, 4 points)

- AmeriCorps members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to AmeriCorps requirements including the rules regarding prohibited activities (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance).

7. Member Supervision (2,500 character limit, 2 points)

- 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.

8. Member Experience (1,500 character limit, 3 points)

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience 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.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences.
- AmeriCorps members will have access to opportunities for reflection and connection to the broader National Service network.
- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic and demographic communities in which the programs operate.

9. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (1,500 character limit, 2 points)

- Members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- Staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.

C. Organizational Capability (25 points)

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.

1. Organizational Background and staffing (3,000 character limit, 10 points)

- The organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.

As documentation of community support and commitment to the program please procure, keep on file, but do not submit to CNCS, letter(s) from the applicant's most significant community partner(s). The letter(s) 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. In addition, please submit an organizational chart.

2. Compliance and Accountability (1,500 character limit, 15 points)

- The organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee (if applicable), and service site locations.
- The applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- The applicant will hold subgrantees (if applicable) and service site locations accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.

D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)

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.

1. Cost Effectiveness (18 points)

- The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.*
- The budget aligns with the applicant's narrative.*
- The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program.
- The applicant, if recompeting, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) than approved in previous grants, or provides a compelling rationale for the same or increased cost, including why this increase could not be covered by the grantee share.

*Program costs not included in the formal budget, including for Fixed Price grantees, must be described in this section in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess their sufficiency and alignment. Failure to provide adequate information in this section may result in a lower score.

Having a low cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. New applicants that submit with a low cost per MSY and recompeting applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher priority for funding. Applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than in previous years must justify their requests. If an applicant requests above the maximum cost per MSY (see *Maximum Cost per MSY* Section), it must justify its request. Please note that such requests are rarely approved.

2. Budget Adequacy (7 points)

- 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.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget narrative (requested information in the budget screens):

- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments.

E. Evaluation Plan (Required for recompeting grantees Only- 3,000 character limit, 0 points)

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the “Evaluation Summary or Plan” since it pertains only to recompeting grantees. If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of “recompeting” below) the program must submit its evaluation plan. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report (see the *Submission of Additional Documents* section for more information), as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period.

Evaluation plans must include as much information as possible for each of the following (see Frequently Asked Questions: Evaluation, available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cnsc-evaluation-policies>):

- A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results
- Outcome 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
- Study components – a) a 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; b) description of the sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures, and c) an analysis plan
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator
- The estimated budget.

For more information about evaluation plans visit the CNCS Knowledge Network’s Evaluation Resources: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/planning-evaluation>.

The evaluation requirements differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710:

- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee (other than an Education Award Program grantee), and its average annual CNCS program grant is \$500,000 or more, it must arrange for an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 C.F.R. §2522.730.
- If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee whose average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program Grantee, it must conduct an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in 45 C.F.R. §2522.730.

A program will be considered a recompeting application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one competitively funded three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more

competitively funded three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan for the upcoming 3 year grant. If the project does not satisfy the definition of re-competing, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, or completed evaluation report.

State/Territory subgrantees and/or National Direct Grantees with an average annual CNCS program grant of \$500,000 or more that are re-competing for funds are eligible to apply for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. Grantees requesting approval of an alternative evaluation approach should submit a request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. The request should clearly explain: (a) the evaluation constraints faced by the program, (b) why the proposed approach is the most rigorous option feasible, and (c) how the proposed alternative approach will help the grantee build their evidence base. Evaluation plans should include, at a minimum, the required elements listed in the *Notice*. The evaluation plan must be consistent with the information submitted in the competitive funding application and in the request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. More information on alternative evaluation approaches can be found at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cnscs-evaluation-policies>.

F. Performance Measures

All applicants must submit performance measures with their application. See Attachment B for instructions for entering performance measures, and Attachment C for the checklist to help you during your own review process. CNCS may use the performance measures separately from the grant narrative after grant-making. Thus all information requested in the National Performance Measure Instructions must be included in the text of the performance measures themselves, and it must be evident in the performance measure text that all definitions and requirements outlined in the National Performance Measures Instructions and NOFO FAQs are met. Should an applicant choose to provide information about performance measures in the narrative, this information will also need to be in the performance measures module.

