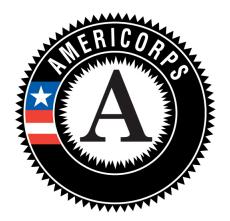# 2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications

Applications due November 24, 2014

CaliforniaVolunteers
1400 10th Street ■ Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-7646 phone ■ (916) 445-8317 fax
www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO APPLICANTS: The following seven documents are necessary to complete a 2015-16 application for AmeriCorps funding. All can be found on the CaliforniaVolunteers website, www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/.

(1) 2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA),
(2) 2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions,
(3) 2015 AmeriCorps Application Forms,
(4) Budget Form and Budget Narrative,
(5) Fixed Amount Grant Budget Worksheet
(6) AmeriCorps Program Title Page and Partnership Forms
(7) 2015 CNCS Performance Measures Instructions

Note: If you are currently funded by CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) and need to apply for year two or three of continuation funding, this RFA does **not** apply to you. Instructions will be e-mailed directly to you by CV at a later time.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

This RFA is available on the CV AmeriCorps funding webpage at www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/.

CV is committed to providing the most current information available to all applicants. We will rely primarily upon our websiteto keep applicants abreast of changes. Please check our website frequently for updates and information on technical assistance opportunities.

Please submit questions about this funding opportunity to Funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov. Responses will be included in a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) that we will update periodically on the CV AmeriCorps funding webpage. Applicants are encouraged to submit their questions well in advance of the application deadline as CV is not obligated to respond to questions that are received 48 hours prior to the application due date.

For questions regarding multi-state or Indian Tribes applications submitted directly to CNCS, please contact:

Corporation for National and Community Service
Phone: (202) 606-7508
TTY: (202) 606-3472
Email: americorpsnational@cns.gov

OVERVIEW

State Entity Name:	CaliforniaVolunteers
Funding Opportunity Title:	2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications
Announcement Type:	Initial Announcement
CFDA Number:	94.006

Key Dates: There are two steps that must be followed to apply for an AmeriCorps grant:
1. The submission of a **Notice of Intent to Apply**, due to CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) by **5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Monday, November 3, 2014**; and
2. The **Completed Application**, due to CV by **5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Monday, November 24, 2014**.

There will be no exceptions for late submissions.

Our Purpose: CaliforniaVolunteers is excited to issue the *2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA)* in support of community partnerships that will engage individuals as AmeriCorps members to meet state and local challenges through service and volunteer action. CV is seeking to fund programs that can address community problems and demonstrate impact through an evidence-informed or evidence-based approach (e.g., based on proposed program's performance and evaluation data or research demonstrating the effectiveness of a similar intervention).

CaliforniaVolunteers' mission is to increase the number and impact of Californians engaged in service and volunteering. Since its inception, CaliforniaVolunteers has secured and disseminated over $434 million in AmeriCorps funding to support local and statewide public and nonprofits in engaging over 60,000 AmeriCorps members in service to address some of the most pressing challenges facing California.

CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to providing the most current information available to all applicants. We will rely primarily upon our website, http://www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/, to keep applicants abreast of changes. Please check our website frequently. Additionally, our website will also provide information on available technical assistance opportunities. If you have questions, please contact us via email at funding@CaliforniaVolunteers.ca.gov.

This *2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications* should be read together with the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR Sections 2520-2550, and the following accompanying documents:

1) *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions*
2) *2015 AmeriCorps Application Forms*
3) *2015 CNCS Performance Measures Instructions.*

For additional state resources and guidance on AmeriCorps, please see the *California AmeriCorps Program Guide* at http://www.californiavolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/.

Note for Continuation Programs: If you are currently funded by CV and need to apply for year two or three continuation funding, this RFA does not apply. Instructions will be e-mailed directly to you by CV for both competitive and formula continuation programs at a later time.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Funding Program Description

Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is the federal agency that oversees the AmeriCorps State and National programs and other national service programs such as Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA. CNCS's mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. CNCS—through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Social Innovation Fund—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

Through all its programs, CNCS expands economic opportunity – helping Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment. In doing so, national service provides immediate and long term benefits by expanding individual opportunity, building family stability, and creating more sustainable, resilient communities.

Through Governor-appointed State Service Commissions, CNCS provides grants to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including hundreds of faith-based and community organizations, higher education institutions, and public agencies. Grants assist these groups in recruiting, training, and placing AmeriCorps members to meet state and local community challenges through service and volunteer action.

CaliforniaVolunteers

CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) is the State Service Commission in California. As such, CV is the state entity responsible for increasing the number and impact of Californians engaged in service and volunteering. Karen Baker, State of California Chief Service Officer, leads the organization in consultation with a 25-member Commission appointed by the Governor. The Commission develops and adopts policies that guide the State's AmeriCorps grantmaking process. CV provides AmeriCorps grants to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the state, including faith-based and community organizations, higher education institutions, and public agencies.

As home to the largest and most diverse population in the country, California faces many challenges that need our attention. CaliforniaVolunteers is seeking to invest AmeriCorps resources in programs that are:

> ***Targeted at solving a critical challenge facing California.*** CaliforniaVolunteers values program models that clearly address an identified critical community issue. AmeriCorps programs are expected to perform activities that are designed, implemented, and evaluated with extensive and broad-based local input. This input is provided in consultation with representatives from the community served and agencies with a demonstrated record of experience in providing services.

> ***Using national service as an appropriate strategy.*** CaliforniaVolunteers is committed to continuing to demonstrate that service is a powerful strategy to address community challenges. Successful program designs clearly identify direct beneficiaries of the stated community need, identify an evidence-based or evidence-informed intervention proven to address the need, and clearly articulate why the efforts of an AmeriCorps member are an appropriate strategy to deliver the intervention. This includes demonstrating that the proposed intervention will lead to the desired outcomes, along with strong evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the target population and community challenge identified.

