AmeriCorps Grantmaking and Program Design Policies

Adopted by
California Service Commission

August 24, 2017

Grantmaking Policy 1. Grantmaking Policies & Requirements[1]

Successful applicants will be required to comply with all state and federal laws applicable to AmeriCorps such as Federal Regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, AmeriCorps provisions, and any applicable changes in federal requirements as issued by the Corporation for National and Community Service or state requirements issued by CaliforniaVolunteers.

Intent: The intent of this policy is for grantees to be aware of state and federal rules.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: The CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) state service commission selects and administers AmeriCorps grants under the provisions of Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA). This legislation authorizes national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation), the federal agency that oversees AmeriCorps and provides funding for CaliforniaVolunteers' grants. The SAA becomes effective October 1, 2009, and includes a number of improvements and changes to the AmeriCorps program. The Corporation's FY 2010 *Notice of Federal Funding* Opportunity begins the process of implementing this Act.

The Commission's grantmaking policies are informed by federal regulations, provisions, and policies governing AmeriCorps programs. In the past, the Commission has typically created a separate policy to address each federal requirement (e.g. federal strategic plan, matching requirements, tutoring requirements, member eligibility, living allowance, education awards, member orientation and training plans, etc.). In the 2010 funding year, the Commission established a single policy to encompass all federal requirements, inclusive of the above previously created policies. This policy was revised in 2011 to incorporate all applicable state policies and requirements.

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[1]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13

Grantmaking Policy 2. Funding Decision Authority[2]

In any given grantmaking process, the Commission approves new grant awards and authorizes staff to review and approve continuation of these grants during the 3-year grant period. All funding decisions are final.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to clarify funding decision authority.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: Traditionally, AmeriCorps grants are awarded in a three-year cycle to any given applicant type[3]. The Commission has traditionally awarded the opportunity for new applicants to have a three year cycle. CaliforniaVolunteers staff assess the programs' performance annually. The intention is to assist programs to be awarded year two and year three.

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[2]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 9.22.12; 8.24.17
[3]There are three types of applicants: (1) New Applicants, (2) Recompeting Applicants, and (3) Continuation 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. Typically, all existing programs entering the final year of their grant period are eligible for recompetition. Such programs will receive a program assessment completed by their Program Associate (PA). The assessment will include things such as an analysis of the program's performance as well as its member enrollment and retention data, and Corporation Inspector General audit findings (if applicable).

A "New Applicant" is one in which neither the legal applicant, nor primary partnering organizations, nor individuals involved in developing the current AmeriCorps application have developed an AmeriCorps application that has been awarded an operating grant,
or were previously employed as core program staff of a funded program, state Commission staff, or Corporation staff in the last *five years*.

"Continuation Applicants" are programs submitting requests for years two and three of the three-year grant cycle. Continuation requests are typically submitted for the same
number of Member Service Years (MSYs) with minor changes in the budget request due to inflationary cost per Member Service Year (MSY) increases, or
cost per MSY reductions based on CVs' cost per MSY schedule.

> ### *Grantmaking Policy 3. Partnership Requirements[4]*
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> A funded program must have a partnership of at least three independent entities, of which one must be public and one private partner (non-profit or for-profit).

Intent: The intent of this policy is to maximize community involvement in AmeriCorps that goes beyond AmeriCorps placement sites and the grantee.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: The Commission has a long standing policy of supporting strong community partnerships that use AmeriCorps resources to develop and operate impactful strategies to address challenges that face California communities.   The Commission prefers partners to have a significant role in planning, operating, and sustaining the program (e.g. match contribution, training, assessment, quarterly meetings, etc.) to ensure the success of the program.

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[4]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11

> ***Grantmaking Policy 4. Funding—Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)[5]***
> Successful applicants must fall at or below the cost per MSY limit and follow the rules/guidelines outlined in CVs' current year AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA). Applicants that demonstrate cost efficiency with a low cost per MSY may receive higher preference for funding.
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> The limit will set the maximum funding levels for operating grants, including *fixed-amount grants*.[6].

Intent: The intent of this policy multi-faceted: (1) Assure responsible use of AmeriCorps resources by encouraging programs to gravitate toward cost efficiency rather than the maximum cost per MSY allowable; (2) Provide a mechanism for CV to stay within the Corporation's cap on state average cost per member; and (3) Allow greater flexibility for programs to access limited federal funds to support program costs.

Implementation Issues: CV staff would have to operationalize "cost-efficiency" so that it can be scored as part of the application review and how "cost-efficiency" is operationalized by CV must be transparent to applicants. Some grantees may have to rethink implementation costs.

Background*:* Budgets are awarded based on the Cost per Member Service Year (MSY) or amount awarded per full-time equivalent member. This policy sets limits on maximums, and charges CV to maintain appropriate cost per member.