For more information about the National Performance Measures go to:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement>

For CNCS Performance measure Instruction go to:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2016/2017-performance-measures-instructions>

G. Budget Instructions

A. Match Requirements

Program requirements, including requirements on match, are located in the AmeriCorps regulations and summarized below.

Table 3: Match Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Competition	Match Requirement
State and National Competitive including Professional Corps, States and Territories without Commissions, Indian Tribes	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by Year 10 of funding and any year thereafter.

- Grantees are required to meet an overall matching rate that increases over time. You have the flexibility to meet the overall match requirements in any of the three budget areas, as long as the

minimum match of 24% for the first three years, and the increasing minimums in years thereafter, are maintained. See 45 CFR §§ 2521.35–2521.90 for the specific regulations.

- If you are applying for the first time, you must match with cash or in-kind contributions at least 24% of the project's total Operating Costs (Section I) plus Member Costs (Section II) plus Administrative Costs (Section III). If you are re-competing, please see 45 CFR §§ 2521.40-2521.95 for the match schedule.
- The acceptable sources of matching funds are federal, state, local, and/or private sector funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements.
- In the “Source of Funds” field that appears at the end of Budget Section III, enter a brief description of the match. Identify each match source separately. Identify if the match is secured or proposed. Include dollar amount, the match classification (cash or in-kind), and the source type (Private, State/Local, or Federal) for your **entire match**. Define all acronyms the first time they are used. See Attachment E for instructions for applying for the Alternative Match Schedule.

Note: CNCS legislation permits the use of non-CNCS federal funds as match for the grantee share of the budget. Please discuss your intention of using federal funds to match an AmeriCorps grant with the other agency prior to submitting your application. Section 121(e)(5) of the National Community Service Act requires that grantees that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to CNCS. If you use other federal funds as match, you must ensure you can meet the requirements and purpose of both grants. Grantees that use federal funds as match will be required to report the sources and amounts on the Federal Financial Report (FFR).

B. Preparing Your Budget

Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your narrative. Reviewers will consider the information you provide in this section in their assessment of the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy selection criterion.

Follow the detailed budget instructions in Attachment D to prepare your budget. We recommend that you prepare your budget in the same order as indicated in the Budget Worksheet in Attachment E.

As you prepare your budget:

- Follow the budget narrative format required by the GOSV; this is demonstrated in Attachment E and in the sample program budget located at [GOSV.maryland.gov](https://www.gosv.maryland.gov).
- All the amounts you request must be defined for a particular purpose. Do not include miscellaneous, contingency, or other undefined budget amounts.
- Itemize each cost and present the basis for all calculations in the form of an equation.
- Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an activity.
- Do not include fractional amounts (cents) in your calculations or totals.
- Follow the GOSV's required budget format exactly.

Programs must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and the requirements of the Omni Circular. Please refer to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Part 200) for allowable, allocable, and reasonable cost information, as well as, audit requirements, including the need to provide audits to the Clearinghouse if expending over \$750,000 in federal funds as required in the OmniCircular. The OMB OmniCircular can be found on-line at https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_default.

H. Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications

Read the authorization, assurances, and certifications carefully. Complete each section of the Assurances and Certifications. See Attachment G. Be sure to check your application to make sure that there are no errors before submission. You are required to upload a copy of these documents, as well as the information described below (Additional Required Documentation) as part of your original application.

I. Additional Required Documentation

In addition to your narrative, budget, logic model, and performance measures, you are required to upload a copy of the information described below as part of your original application.

- Organizational Chart
- Most recent Audit (A-133, if applicable)
- Proof of 501(c) 3 status

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INFORMATION

The GOSV will host two online technical assistance (TA) sessions. These sessions are not mandatory for applicants; however, for those who wish to participate, registration is required.

Note: GOSV will cancel a session if there have not been any registrations for a particular TA session two days prior to the event.

If you wish to attend, but are unable to do so, the GOSV will post a recording of the TA webinar on our website following the second session.

Date	Time	
Tuesday, August 22nd	3:00pm-4:00pm	Webinar Training https://cc.readytalk.com/r/oquoputzg01p&eom
Tuesday, November 7th	10:00am-11:00am	Webinar Training https://cc.readytalk.com/r/xis5orpj7xi9&eom