Based on a well-aligned logic model and focused on measurable outcomes.
CaliforniaVolunteers values strong program designs built to address the community need by logically connecting all program components back to the need. The program design is built to deliver the services that will achieve the desired result and can quantifiably measure and report on that impact annually. (See *2015 AmeriCorps Application Forms; California Performance Measurement Worksheets*)

Dedicated to quality. CaliforniaVolunteers seeks to invest in programs that are committed to making a difference and incorporate quality management practices to oversee the program and ensure appropriate investment of public funds. CaliforniaVolunteers values programs that can successfully implement the program design by assuring that the systems and processes necessary for managing and assessing the effectiveness of the program model are in place prior to operation. This includes adequate oversight in the management of each component to assure that the program design and systems are implemented and assessed, and that stakeholder feedback leads to continuous improvement.

Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding
AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans each year to provide intensive results-driven service. AmeriCorps grants support the efforts of national and community-based nonprofit organizations to recruit and deploy AmeriCorps members and the volunteers with whom they serve to tackle unmet community needs. AmeriCorps grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible organizations that engage members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities.

An AmeriCorps member is an individual who meets the eligibility requirements, and engages in community service through an approved national service position. AmeriCorps members are recruited, trained, supervised, and managed by the funded organization, and may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust. For member eligibility requirements, please visit: http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/ready/eligibility.asp.

AmeriCorps requires that programs co-brand as AmeriCorps programs and that their participants consistently identify and are recognized as AmeriCorps members providing value to the community. Applicants will be asked to provide their implementation plans to ensure that this occurs.

B. National Service Focus Areas (Focus Areas)
In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of the investment in national service, CV has targeted funds to the following focus areas:

1. *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.

2. *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 the My Brother's Keeper federal initiative 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.

3. *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.

4. ***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.

5. ***Healthy Futures***— Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by AmeriCorps 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.

6. ***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 AmeriCorps programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through AmeriCorps programs.

C. Additional Program Models

1. ***Capacity Building***
Grants also will provide support for capacity building activities provided by AmeriCorps members. As a rule, CV considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CV-supported organizations to provide stronger, expanded, and sustained *direct services* in the six focus areas. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Examples of capacity building activities include:
   • Recruiting and/or managing community volunteers.
   • Implementing effective volunteer management practices.
   • Completing community assessment that identifies goals and recommendations.
   • Developing new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

2. ***Professional Corps***
Professional Corps programs recruit and place qualified members in positions as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of the program costs. Professional Corps members' salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the corps seeks to place members. These grants can either be fixed amount or cost reimbursement grants.

D. National Performance Measures

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS's five-year Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious set of objectives that support the mission and goals to implement the SAA. These strategic goals guided the development of national performance measures. National Performance Measures allow CV and CNCS to focus AmeriCorps funds and activities on specific needed outcomes and also allows for the aggregation of AmeriCorps impacts.

CV expects organizations to use national performance measures as part of a comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from its work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve its goals. The national performance measures can be found in the accompanying *2015 CNCS National Performance Measures Instructions*. Measures are grouped by focus area, with outcomes corresponding to specific outputs. Information on each performance measure, including definitions and how to collect data on the measure, is provided. Successful applicants will be required to report on measures that they select.

All applicants responding to this RFA are required to submit the "California Performance Measurement Worksheets" as part of their application (see *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions*).

E. 2015 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

Priorities for CV are informed by CNCS priorities and Commission interests. CV is seeking to fund programs that can demonstrate community impact and address community problems through an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach (e.g., based on proposed program's performance and evaluation data or research demonstrating the effectiveness of a similar intervention). In the 2015 AmeriCorps grant competition, CV seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in intermediaries, disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environment, veterans and military families, and programming that supports the My Brother's Keeper federal initiative. Applicants proposing programs that receive priority consideration are not guaranteed funding. Specifically, applicants must demonstrate significant program focus, design, and outcomes to receive priority consideration.

CV will give priority consideration to the following:

- Intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities. Applicants seeking consideration under this priority must demonstrate that they will be serving in severely under-resourced communities, and how the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs. The applicant must demonstrate that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortia.
- Disaster Services -- improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Economic Opportunity -- increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically disadvantaged youth ages 16-24, both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members.
- Education -- improving student academic performance.
- Environment -- 21st Century Service Corps. In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that they are a 21st Century Service Corps member organization. Applications for membership are reviewed quarterly. Instructions for applicants are available in the Federal Register Notice, here: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-11/pdf/2014-08101.pdf.
- Veterans and Military Families -- positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength.
- Programing that supports My Brother's Keeper, the federal initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that their program addresses one or more of these milestones: Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn, Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade, Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career, Successfully Entering the Workforce, Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances.

Strong programs will be considered for funding, regardless of focus areas.

F. Available Funding

The actual level of funding will be subject to timely full-year federal appropriations. CV receives AmeriCorps grant funding from CNCS through two separate funding streams: formula and competitive funds. CV subgrants these funds to applicants through its AmeriCorps State grant competition based on a rank-order score received during the grant process. Grants are awarded to organizations that will operate solely in California. CaliforniaVolunteers expects to award new, recompeting, and continuation AmeriCorps grants for fiscal year 2015. In awarding funds, continuation grants are considered first, followed by new and recompeting grants. AmeriCorps grantmaking is always highly competitive.

CaliforniaVolunteers receives formula funds from CNCS through a population-based allocation. Competitive funds are awarded through a national competition administered by CNCS to applicants that have competed successfully at both the state and national levels. CaliforniaVolunteers' review and selection process will be used to determine applications that will be considered for funding. Some finalists will be nominated for the national competition by CV. Applications submitted to the national competition are not guaranteed AmeriCorps funding at any level. These applications will be sent to CNCS to be reviewed and scored in the national competition. CNCS will make final awards for competitive funds. If selected for competitive funds, these applications are considered grantees of CV. Unsuccessful applicants will return to a rank-order list for consideration of formula funds following competitive funding announcements. CaliforniaVolunteers anticipates announcing final funding decisions in June 2015.

G. Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

An AmeriCorps grant is determined based on the number of AmeriCorps members that a grantee will support. A 1700 hours or full-time AmeriCorps member position is equivalent to one Member Service Year. Maximum costs per MSY are set forth in Table 2 below. CaliforniaVolunteers considers the cost per MSY a competitive factor in making funding decisions. 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.

An applicant's cost per MSY is determined by dividing the total federal share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. For example, an applicant requesting $325,000 to support 25 MSYs would have a cost per MSY of $13,000 ($325,000 ÷ $13,000). The cost per MSY does not include child care or the value of the education award a member may earn. These costs are covered directly by CNCS. The maximum amount an applicant may request CV per MSY is determined on an annual basis.