CaliforniaVolunteers and the Corporation determine the maximum amounts an applicant can request per member on an annual basis. Applicants calculate their MSY by dividing the Corporation's share of their budget request by the number of MSYs requested in the application. One MSY is the equivalent to a full-time term of service and does not include child care or the value of the education award. The Corporation and the Commission use this number to compare costs of programs. The Commission initially created the cost per MSY policy in 1999, which requires programs to "ramp down" their program's reliance on AmeriCorps funding over time. Programs are required to reduce the federal funding request annually per the cost per member schedule to free up formula funds to support additional programs. The cost per MSY schedule established for each funding year is published in the CV AmeriCorps Request for Applications.

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[5]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 3.30.09; 10.08.09; 7.07.11;8.22.12; 8.15.13; 8.24.17
[6]**Fixed-Amount Grants--**The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA) signed into law by President Obama on April 21, 2009 authorizes the Corporation to award fixed-amount grants in FY 2010. Fixed-amount grants allow programs to apply for a fixed dollar amount per member. The fixed amount awarded per member is significantly less than the cost of running an AmeriCorps program and the applicant must raise the additional revenue necessary to operate the program.

Education Award Programs (EAP) have been authorized to receive fixed-amount grants for many years, and may continue to enroll less-than-full-time members. EAP programs can apply up to $800 per MSY to support administrative costs and use their own or other resources for the members' living allowance and program costs.

An AmeriCorps program that receives a fixed-amount grant is like any other AmeriCorps program except that, unlike the more typical cost-reimbursement grant, the fixed amount grant does not require:
- Compliance with OMB Cost Principles.
- Detailed, line-item budgets.
- Corporation FFRs.
- Match or documentation of match.

In 2010, the Corporation made available full-time fixed-amount grants to programs that enroll full-time members only. An applicant may apply for a fixed amount grant, provided that the applicant maintains the cost per MSY appropriate to the level established for its associated funding years and that its cost per MSY does not exceed the maximum costs per MSY for fixed-amount grants set by the Corporation. Successful applicants receiving fixed amount grants must also comply to any other federal requirements determined by the Corporation.

The Commission reviews the cost per MSY schedule annually to determine whether increases in the maximum levels can be accommodated. Historically, CVs' cost per MSY schedule has been adjusted to account for increases in the minimum living allowance for members, rising health care costs, and additional programmatic requirements.

Grantmaking Policy 5. Funding—Grant Period[7]

The Commission follows the Corporation's practice of awarding up to three-year grants, which are evaluated annually for continued funding. Continued funding for all three years is contingent upon funding availability at the federal level and the program's performance.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to provide programs with significant time to establish a strong program while maintaining an element of competition and flexibility.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background:
The Corporation creates three-year grants whereby funding is provided annually for each one of the three years.

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[7]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13

> ### *Grantmaking Policy 6. Funding—Grant Types[8]*
>
> The Commission typically approves three-year operating grants. Following the grant review process, the Commission may approve staff recommendations to award "program development" or "planning grants" to applicants.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to provide a qualified [9]applicant an opportunity for up to 12 months of planning/development.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: Since 1994, the Commission has identified three grant-types:

1. "Operating Grants"– (new, recompetes, and continuation) – funds provided to support AmeriCorps members and their respective service activities over a three year grant period;

2. "Planning Grants"– funds to support the development of an AmeriCorps program design and infrastructures needed to operate the program; and,

3. "Program Development Grants"– funds to support one year of operation; where continued funding would be subject to available funds and/or staff recommendations based on program performance.

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[8]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 3.26.15; 8.24.17
[9]A "qualified" applicant is likely to be funded based on their state ranking.

Grantmaking Policy 7. Funding—Minimum and Maximum Grant Size[10]

The maximum award for a formula grant is $850,000. Programs that are unsuccessful in their attempt to secure competitive funding will be considered for formula funding, based on their state ranking. Such programs are subject to a reduced budget up to $850,000.The Commission reserves the right to waive this cap for recompeting or experienced applicants that have demonstrated the ability to scale an effective program model. Programs being considered for competitive funds are not subject to a maximum limit.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure that formula funding will be distributed to the most qualified number of applicants while providing flexibility to provide larger grants to programs that can effectively use them.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: Historically, the amount of available funds for formula grants is less than the amount available for competitive grants. The purpose of formula grants is to support AmeriCorps service throughout California and maximum limits have been set so that more applicants are considered to be funded. Maximum limits have been set for competitive grants only when the amount of national funding is limited.

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[10]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05, 10.08,09; 7.07.11; 1.30.12; 10.02.14; 3.26.15; 8.24.17

Grantmaking Policy 8. Funding—Minimum Program Size[11]

The Commission requires a minimum program size of 20 MSYs. Staff will review requests for exemptions to be approved by the Director of Programs & Administration.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure that CVs' portfolio of programs can maintain a high quality that is manageable and does not consist of hundreds of programs each with a few members[12] and provide members in numbers that can make a substantial difference relative to locally identified needs.