CaliforniaVolunteers limits the 2015 cost per MSY for successful new applicants to $16,000. Other applicants must follow the guidelines appropriate to the number of previous funding years the proposed program has received AmeriCorps funding as set forth in Table 2 below. CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to adjust or waive the cost per MSY schedule below to align with changes in requirements or due to extenuating circumstances. CaliforniaVolunteers is responsible to monitor successful applicants' member enrollment and retention to adjust budgets to maintain cost per member, as needed. The average cost per MSY for CVs' 2014 AmeriCorps portfolio is $12,068.

Table 1: CaliforniaVolunteers Cost per Member Service Year Limit

Grant Cycle	Grant Years	Maximum Cost Per MSY
1	1, 2 , 3	$16,000
2	4, 5, 6	$15,000
3	7, 8 , 9	$14,000
4	10, 11, 12	$13,000
5	13, 14, 15	$12,000
6	16, 17, 18	$11,000
7+	19+	$10,000

Recompeting and previously funded applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than in the previous year must include a compelling rationale for this increased cost. This applies even if the proposed increased cost per MSY is less than the maximum, for your cycle.

NOTE: Per CNCS requirement, to be considered for competitive funds, an applicant must have a cost per member that is at or below $13,730.

Recompeting applicants that apply for a *Fixed-amount Full-Time or Less than Full-Time Serving in a Full-Time Capacity Grant*, must maintain the cost per MSY appropriate to the level established for its number of funding years and that its cost per MSY does not exceed the maximum costs per MSY set by CNCS. Successful applicants receiving fixed-amount grants must comply with any other requirements determined by CV and/or CNCS.

H. Types of Grants

AmeriCorps grants can be awarded on a cost reimbursement or fixed amount basis. CV will not provide both types of grants for the same program in one fiscal year. Applicants will need to select and indicate which type of grant they are applying for in their application. The following types of AmeriCorps grants are offered through this funding opportunity:

Cost Reimbursement

1. ***Traditional*:**
   In a traditional AmeriCorps operating grant, all program expenses are based on an approved budget as part of the grant award and are reimbursed through the submission of expense reports to CV. The grant funds can only be spent on costs in the approved budget. A cost-reimbursement grant provides funding to pay for program costs such as member support, operational costs, and administrative costs associated with the implementation of an AmeriCorps program. An applicant that applies for a cost-reimbursement grant must provide and include in the budget cash and/or in-kind match to support its overall program costs. The minimum match level required varies for applicants depending on the number of years an applicant has received AmeriCorps funding. (See Table 4 on page 13 for information on match requirements.)

2. ***Professional Corps*:**
   These grants are awarded to organizations that propose to operate a Professional Corps program that place AmeriCorps members as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities where there is a documented shortage of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of program costs. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. A Professional Corps program may request up to $1,000 per MSY to implement an AmeriCorps program.

Fixed Amount
An AmeriCorps program that receives a fixed-amount grant is like any other AmeriCorps program and is still responsible for adhering to all AmeriCorps Regulations and Provisions such as the administrative and programmatic requirements related to the recruitment, placement, training, and management of members and the required documentation. The exception is that, unlike the cost-reimbursement grant, the fixed-amount grant does not require compliance with OMB cost principles, Federal Financial Reports (FFR), nor match or documentation of match.

1. ***Full-Time/Less than Full-Time AmeriCorps Members Serving in a Full Time Capacity*:**
   These fixed-amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members or less than full-time members that are serving in a full time capacity only. These grants allow programs to apply for a fixed dollar amount of up to $13,430 per member. The fixed-amount awarded per member is

significantly less than the cost of running an AmeriCorps program and the applicant must use its own or other resources for the remaining cost of the program. There is no match required for full-time fixed-amount grants, but successful applicants must still raise the additional funds needed to run the program. The final grant amount that a fixed-amount grantee may retain under its award is tied to the number of service hours completed by each member. If a member completed the term of service and earned the education award, the program is entitled to the full amount approved per MSY. If a member did not complete the term of service, 1700 hours, the program is entitled to the pro-rated approved amount per MSY based on percentage of hours served divided by 1700 hours of service. Programs can access all of the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. New applicants are NOT eligible to apply for these fixed amount grants.

2. *Education Award Program (EAP)*:
   EAP programs apply for a small fixed amount up to $800 per Member Service Year (MSY) and use their own resources to cover all other costs (e.g. majority of member living allowance, staffing, training, etc.). Like cost reimbursement grants, an EAP program receives an award for a specific amount per the number of MSYs enrolled. Because of the minimal financial support, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. Programs are not required to pay a living allowance to less-than-full-time members. There are no match or financial reporting requirements. Unlike the Full-time Fixed-amount grant noted below, EAPs may enroll less-than-full-time members in addition to full-time members. New applicants are NOT eligible to apply for EAP grants.

3. *Fixed-amount Professional Corps*:
   These grants are awarded to organizations that propose to operate a Professional Corps program for full-time members only. The Professional Corps program model places AmeriCorps members as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities where there is a documented shortage of such professions. Applicants can apply for up to $2,000 per MSY. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of program costs, and use their own or other resources to pay the members' living allowance and additional member costs. New applicants are NOT eligible to apply for this grant.

Table 2: Overview of the Types of AmeriCorps Grants

	Cost Reimbursement Grants		Fixed Amount Grants		
Available Sub Grant Types	Traditional	Professional Corps	Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity	Education Award Program (EAP)	Professional Corps
Maximum Cost per MSY	See Table 2 on page 12	Up to $1,000*	$13,430	$800	Up to $1,000*
Type of Slots	All	All	Full-Time or Less than Full-Time serving in a full time capacity Only	All	Full-Time Only
Budget Submission Required	Yes	Yes	Yes**		
Availability of Funds linked to enrollment and retention of awarded MSY	No	No	Yes		
Special Requirements	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Member salaries must be paid entirely by organization where member serves and not included in the budget.	N/A	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. No CNCS funds may be used to pay member living allowance or salary.
Match Requirements	Yes	Yes; Living allowance or salary paid to members may not be counted toward the match requirement.	No, but organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.		
Financial Tracking Requirements	Yes	Yes	Minimal		
Available to New Applicants	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

* CVs' assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CV will consider operating funds of up to $1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non CNCS resources.

** Applicants are required to submit a detailed budget at the time of application in order to plan and show all costs, including match resources needed to support their proposed program design. If funded, a detailed budget will not be used for contracting due to minimal financial tracking required.

I. Cost Sharing or 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

Grant Type	Match Requirement
Cost-Reimbursement Grants	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 the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter.
Fixed-Amount EAP Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over $800 per MSY awarded.
Fixed-Amount Professional Corps Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the $1,000 per MSY awarded.
Fixed-Amount Full-Time Grants	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the $13,430 per MSY awarded.

Fixed-Amount Grants (EAP, Full-time & Less than Full-time serving in a Full time capacity Fixed-Amount, Professional Corps Fixed-Amount)

There is no match requirement for fixed-amount grants. However, the fixed-amount grant does not cover all costs. Fixed-amount grantees provide the additional resources needed to operate the program, but are not required to track or report on them.

Cost Reimbursement Grants (Traditional and Professional Corps Non Fixed-Amount)

A first-time successful applicant is required to provide a single overall match of 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with the second three-year cycle, match gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR § 2521.60 summarized in Table 4:

Table 4: Single Match Requirements for Cost Reimbursement Grants

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1,2,3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Match Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

The legal applicant is the entity responsible for meeting matching funds requirements. The legal applicant may request that partnering organizations provide a share of the match necessary to meet matching funds requirements. Programs may provide their share of operating costs and overall match through cash or in-kind resources, and may use non-CNCS federal funds if specifically allowed by the other federal agency. Matching funds must be verifiable; not be included as match for other federal programs; be necessary and reasonable for the purpose of your program; and, be allowable under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cost principles. Matching funds must be secured on an annual basis. Use of other federal funds as match requires approval from the other federal agency to use their funds for match on an AmeriCorps grant.

Successful applicants are awarded a grant dollar amount to support an overall operating budget, which includes the match needed to run the program and achieve the outcomes. As such, grantees must meet their *contracted* match and show a corresponding increase in match for increases to the awarded operating budget. Grantees must receive prior approval from CV to use program savings to support new costs/increases to the awarded operating budget. Failure to secure matching funds identified in the budget may result in adverse audit findings in addition to negatively affecting future grant applications to CV.

Section 121(e)(5) of the National Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires that programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to CV on the Federal Financial Report. Grantees must track and be prepared to report on that match separately each year.

The living allowance or salary provided to Cost-Reimbursement Professional Corps AmeriCorps members does not count toward the matching requirement for a cost reimbursement Professional Corps grant.

Alternative Match
Under certain circumstances, applicants may qualify to meet alternative matching requirements that increase over the years to 35% instead of 50% as specified in the regulations at §2521.60(b). To qualify, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined in the accompanying document, *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions*. Applicants that plan to request an alternative match schedule must include the *Request for Alternative Match Form* as part of the application.

J. How to Apply
Organizations that operate solely in California apply through CaliforniaVolunteers. Organizations that operate in more than one state are eligible to apply for national grants directly from CNCS. Indian tribes may apply through CV or directly to CNCS. An Indian Tribe is defined as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Native village, regional Corporation, or Village Corporation, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1602), that the United States Government determines is eligible for special programs and service provided under federal law to Indians because of their status as Indians. Indian Tribes also include tribal organizations controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by one of the entities described above.

K. Potential Change to RFA Guidelines and Supplemental Guidance
This *Request for Applications (RFA)* was created in good faith and based on the most recent guidance available. The amount of funds available for AmeriCorps, as well as new grant limits and requirements, are contingent on timely full-year congressional appropriations . These and other factors may require changes to the guidance and to this RFA. As necessary, CV will issue all supplemental materials at the earliest possible date. All supplemental materials and updates will be available on the CV website at www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org. **Applicants are advised to check the website at least weekly.**

This RFA provides a broad overview of AmeriCorps guidance, highlighting many basic components and rules to provide a general understanding of the complexities and intricacies of AmeriCorps programming and requirements. A companion document, the California *AmeriCorps Program Guide (Guide)*, provides more detail on AmeriCorps program elements and further clarification of federal and state requirements. The full AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2520-2550, are available online at www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr. Successful applicants will be required to comply with these regulations, AmeriCorps provisions, and federal and state policies. Federal funds provided under this grant are identified by the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 94.006.

The AmeriCorps regulations include the criteria used to select applicants for funding and other pertinent information (Table 5).

Table 5: Program Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Requirements and Selection	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

L. Authority

These funds will be available under authority of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.§12571-12595) reauthorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Amount
Successful applicants will receive grant funds and an allotment of AmeriCorps member slots. CV will review applications and determine the final award amount. Award amounts vary.

B. Project/Award Period
Grants awarded through this selection process will support programming beginning in the summer of 2015. Successful applicants must start member service activities no later than mid-October 2015 and allow up to 12 months for members to complete a term of service. Any exception to this start date deadline must be requested in contracting and receive approval from CV. Additionally, the project start date may not occur prior to a program's AmeriCorps contract execution date with CV, which means AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the program entering into a fully executed contract with CV. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the contraction execution date.

Applications for 2015 must include proposed activities and a detailed proposed budget for the first year of operation. CaliforniaVolunteers expects that programmatic activities for the second and third years of operation will build upon, and be similar in scope to those of the first year. Unless otherwise specified, CV follows CNCS's practice of awarding up to three-year grants, which are evaluated annually for continued funding. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage a grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriation fund. CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to adjust the amount of a grant award for subsequent years, or elect not to continue funding for subsequent years.

C. Maximum Grant Size
Programs being considered for competitive funds do not have a maximum limit; however, grants generally do not exceed $2 million. Applicants unsuccessful in securing competitive funding will be considered for formula funding, based on their state ranking. Such programs may be subjected to a reduced budget up to $850,000.The median grant request for 2014 was $430,000.