Implementation Issues:
CV recognizes that some communities may be challenged to meet the size requirement (i.e. rural communities, etc.).

Background:
AmeriCorps programs are designed to address unmet compelling community needs.
The program design should consider the scope of the need, the intensity of the service required, and the critical mass needed to deliver the service.

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[11]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.11.11; 8.22.12; 3.26.15

[12]Over the last decade, CV has had roughly 2,000 full-time members—equivalent to approximately 5,000 member slots. If a program were to request the minimum number of members (20) that would be about 100 programs to monitor and provide oversight.

Grantmaking Policy 9. Commission Authority to Rescind Funding[13]

CV reserves the right to bypass an applicant's state ranking on a case-by-case basis at the application stage and after post award, suspend, or terminate a grant award or contract under the following circumstances:

[1] An applicant has multiple national service funding opportunities available;
[2] The Commission has restrained resources; and/or
[3] The legal applicant presents serious risks around grant performance and/or fiduciary responsibilities discovered after rankings have been completed.

The California Chief Service Officer shall have final authority to approve all decisions to rescind funding.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure responsible granting of AmeriCorps funds to organizations that demonstrate financial capability and capacity to manage Federal funds.

Implementation Issues: It will be the responsibility of Commission staff to document the issues and circumstances that result in any instances of rescinded funding.

Background:
This policy was initially integrated with *Grantmaking Policy B.7. Funding Minimum and Maximum Grant Size.* Because the intent of this policy specifically pertains to CaliforniaVolunteers' authority to rescind funding, rather than grant size, it is being removed out of Grantmaking Policy B.7 to be its own policy.

As necessary, CV staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by a grant applicant or grantee. 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. In evaluating risks, CV may consider the following, but not limited to:

- Financial capability and capacity to manage Federal funds
- Quality of financial management systems and ability to meet the administrative standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance
- History of performance as reflected in the applicant's record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including:
  - Timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements,
  - If applicable, meeting matching requirements, and
  - If applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards
- Information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as—
  - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS),
  - U.S. Treasury Bureau of Fiscal Services
  - Dun and Bradstreet, or

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[13] Adopted 8.24.17

- "Do Not Pay"
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under Uniform Administrative Guidance (formerly OMB Circular A-133) and findings of any other available audits
- IRS Tax Form 990
- An applicant organization's annual report
- Publicly available information including information from an applicant organization's website
- Any other information listed in 45 CFR § 2522.140
- The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.
- Past Performance, including:
  - Grant progress reports – attainment of Performance Measurement Targets
  - Enrollment and retention
  - Compliance with 30 day enrollment and exit requirements
  - Site visit or other monitoring findings (if applicable)
  - OIG findings (if applicable)
  - Significant opportunities and/or risks of the grantee related to national service

Grantmaking Policy 10. Portfolio Development[14]
A <u>new applicant</u> is one in which the legal applicant has not operated an AmeriCorps program in the last five years, and/or whose staff have not been employed as core program staff of a funded program, National Direct organization staff, state commission staff, or Corporation staff in the last five years. An applicant may submit a "Request for Reconsideration" as outlined in the CV current year RFA.

New applicants may receive up to an additional 10% of the total possible score at each review stage. A new applicant submitting a recompeting application for a funded program would not qualify for the additional 10% points. Similarly, a new applicant that intends to pass on the program implementation responsibility to an existing grantee or another entity that has experience operating an AmeriCorps program in the last five years, would not qualify for the additional 10% points.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to level the competition among experienced and new applicants/programs.

Implementation Issues: Definition of new versus existing programs can be challenging.

Background: CaliforniaVolunteers actively conducts outreach to, and encourages the participation of, new applicants prior to every three-year grant competition. CaliforniaVolunteers has adopted a policy that explicitly provides for strong representation of new applicants in its portfolio.

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[14]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.22.12; 8.15.13; 10.02.14; 3.26.15

Grantmaking Policy 11. Portfolio—Funding Priorities and Governor's Initiatives[15]

State Funding Priorities--The Commission has the option to award "priority points" to applications that address funding priorities. Applications that address one or more of the following priorities may receive up to an additional 5% of the total possible score:

- Unmet needs in the bottom five California neighborhood clusters with the lowest American Human Development Index for California[16]:
    - Tulare County: Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville
    - Los Angeles County: Huntington Park, Florence-Graham and Walnut Park
    - Kern County: Bakersfield
    - Los Angeles County: Los Angeles City (Southeast/East Vermont)
    - Los Angeles County: South Central/Watts
- Unmet needs in counties that currently have no AmeriCorps state presence:
    - Merced, Stanislaus, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, San Joaquin, Sutter, and Ventura
- Unmet needs for wounded warriors, veterans, and military families
- Unmet needs in the economic opportunities focus area

Commission/Governor Initiatives--The Commission may create partnerships designed to address specific unmet state priority needs. Initiatives must be approved by the Commission and may be exempt from the competitive process (e.g. peer review, staff review, etc.) at the discretion of CV staff.