D. Minimum Program Size
The minimum program size funded by CV for this application is 20 MSYs. CaliforniaVolunteers believes this MSY requirement is necessary to provide members in quantities that make a substantial difference relative to locally identified needs.   Applicants proposing specialized programs that require reduced-hour positions or programs focused on a need that inherently requires a number of AmeriCorps members below the minimum required MSY level must include a compelling rationale as part of its application to CV.

E. Minimum Number of Members per Service Site
To ensure strong program design and to provide members with at least a minimal mutual support network, successful applicants must place a minimum of two AmeriCorps members at each operating or service site as part of their program design. Exceptions to this requirement must be requested in contracting and receive approval from CV.

F. Living Allowance
The proposed budget must include a living allowance for full-time members that are between $12,530 (minimum) and $25,060 (maximum) per member except as noted below. A living allowance is not considered a salary or a wage. **Programs are prohibited from comparing member living allowance to an "hourly wage" in any recruitment materials, member handbooks, etc.**

Programs are not required to provide a living allowance for members serving in less than full-time terms of service. If a program chooses to provide a living allowance to a less than full-time member, it must comply

with the maximum limits in the table below and should follow the guidelines below for minimum limits. For cost-reimbursement grants, the amount must be included in the proposed budget as either CNCS or grantee share. While Fixed-amount grantees' final grant award does not include a detailed budget, they are still required to provide a living allowance to members that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements.

Table 6: Minimum and Maximum Living Allowance

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Minimum Living Allowance	Maximum Living Allowance
Full-time	1,700	$12,530	$25,060
Half-Time	900	n/a	$13,265
Reduced Half-Time	675	n/a	$9,950
Quarter-Time	450	n/a	$6,635
Minimum-Time	300	n/a	$4,420

In most instances, the grant received by an applicant will not cover the full amount of the living allowance provided to members and the applicant must use its own or other resources to supplement member living allowance. Because the minimum living allowance may not fully cover the actual living expenses of members, programs may wish to offer living allowances in excess of the minimum requirements.

Exceptions to Living Allowance Requirements
Prior to September 21, 1993
If a program existed prior to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (enacted September 21, 1993), the law does not require a living allowance. If an applicant chooses to offer a living allowance, it is exempt from the minimum requirement of $12,100, but not the maximum requirement of $24,200.

EAP Fixed-Amount Grantees
EAP grantees are not required to provide a living allowance for less-than-full-time members, but if a living allowance is provided, it must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance section above.

Professional Corps Grantees
Professional Corps members must receive a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set forth in the Living Allowance section above. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget.

G. Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards
AmeriCorps members serving in a program funded with FY 2015 dollars who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of $5,730 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly smaller awards for less-than-full-time service as defined in the table below. The amount of the Education Award is determined on the basis of the Pell Grant award. A member has up to seven years after the term of service has ended to use the award. The member may use the award to pay for current educational expenses at qualified institutions of higher education, or to repay qualified student loans.   AmeriCorps members who commence service on or after October 1, 2009, who are age 55 or older at the time they commence service, may, upon successful completion of a term of service, transfer the education award to a child, grandchild, or foster child. Educations awards are granted directly to eligible members by the National Service Trust and are not included in the calculation of an AmeriCorps grant. While members can serve up to 4 years, they may only earn up to two full-time equivalent Education Awards.

Table 7: Member Term of Service and FY 15 Education Award

Term of Service	MSYs	Minimum # of Hours	Education Award
Full Time	1.00	1,700	$5,730
Half Time	.500	900	$2,865
Reduced Half Time	.381	675	$2,182.78
Quarter Time	.265	450	$1,515.55
Minimum Time	.212	300	$1,212.44

H. Enrollment Requirements

Enrollment rates ultimately effect the total number of AmeriCorps members awarded to California for service in our communities. We expect grantees to enroll all the members awarded to them in their grant. In any event, grantees may not use unexpended funds resulting from not fully enrolling members for any other purpose in the operating budget.   Grantee budgets will be adjusted to maintain awarded/contracted cost per member MSY. Enrollment rates have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in the continuation and recompete processes. Recompeting grantees that have not achieved full enrollment in the previous year must provide an explanation and a corrective action plan in the application. Successful applicants that do not fully enroll are likely to receive a decrease in funding in subsequent years.

I. Retention Requirements

Retention rates are an indicator of the grantee's ability to properly design and manage an AmeriCorps program that results in achieving the outcomes contracted. We expect grantees to pursue the highest member retention rate possible. Grantees may not use unexpended funds resulting from not fully retaining members to support other areas of the budget, and as such, grantee budgets will be adjusted to maintain awarded/contracted cost per member MSY. Retention rates will have a direct bearing on the number of slots and the size of awards approved in the continuation and recompete processes. Successful applicants that do not retain members are likely to receive a decrease in funding in subsequent years. We recognize retention rates may vary among equally effective programs depending on the program model. Recompeting grantees that have not achieved full retention in the most recently completed program year must provide an explanation and a corrective action plan in the application.

J. Evaluation Requirements

CaliforniaVolunteers strongly encourages grantees to use evaluation as a tool to continuously improve their work and demonstrate their effectiveness. In doing so, programs will have the opportunity to test their program delivery model, adjust services to best meet community needs, and collect trustworthy data to support their work. In turn, these data and program improvements will strengthen the evidence base for the impact of national service as well as inform strong funding and technical assistance decisions. Evaluation requirements vary by types of applicants. See Section IV.E.4 for details.

III. ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligible Applicants

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within California (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and intermediaries planning to subgrant funds awarded are encouraged to apply. Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this *RFA.*

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, any 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, serve as a host site for member placements, or act in any type of supervisory role in the program.

B. Community Partnerships Requirements

To maximize community involvement in AmeriCorps that goes beyond AmeriCorps placement sites and the grantee, all applicants are required to develop a program partnership. Successful applicants must have a partnership of at least three independent entities that include *one public and one private* partner (nonprofit or for-profit entity). CaliforniaVolunteers considers 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to be private entities. CaliforniaVolunteers prefers partners to have a significant role in planning, operating, and sustaining the program (e.g. match contribution, training resources, continuous improvement assessment, etc.). All primary partners and placement sites where members will be performing service are required to be identified on the *Partnership Form* submitted on-line as part of the application.

C. Types of Applicants

For the 2015 competition, there will be several types of applicants seeking AmeriCorps grant funding through this RFA. Details regarding these applicant types are provided below. **"Continuation" programs (i.e., current recipients of AmeriCorps operating grants that are not entering the final year of their current grant period) should <u>NOT</u> use this RFA.**

New Applicants

A "new" applicant is one in which the legal applicant, partner organizations, and/or individuals involved in developing the current AmeriCorps application have not operated an AmeriCorps program and/or have been employed as core program staff of a funded program, National Direct organization staff, state commission staff, or CNCS staff in the last five years. California Volunteers strongly encourages all new applicants to review technical assistance materials as they become available on the CV website at www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

New applicants may receive up to an additional 10% of the total possible score at each review stage. The Grants and Program Development Specialist is responsible to approve criteria to determine the number of additional points a new applicant may receive. Applicants whose partnership had received a planning grant and technical assistance support from CV for the development of the program design being proposed are not eligible for the additional 10% point consideration. To be considered for the additional point consideration, new applicants must complete and submit the *New Applicant Certification Form* as part of their application. See *Application Forms.*

Recompeting Applicants

"Recompeting" applicants are programs that have completed a three-year grant cycle (in most instances) and opt to "recompete" for another three-year award. AmeriCorps programs entering the final year of their grant period must submit a new application if they wish to be considered for future AmeriCorps funding. Recompeting programs are reminded that submitting an application does not guarantee success in securing future funding. Recompeting applicants are advised that previous site visit reports, program progress reports, financial reports, and member enrollment and retention rates, will be reviewed as part of the selection process.

Previously Funded Applicants
The previously funded program designation applies to any applicant who has previously received an AmeriCorps operating grant from CV or the Corporation in any of the past five completed program years (2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, or 2013-14). This definition holds true even if the proposed program is different in scope and purpose to the program previously operated and/or the legal applicant for the previously operated program has changed.

IV. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. CaliforniaVolunteers Review and Selection Process

Applications are selected for funding using an intensive multi-stage process that includes CV Staff Review and CV Commission approval. The 2015 grantmaking process follows the policies published in the *California AmeriCorps Program Guide*, available on the CV website at www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

CaliforniaVolunteers' selection and review process occurs in several stages:

Compliance Check

CaliforniaVolunteers staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. Applications that are submitted by eligible organizations, submitted by the deadline, and that meet compliance check requirements stated in the *Application Checklist* and *Packaging Checklist* will advance to Staff Review.

Staff Review

In the Staff Review, reviewers evaluate each application against a selection matrix based on assessment criteria outlined in the RFA. Following staff assessment, some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information. The purpose of this stage is to clarify issues identified from the review process. Clarification may take the form of an in-person interview, conference call, or written response. New applicants are more likely to receive a clarification request through an in-person interview. Should an interview be requested and held, all costs for travel are assumed to be the responsibility of the applicant. Please note that failure to respond to CVs' clarification requests in a timely manner may result in removal of applicant from funding consideration.

Selection

The primary consideration in the selection of AmeriCorps programs is merit. Applicants must meet a minimum score at each review stage in order to be considered for funding. CaliforniaVolunteers has the responsibility to determine the best strategy in selecting applicants for the national competition.

To help achieve a balanced portfolio, the final selections will take into consideration the following:

- CaliforniaVolunteers' Statewide Geographic Distribution Policy, in which the Commission will seek to ensure a minimum of 40 MSYs in the Los Angeles region and 20 MSYs per the remaining other eight regions as determined by the California's Economic Strategy Panel. In order to achieve geographic parity, a program in an already represented region may be skipped, and another program may be selected. Under no circumstances will the Commission provide formula funding to an applicant that receive a score that is 10 or more points below the applicant it may displace.

- Ensure a minimum amount of funding for programs led by non-profit and non-state governmental organizations as required by AmeriCorps regulations.

- Ensure CV maintains a statewide cost per member average at or below the established Corporation limit.

The CV Commission reserves the right to bypass an applicant's state ranking on a case-by-case bases under the following circumstances:
- An applicant has multiple national service funding opportunities available;
- The Commission has constrained resources; and/or
- The legal applicant presents serious concerns around grant performance and/or fiduciary responsibilities discovered after rankings have been completed.

Results of the grant review process are presented to the CV Commission along with staff recommendation of eligible applicants selected to represent California in the national competition. The Commission makes final approval of funding decisions. Commission funding decisions are final—there is no appeal process.

B. Risk Assessment Evaluation

CV and CNCS will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CV determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award.

C. Assessment Criteria

Each application must clearly describe a project that will effectively deploy AmeriCorps members to address a significant community need. We urge your organization to submit a high quality application carefully following the guidance in the RFA and in the *AmeriCorps Application Instructions.* The quality of your application will be an important factor in determining whether your organization will receive funding. Table 8 sets forth the criteria and corresponding weights for assessing each application.

Table 8: Assessment Criteria and Weights

Category	Sub-Categories	Sub-Category Weights
Program Design – 50%	Problem/Need	9%
	Theory of Change and Logic Model	17%
	Evidence Based/Intervention	8%
	Notice Priority	3%
	Member Training	4%
	Member Supervision	3%
	Member Experience	3%
	Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	3%
Organizational Capability – 25%	Organizational Background and Staffing	7% recompete / 10% new
	Compliance and Accountability	11% recompete / 15% new
	Past Performance	7% recompete / 0% new
Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy – 25%	Cost Effectiveness	18%
	Budget Adequacy	7%
Total Weights		**100%**

Points will be awarded based on an applicant's ability to address each required criterion as well as past performance for recompeting applicants.

D. Threshold Issues

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. For example: If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals. If an applicant is applying for a Fixed Amount grant, the application should reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must clearly describe how the program will meet these requirements.

E. Application Fields

Your application will be assessed as follows:

1. **Program Design (50 percent)**--In assessing Program Design, reviewers will consider the quality of your response to the following:

   a. *Problem/Need (9 percent)*
   - The applicant clearly describes the community problem/need using recent, local supporting data.
   - The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by the program.
   - The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and the need has been well documented with relevant data.
   - The applicant clearly describes how an appropriate target population connected to the community need will be selected to receive program services.

   b. *Theory of Change and Logic Model (17 percent)*
   - The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.
   - The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change.
   - The applicant clearly describes how the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.
   - All elements of the logic model are logically aligned.