Intent:
To encourage applicants to address state priority needs and ensure AmeriCorps dollars are invested in programs targeted at addressing critical challenges facing California.

Implementation Issues:
Applicants may attempt to include extraneous elements in their program design in order to acquire priority points.

Background:
States can identify funding priorities when considering funding awards.

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[15]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13; 3.26.15;8.24.17

[16] The American Human Development Index for California measures three fundamental human development dimensions: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. The index combines, health, education, and income indicators into a composite measure expressed on a scale of 0 to 10. Source: Lewis, K. Burd-Sharps, S. (2014). The Measure of America Series: A Portrait of California 2014-2015.

Grantmaking Policy 12. Portfolio—Minimum Score Threshold[17]

All applicants must meet a minimum "adequate" score threshold based on the scoring matrix in order to be considered for funding. A program application must earn an "adequate" minimum score established for each grant review process administered by CV staff to be considered for funding.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to maintain the quality of the CV program portfolio and the credibility of CVs' grantee selection process

Implementation Issues: Incentives exist to forward an application that received a low score into the national competition based on meeting national priorities.

Background:
To receive AmeriCorps funding, the Corporation requires state commissions to conduct the following grantmaking processes:
- Review and select new/recompeting competitive and Education Award Program (EAP) applications to submit to the Corporation for funding;
- Prepare ranking and recommendations for new/recompeting competitive programs to fund;
- Select programs for formula funding, either separately or as part of the same competition used for the Corporation's competitive grants process;
- Thoroughly review the recommended applications to ensure they are complete, accurate, and in compliance with all program and budget requirements before submitting them to the Corporation in eGrants;
- Review Financial Status Reports to monitor and report on programs' progress toward the matching requirements stipulated in the AmeriCorps rule 45 CFR §§ 2522.35-2522.91; and
- Read, understand, and sign all assurances, certifications, and restrictions, including the certification of programs' progress toward the matching requirements.

State commissions are not required to conduct a peer review process for applications submitted to the state competitive or EAP process, however, the Corporation expects states to conduct a rigorous review and to send forward only those applications that are considered to be high quality and that meet all requirements outlined in the Application Instructions. Commissioners must vote to approve the applications submitted, and commissions are required to maintain a record of that vote.

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[17]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13

> ***Grantmaking Policy Former 13. Portfolio—Statewide Geographic Distribution[18]***
>
> The primary consideration for selection of AmeriCorps programs is merit. Under no circumstance will the Commission fund an applicant that receives a score deemed unacceptable in any grantmaking process.
>
> The Commission uses the California Economic Strategy Panel's (ETP) nine economic regions by county in analyzing geographic distribution. These regions are combinations of similar counties with particular attention paid to geography, demography and economic conditions[19].
>
> At the end of a grantmaking process, when deciding whether a program will receive formula funding, the Commission will seek to ensure a minimum of 20 MSYs per region with the following exception of 40 MSYs in the Los Angeles region. All members proposed in this region will count towards meeting this requirement, including those placed by single region, multi-region, and statewide programs. In order to achieve a geographic parity, a program in an already represented region may be skipped, and another program may be selected in order to achieve geographic balance. Under no circumstances will the Commission provide formula funding to an applicant that receives a score that is 10 or more points below the applicant it displaces.
>
> In the event this policy cannot be met due to funding and configuration limitations, multi- region and statewide programs will be encouraged to place a minimum number of MSY in regions that are underrepresented.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to increase opportunities for communities throughout the state to access AmeriCorps resources.

Implementation Issues: The Commission does not select programs that are assessed as unacceptable in order to remedy lack of regional parity. CaliforniaVolunteers encourages multi-site programs to locate in "underserved" areas. Multi-site programs can complicate assessment of geographic parity. The Commission does not always receive even a minimal number of acceptable programs from all regions. Certain regions (the Bay Area, for example) repeatedly submit a high number of programs that compete successfully for both formula and competitive funds.

Background: The Commission seeks a statewide portfolio that covers all geographic regions of California, including both rural and urban communities.

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[18]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11

[19]The California Economic Strategy Panel's nine regions and accompanying counties are as follows:
- ***Northern California***: Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Sierra, Siskiyou, Trinity
- ***Northern Sacramento Valley***: Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Shasta, Tehama
- ***Greater Sacramento***: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba
- ***Bay Area***: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma
- ***San Joaquin Valley***: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare
- ***Central Coast***: Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara
- ***Central Sierra***: Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Tuolumne
- ***Southern California***: Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino
- ***Southern Border***: Imperial, San Diego

Grantmaking Policy 14. Portfolio—Maximum State and Minimum non-State/Private[20] Sector

Final decisions will consider this requirement and adjustments will be made as necessary.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure a minimum amount of funding for programs led by non-profit and non-state governmental organizations.