   The logic model shall depict:
   - A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative.
   - The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
     o Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
     o 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:
     o The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention).
     o The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week.)
     o 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.) 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.

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. The Logic Model should identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention.

c. **Evidence Base (8 percent)**
Applicants will be awarded up to 8 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. 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. Studies should be included as part of the application.

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 collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

Pre-preliminary evidence (1 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 (2 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 (4 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 (8 points) means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence. This consists of one or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes.

The description of evidence in this section should include as much detailed information as possible. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from their strongest studies rather than only cursory descriptions of many studies. Reviewers will examine criteria that may include: a) how closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant; b) the methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.); c) the recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years; and d) strength of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a large and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels.

d. Notice Priority (3 percent)
- The applicant clearly describes how its proposed program is within one or more of the 2015 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined on page 7 of this RFA.
- The applicant clearly describes how the proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed in this RFA.

e. Member Training (4 percent)
- The applicant clearly provides a comprehensive training plan that orients members to AmeriCorps, the community they serve, their placement sites, and provides the skills members need to perform activities and deliver high-quality service.
- The applicant clearly describes how members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.

f. Member Supervision (3 percent)
- The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will provide members with excellent guidance and support throughout their service.
- The applicant clearly describes the supervisory systems that are/will be in place for the program.

g. *Member Experience (3 percent)*
- 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.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have opportunities to establish connections with each other and the broader National Service network to build esprit de corps.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term.
- The applicant clearly describes how the program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.

h. *Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (3 percent)*
- The applicant clearly describes how members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how the staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

2. **Organizational Capability (25 percent)**
   a. **Organizational Background and Staffing (7 percent/10 percent for new applicants)**
      - The applicant clearly describes how the organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
      - The applicant clearly describes key roles of program staff and administrators in implementing the proposed program.
      - The applicant clearly describes how the organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants.
      - The applicant clearly describes how the organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

   As documentation of community support and commitment to the program; please procure, keep on file, but do not submit to CV, 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.

   b. **Compliance and Accountability (11 percent/15 percent for new applicants)**
      - The applicant clearly describes how the applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
      - The applicant clearly describes how the applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.
      - The applicant clearly describes how the organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).

   c. **Past Performance for Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only (7 percent for recompeting applicants and formula Grantees)**
   Any applicant that has received competitive or formula funding for the same project in any of the past three years must address these criteria.

- The applicant clearly describes how it has met performance measurement targets during the last three years of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member enrollment, in the most recent full year of program operations, or if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member retention, in the most recent full year of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes any compliance issues or areas of weakness/risk identified during the last three years of program operations (if applicable) and describes an effective corrective action plan that was implemented.

3. **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**
   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.

   a. **Cost Effectiveness (18 percent)**
   - The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.
   - The budget aligns with the applicant's narrative.
   - The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost.
   - The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program. This applies to Fixed Amount, EAP, and Cost Reimbursement grants.
   - The applicant, if recompeting, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY) 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.

   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, it must justify its request. Please note that such requests are rarely approved.

   b. **Budget Adequacy (7 percent)**
   - Budget is submitted without mathematical errors.
   - Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
   - Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.

   Applicants must fill out the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget narrative:
   - 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.

4. **Evaluation Summary or Plan (Required for recompeting grantees - 0 percent)**
   New applicants are not required to submit an evaluation plan. Recompeting applicants (both formula and competitive programs) are required to submit an evaluation plan as part of their application.

   Evaluation plans must include the following:
   - A description of the theory of change, or why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results;
   - Clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation;
   - Concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes;
   - A proposed research design for the evaluation;
   - Qualifications needed for the evaluator; and

- The estimated budget.

The Evaluation Plan does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it must not exceed 10 double-spaced pages.

Evaluation Requirements for Competitive Programs
The evaluation requirements for competitive grantees (successful applicants funded through the national competition) differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710:
- If a competitive program's 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 §2522.730 of this subpart.
- If a competitive program or an Education Award Program's average annual CNCS program grant is less than $500,000, 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 §2522.730 of this subpart.

A program will be considered a recompeting application if it satisfies the definition of "same project" 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 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 three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan. If the project does not satisfy the definition of recompeting, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, summary, or completed evaluation.

Definition of "Same Project"
Two projects will be considered the same if they:
- Address the same issue areas
- Address the same priorities
- Address the same objectives
- Serve the same target communities and population
- Utilize the same sites
- Use the same program staff and members

Evaluation Requirements for Formula Programs
Formula programs are not required to conduct an evaluation. However, recompeting formula applicants proposing the "same project" are required to submit an evaluation plan at the time of application to satisfy CNCS evaluation requirements in the event they are selected by CV to compete in the national competition. If the project does not satisfy the definition, it will be considered new and will not be required to submit an evaluation plan.

V. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Notice of Intent to Apply

Please complete and submit the *Notice of Intent to Apply* Form to CV at
funding@CaliforinaVolunteers.ca.gov by **5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 3, 2014**. Submission of the
Notice of Intent is required and will help CV plan more efficiently for review.

B. Submission to CaliforniaVolunteers

Applicants must complete a "Paper Application" <u>and</u> an "Electronic Submission". The electronic and
paper portions of the application are <u>both</u> required. To complete your application, you should:

1. Download the following documents from the CV website at
    http://www.CaliforniaVolunteers.org/index.php/Grants/americorps/):
    a. *2015 AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA),*
    b. *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions,*
    c. *2015 AmeriCorps Application Forms,*
    d. *2015 Budget Narrative, and*
    e. *2015 Budget Forms.* [Note: The Budget Narrative and Budget Form are contained within one
        Excel workbook]
    f. *2015 Fixed-Amount Grant Budget Worksheet*
    g. *2015 CNCS Performance Measures Instructions*

2. Follow the instructions included in the *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions* document in
    completing and submitting your application. The *Application Instructions* document also contains
    directions for completing your required Electronic Submission.

3. A complete **Paper Application** must include <u>one original containing items #1-20</u> (as applicable) and
    <u>five copies containing items #1-13</u>, as listed on the AmeriCorps Application Checklist.

4. A complete **Electronic Submission** must include the following:
    * Online submission of the AmeriCorps Program Title Page
    * Online submission of the AmeriCorps Partnership Forms

Page Limits

You may not exceed <u>18 double spaced, single-sided, pages</u> in the Program Narratives, including the
Executive Summary Page (21 pages for multi-focus Intermediaries). This limit does not include the
budget, performance measurement worksheets, evaluation plan, program diagram, or <u>required</u>
supplementary materials (e.g. letters of commitment, financial documents, etc.) **Do not submit
supplementary materials such as videos, brochures, or any other <u>items not requested</u> in these
application instructions**. CaliforniaVolunteers will not review or return them.

C. Submission Date and Time

Applications (both Paper Application and Electronic Submission) must arrive at CaliforniaVolunteers by
Thursday, November 24, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time in order to be considered.

<u>Please send your Paper Application to</u>:
CaliforniaVolunteers
ATTN: AmeriCorps 2015
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Applications that do not meet the *Application Checklist* and *Application Packaging Checklist* requirements included in the *2015 AmeriCorps Application Instructions* will be disqualified. Late applications will not be accepted, except under extreme extenuating circumstances.

D. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. All applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM).

DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, we suggest registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number register with SAM at https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM. To register online go to https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/.

E. Submission to CNCS

Following the conclusion of CVs grant review process, all applicants will be required to submit their applications electronically into CNCS's web-based application system, eGrants, to be awarded. Applicants selected to represent California in the national competition must be prepared to resubmit their application incorporating feedback from the CV grant review process the week of January 5th and submit their applications into eGrants by January 16, 2015. Please ensure staff availability during this time period to enter your application into eGrants as well as respond to CVs' requests for clarification. Applications selected for formula funding will submit their applications in eGrants in May or June 2015. CaliforniaVolunteers will provide instructions to this process at a later time.

F. Funding Restrictions

Grants under this program, except for fixed-amount and EAP grants, are subject to the applicable Cost Principles under OMB Circulars A-21 (2 CFR part 220), A-122 (2 CFR part 230), or A-87 (2 CFR part 225) and the Uniform Administrative Requirements for grants under A-102 (45 CFR part 2541) or A-110 (45 CFR 2543 or 2 CFR part 21).

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Important Dates
This timeline is subject to change due to CNCS announcements and other events.

October 27 - 31, 2014	RFA TA Webinars
November 3, 2014	Notice of Intent to Apply due by 4:00 p.m.
November 24, 2014	Applications due to by 5:00 p.m.
December 1-18, 2014	Staff Review
December 22, 2014 (week of)	*CV issues clarification request for competitive review
Dec. 29, 2014 – Jan. 2, 2015	In-person clarification interview
January 5, 2015	Clarification response/competitive rewrite due to CV
January 16, 2015	**Competitive Applications due in eGrants
January 17-21, 2015	*eGrants Application Review/Final Edits
February – March 2015	Complete Staff Review
April 2015	CV issues clarification request for Formula Waitlist
June 2015	Funding results announced; submit Formula Applications in eGrants*
July-October 2015	Contracting process and program launch

* Applicants and their partnership representatives must be available during this timeframe to respond to CVs' clarification requests.

**During this period, applicants must have appropriate staff available to enter and submit application into eGrants.

B. Governing Documents
A grantee's fully executed AmeriCorps contract incorporates the approved application as part of a binding commitment under the grant as well as the AmeriCorps regulations (45 CFR Sections 2520-2550) and grant provisions.

Grants under this program are subject to 2 CFR 200 and CNCS regulations issued to implement the part. This final guidance, published on Dec. 26, 2013, supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, and A-122 (which have been placed in OMB guidances); Circulars A-89, A-102, and A-133; and the guidance in Circular A-50 on Single Audit Act follow-up.

C. Reporting Requirements
Successful applicants are required to submit programmatic and/or financial reports as designated by CaliforniaVolunteers. In addition to required programmatic and financial reports, successful applicants will be required to collect and report certain demographic information on AmeriCorps members, volunteers recruited and/or managed by members, and beneficiaries served by members. See Section IX for required demographic information to be collected and reported by successful applicants.

While applications will not be evaluated on these criteria, grantees will be expected to have data collection and data management policies and practices that provide reasonable assurance that they are providing CV with high quality performance measure data. At a minimum, grantees should have policies and practices which address the following five aspects of data quality:
- The data measures what it intends to measure;
- The grantee collects data in a consistent manner; The grantee takes steps to correct

data errors;
- The grantee ensures that the data reported is complete; and
- The grantee actively reviews data prior to submission.

D. Re-focusing of Funding

CaliforniaVolunteers reserves the right to re-focus program dollars in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.

F. Use of Material

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to grantees and non-grantees, CV and CNCS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so. 45 CFR § 2543.36; 2541.30

VII. DEMOGRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS

Successful applicants are required to collect and report on the demographic information below.

AmeriCorps Member Demographics
V2: Number of veterans engaged in service opportunities as a National Service Participant [member]
V10: Number of military family members engaged in service opportunities as a National Service Participant [member]
GPR1: Number of individuals who applied to be AmeriCorps members
GPR2: Number of AmeriCorps members who participated in disaster services projects
GPR3: Number of AmeriCorps member certified in disaster preparedness and response
GPR4: Number of AmeriCorps members available for deployment in support of any disaster:
Volunteer Demographics
V2: Number of veterans engaged in service opportunities as a volunteer.
V10: Number of military family members engaged in service opportunities as a volunteer.
GPR 5: Number of volunteers recruited, coordinated, or supported by program
GPR 6: Number of disadvantaged children and youth serving as leveraged volunteers
GPR7: Number of leveraged college student volunteers enrolled in a degree-seeking program
GPR8:   Number of individuals born between 1946 and 1964 [Baby Boomers] who serve as volunteers
Beneficiary Demographics
GPR 9: Number of disadvantaged children and youth served by AmeriCorps members
GPR 10: Number of children and youth of incarcerated parents by AmeriCorps members
GPR 11: Number of Individuals mentored by AmeriCorps members
GPR 12: Number of clients who received independent living services from AmeriCorps members
GPR 13: Number of individuals affected by disaster receiving assistance from AmeriCorps members