Implementation Issues: This requirement can be difficult to assess. Funding to programs with a state agency legal applicant (e.g., Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges) is commonly subgranted to non-state agencies (i.e., community college districts) while other funds are subgranted to non-profit organizations (i.e., local conservation corps). In the past, non-profits have deferred administration to a public agency to avoid workload and cash flow problems.

Background: The Corporation requires that at least 60% of funds support programs that are not carried out by the state or by a state agency. The Corporation will waive the requirement if an adequate number of acceptable applications from non-state agencies are not received.

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[20]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meetings: 6.16.04; 11.16.04; 6.15.05; 9.28.05

> **Program Design Policy 1. Community Need[21]**
>
> Applicants must provide evidence of a compelling community need through relevant data (e.g. city, county, state data that reasonably reflects the population to be served). Proposed AmeriCorps member activities and results must directly relate to the identified need.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure that AmeriCorps meets pressing community [and local] needs.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background: AmeriCorps was designed to focus the time, energy and skills of national service participants on pressing local needs. The Corporation and CV have an interest in ensuring that grantees can identify specific needs and conditions that require AmeriCorps resources (i.e., the Porterville Police Department documented a 55% increase in youth-involved theft during hours immediately following the close of school, rather than a generic statement that there is a national trend toward higher youth crime during after-school hours).

Current policy requires applicants to produce evidence of a compelling community need using local data that demonstrates the need.

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[21]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 3.26.15

Program Design Policy 2. Added Value[22]
Successful applicants must describe: (1) unique, compelling role for AmeriCorps members and how individuals providing a year or two of service can be particularly effective at addressing the identified community need; and (2) how serving in their program will create meaningful experience for AmeriCorps members.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure that AmeriCorps resources represent an effective strategy and added value for addressing identified unmet community needs.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background: Federal law prohibits AmeriCorps members from displacing either paid staff or volunteers. Thereby, AmeriCorps was created to target unmet community needs (i.e., needs that are not already receiving attention through other programs and organizations).

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[22]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 3.26.15

> ***Program Design Policy 3. Evidence-based Intervention***[23]
>
> Successful applicants must demonstrate that the efficacy of their model or intervention is supported by documented and independent research. The intervention is defined, effective for the proposed high need population and community challenge, and will lead to the outcomes identified in their theory of change.

Intent: To ensure AmeriCorps dollars are invested in programs that can effectively address critical challenges facing California and encourage grantees to build and strengthen the evidence base supporting their program model.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background:. CaliforniaVolunteers has a long history of funding programs that can demonstrate their program is effective through strong performance data. The addition of this policy is aligned with recent national trend to move toward funding evidence-based service models. In recent years CNCS at the guidance of the Obama Administration has increased emphasis on the use of evidence and rigorous evaluation in budget, management, and policy decisions. Consistent with CNCS guidance, CV uses its grantmaking process to select the strongest service models, taking into account the level of evidence for each intervention. Since 2014 applicants are required to submit a logic model and provide evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in their theory of change. Applicants are required to describe studies and evaluations and provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge. In FY 15, applicants classifying their evidence as moderate or strong were required to submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles. For each report cited, they must 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, their evaluation report was considered as part of the evidence base of the program.

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[23]Adopted per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 3.26.15

> **Program Design Policy 4. Members—Minimum Number per Operating Site[24]**
>
> Programs must place a minimum of two AmeriCorps members at each service site. CV staff may waive this requirement if a program demonstrates enhanced impact and member support mechanisms.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to ensure strong program design and to provide members with at least a minimal mutual support network. Requests for single site placement must show enhanced impact and member support mechanisms.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background:
Experience has shown that assigning individual AmeriCorps members to placement sites generally brings major challenges. At the program level, it is difficult for a lone AmeriCorps member to have a significant impact or bring about meaningful results. For members, single site placements often fail to provide a supportive environment conducive to effective service. Placed alone at their sites, members also lack connection to the larger national service community or even the immediate local program.

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[24]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 10.02.14

Program Design Policy 5. AmeriCorps Disaster Response[25]

CV reserves the right to redirect AmeriCorps members and grant resources to support disaster response. The Commission strongly supports the preparation of AmeriCorps members in areas of emergency response (e.g. Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), local disaster awareness training, if possible, at a minimum, provide staff and AmeriCorps members with CPR and standard first aid training).

Intent: The intent of this policy to assist with the creation of a foundation for community preparedness in the event of disasters and other emergencies.

Implementation Issues: CERT training may not be available in all regions. Training may divert some members from unrelated but primary service activities.

Background: California is prone to a wide variety of natural disasters (most notably, fires, earthquakes, and floods). CV believes that AmeriCorps (AC) members are valuable resources who are well-suited to assist communities in times of natural disaster, emergencies, and acts of terrorism.

Disaster Volunteering and Preparedness Department (DVP)
As part of the CV disaster mission, AC programs may be trained to support the State's volunteer and donations management function. The DVP will provide specific language to define expectations of future AC grantees in support of CV disaster role.

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[25]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 3.26.15

> ### *Program Design Policy 6. Direct and Indirect Service[26]*
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> AmeriCorps resources should be invested in programs that:
> - Promote direct service as a means to address a compelling community need; and,
> - Demonstrate the capacity to operate an AmeriCorps program at the time of submitting an application.
>
> CaliforniaVolunteers values the direct service that has traditionally been a foundation of AmeriCorps. Direct service activities focus on the beneficiaries of service, while capacity building activities lead to organizational outcomes. AmeriCorps members are permitted to engage in indirect service activities that are consistent with the community need addressed by the program and outlined in performance measurement worksheets (PMWs). If an applicant intends to have members provide any indirect services, these services must be clearly defined in the program design, specifically in the PMWs.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to have programs designed to impact as strongly as possible direct beneficiaries with indirect services being a clear added value.

Implementation Issues: Programs with significant indirect service components may have difficulty creating meaningful performance measures.

Background: Traditionally, AmeriCorps member activities focused on direct service activities. Other activities -- such as clerical support and fundraising (often referred to as indirect service activities) -- had been prohibited. In contrast, these were allowable activities for AmeriCorps*VISTAs, whose service activities must focus on indirect service, include: volunteer management, training direct service providers, coordinating projects, public speaking, writing press releases, organizing fundraising events, organizing task forces/coalitions, and conducting outreach.

AmeriCorps members are permitted to assist grantee organizations in building capacity (specifically, activities such as volunteer recruitment). Other allowable activities include conducting outreach, developing infrastructure to support a volunteer program, developing partnerships in the community and securing resources to support service activities. CaliforniaVolunteers values the direct service that has traditionally been a foundation of AmeriCorps. Direct service activities focus on the beneficiaries of service, while capacity building activities lead to organizational outcomes. AmeriCorps members are permitted to engage in indirect service activities that are consistent with the community need addressed by the program.

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[26]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13; 10.02.14

Program Design Policy 7. Volunteer Recruitment[27]

AmeriCorps members are required to recruit volunteers. Applicants may apply for a volunteer recruitment waiver which will be reviewed by CV staff.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to require AmeriCorps members to recruit volunteers to address community needs.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: Consistent with Corporation requirement on volunteer recruitment, CV requires programs to include a volunteer recruitment and/or support component in their program design. Effective involvement of volunteers will vary among AmeriCorps programs, depending on the nature of the service activities and the partnership's capacity to utilize and sustain the efforts of community volunteers. CaliforniaVolunteers has a volunteer recruitment performance measure that captures the number of community volunteers and number of service hours performed.

Volunteer recruitment/management refers to AmeriCorps members recruiting volunteers to perform allowable activities that address community needs. Members charging time to an AmeriCorps grant may not support volunteers engaged in activities prohibited by AmeriCorps regulations.

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[27]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 10.08.09; 7.07.11; 8.15.13; 3.26.15

***Program Design Policy 8. Days of Service**[28]*

AmeriCorps programs must conduct both a swearing-in and graduation ceremony for all cohorts/classes of members and participate in AmeriCorps Week. Programs are strongly encouraged to participate in other National Service Days (e.g. Make a Difference Day, September 11th Day of Service, Martin Luther King Day of Service or Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning).

Intent: The intent of this policy is to encourage and promote the development of service and volunteerism throughout the state.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background: CaliforniaVolunteers strives to create a strong platform for promoting volunteerism and convey to event volunteers – including AmeriCorps members – that they are participants in a larger movement that extends beyond their local community by participating in National Days of Service. Days of service focus on a particular theme or group (i.e., Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning).

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[28]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 10.08.09

Program Design Policy 9. Terms of Service[29]
CaliforniaVolunteers establishes the following member positions (hours are hours per year):

1,700 hours:	Full-time
900 hours:	Part-time
675 hours:	Reduced part-time
450 hours:	Quarter-time
300 hours:	Minimum-time

CaliforniaVolunteers strongly encourages applicants to use the most intensive term of service appropriate to their program designs.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to provide service opportunities for individuals to commit a year of their life to a community need.

Implementation Issues: None noted at this time.

Background: AmeriCorps was designed to provide members with intensive service experiences. While an ideal position would engage members in full-time service such as that performed by Peace Corps Volunteers, other positions could enroll members in "terms of service" that would provide meaningful experiences while allowing for a degree of flexibility in individual program designs. In addition to a full-time (1700 hours per year) term of service, AmeriCorps allows for 900, 675, 450 and 300 hour terms of service.

Terms of service of less than 1700 hours are meaningful only to the extent that they provide members with a focused and intensive experience. For example, a member with no formal obligations (college enrollment, a full-time job, etc.) would not need to make a major commitment to enroll in a 300 hour (i.e., 6 hours per week) term of service. A full-time student, however, would need to make a significant commitment if (s)he were to serve 300 hours over the course of a nine-month academic year.

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[29]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05

> *Program Design Policy 10. Performance Measures[30]*
>
> Successful applicants must follow CV performance measurement rules/guidelines outlined in the current year's *AmeriCorps Request for Applications (RFA)* and accompanying *Application Forms and Instructions.* All member hours must be *captured* within the program's performance measures.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to systematically measure the effectiveness of AmeriCorps program activities and ensure that all member activities are allowable and within the scope of the grant.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires applicants for funding to apply measurable performance goals to determine the impact of AmeriCorps on communities and participants. Since 1993, programs and state commissions have used various forms of performance measurement to articulate program goals and results. Programs are required to develop performance measures in three categories: needs and service (direct service), member development, and strengthening communities.

With the 2008 rule, the Corporation requires: 1) one set of aligned performance measures (output, intermediate outcome, end outcome) that capture the results of the program's primary activity; and, 2) any performance measure submitted beyond the minimum requirement may or may not be aligned measures. In addition, the Corporation requires that at a minimum, grantees report on their output measure after year one and the output and intermediate outcome after year two and three.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA) signed into law on April 21, 2009 requires that the Corporation design and use national performance measures to collect meaningful data on the critical impact of AmeriCorps across the country in the five national service priority areas identified (e.g. Education, Healthy Futures, Clean Energy/Environment, Veterans, and Opportunity). The Corporation released national measures as an option in the 2010 application process. The development of national measures allows for aggregated reporting of impact across the portfolio and contributes to the growth of AmeriCorps envisioned in the SAA.

With the passage of SAA, the Corporation is placing greater emphasis on outcome-based performance measures. Consistent with this national objective, the Commission values programs seeking an investment of California AmeriCorps resources that are committed to and capable of quantifiably measuring and reporting on the outcomes their program will produce. In particular, the Commission is most interested in programs that can show a direct connection between the outcomes they generate and the community need identified. Historically, programs funded by the Commission have long been demonstrating the ability to achieve significant lasting impact in the lives of beneficiaries served through AmeriCorps as captured through annual end outcome performance measurement targets. The Commission values these outcomes and continues to receive encouragement and support from Corporation staff to continue this practice.

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[30]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting: 9.28.05; 7.07.11; 3.26.15

> **Program Design Policy 11. Evaluation[31]**
>
> CaliforniaVolunteers may provide technical assistance and additional grant funds to support the evaluation costs of promising program models that has potential for scaling or replication by increasing a program's cost per member level.
>
> Programs funded with CNCS competitive dollars are required to follow federal evaluation requirements as described in the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.500-.540 and .700-.740 and the CNCS Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity for submitting an evaluation plan, summary or report, as applicable, at the time of application.
>
> Programs funded with CaliforniaVolunteers state formula dollars are strongly encouraged to complete a process or outcome evaluation covering one year of operation.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to have grantees 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.

Implementation Issues: Conducting high quality outcome or impact evaluations require staff and monetary resources that may not be entirely covered through the federal share of the grant. Grantees may have to identify additional outside resources to fund a rigorous evaluation design study.

Background: The AmeriCorps regulations 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.500-.540 and .700-.740 stress the value of evaluations in assessing program design, implementation, and effectiveness. While the evaluation requirements for competitive programs have not changed, in 2013 CNCS began to enforce compliance with evaluation requirements and provide training and technical assistance to assist competitive grantees in fulfilling the requirements. The requirements are central to CNCS's strategic goals and efforts to expand the use of evidence to make strong and informed funding and technical assistance decisions.

CNCS requires that all AmeriCorps state competitively funded grantees receiving an average annual CNCS grant of $500,000 or more conduct an *independent* evaluation to measure the impact of their program. An evaluation is considered *independent* if it uses an external evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in, the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program being evaluated. An *impact evaluation* is designed to provide statistical evidence of the impact of the program compared to what would happened in the absence of the program (i.e. evaluations that include a comparison or control group).All state competitive grantees whose average annual CNCS grant is less than $500,000are required to conduct an evaluation, but may use an internal evaluator rather than an independent one. An internal evaluation is designed and conducted by qualified program staff or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates. The following table summarizes the evaluation requirements for competitively funded programs:

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[31]Revised per AmeriCorps-Executive Committee Meeting:: 9.28.05;10.08.09;10.02.14; 3.26.15

Evaluation Designs and CNCS's Requirements for Competitive Programs

Evaluation Study Designs	Meet Requirements	
	Large Grantees ($500K+)	Small Grantees (<$500K)
Experimental Design Studies	Yes	Yes (optional)
Quasi-Experimental Design Studies[32]	Yes	Yes (optional)
Non-Experimental Design Studies	No	Yes

Per the AmeriCorps regulations, AmeriCorps State formula grantees are required to complete the evaluation requirements as established by their respective State Service Commission. CaliforniaVolunteers does not require formula grantees to complete an evaluation; however, CV strongly encourages formula grantees to evaluate their program models in order to strengthen the evidence base for their program intervention. CV values programs that can demonstrate their program models are being implemented with fidelity and that continuous improvements are being made to strengthen their program designs in order to achieve the highest level of intended impact. CV will continue to promote effective and efficient solutions to social challenges facing California by using a grantmaking process that selects the strongest service models, taking into account the level of evidence for each intervention. For current grantees, their evaluation report is considered as part of the evidence base of the program.

Formula programs are encouraged to conduct a *process* evaluation that: 1) document what the program is doing; 2) document to what extent and how consistently the program has been implemented as intended; and 3) informs changes or improvements in the program's operations.

The process evaluation should focus on questions such as:
- Is the program being implemented as designed or planned?
  - Is the program being implemented the same way at each site?
  - Is the program reaching the intended target population with the appropriate services at the planned rate and "dosage"?
- Are there any components of the program that are not working well? Why or Why not?
- Are program beneficiaries generally satisfied with the program? Why or Why not?
- Are the resources adequate for the successful implementation of the program?

Formula programs that have already completed a process evaluation are encouraged to conduct an outcome evaluation. The goals of an *outcome* evaluation are to: 1) identify the results or effects of a program; and 2) measure program beneficiaries' changes in knowledge, attitude(s), and/or behavior(s) that result from a program. Outcome evaluation designs may be non-experimental design, quasi-experimental design, and experimental design. Outcome evaluations using a quasi-experimental or experimental design are considered to be impact-focused.

The outcome evaluation should focus on questions such as:
- Are there differences in outcomes for program beneficiaries compared to those not in the program?
- Did all types of program beneficiaries benefit from the program or only specific

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[32] Quasi-experimental design studies fulfills the Corporation requirement for large grantees if a reasonable comparison group is identified and appropriate matching/propensity scoring is used in the analysis.

subgroups?
- Did the program change beneficiaries' knowledge attitude, behavior, or condition?

Program Design Policy 12. Criminal History Checks Certification[33]

Required Criminal History Check Components for all "Covered Positions"[34] (program staff and AmeriCorps applicants):
1. Nationwide[35] name-based <u>National Sex Offender Public Registry Check</u> using NSOPW.gov; **and**
2. <u>Statewide Criminal History Registry Check</u> in the State of residence[36] **and** in the State where the individual will serve or work
AND
3. <u>FBI National Fingerprint-based Check</u>
All checks must be conducted and any results considered according to Program and CV policy, with the individual <u>cleared prior</u> to the start of service and/or time on the grant. **This includes <u>anyone</u> listed on the budget whether grantee or match funded.**

CV requirements are that the legal applicant:
1. Follow all CNCS requirements outlined in 45 CFR §§ 2540.200 – 2540.207 and CNCS' most recent *NSCHC FAQs*; and
2. Follow CVs' definition that since all programs/grantees serve and/or enroll vulnerable populations, all covered staff and potential AmeriCorps members must complete the **State, FBI and NSOPW.gov** checks; and
3. <u>Recheck</u> the NSOPW.gov nationwide search prior to the start of each term of service for all returning AmeriCorps members; and
4. Ensure all required checks are completed, results are considered and the individual is <u>cleared prior</u> to becoming an AmeriCorps member eligible to earn hours and/or a staff person beginning work on an AmeriCorps grant; and
5. Appropriately documents the checks process and retains a verification form and NSOPW.gov results in each staff/member file; and
6. Has a written policy and procedures in place, which at a minimum addresses requirements 1-5.
7. Ensure one staff member be trained annually in National Service Criminal History Checks using CNCS' training module and maintain the resultant training certificate (per AC Terms and Conditions).

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[33] Adopted per AmeriCorps Committee Meeting 8.22.12; 8.15.13; 10.02.14; 8.24.17

[34] A "covered position" is a position in which an individual serving or employed receives a living allowance, stipend, national service education award, or salary through a program receiving a grant under the national service laws. **Coverage is not dependent on the type of service the individual is performing, the individual's access to vulnerable populations, or whether the grantee or sub-grantee programs are using federal share or grantee matching share funds to pay the individual, including salary or stipends which may be counted as matching contributions.** See 45 CFR § 2540.201 [http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/fedregister_final_rule_oct_5_2012.pdf].

[35] An "Advanced Search" of geographic region will not satisfy this requirement. All states that make up the nationwide NSOPR database must be checked before the check is considered complete. Use of a vendor for this check is often not compliant. (See CNCS' NSCHC FAQs regarding Vendors).

[36] The State where a candidate "resides" is the location where the individual has made a home which he/she considers to be his/her place of residence at the moment in time that he/she applied to serve or work. College students must be handled differently. An individual applying to serve or work who is an enrolled full-time college student is deemed to be residing in the state where he/she lives for the purpose of attending the school without regards to whether or not that home is on- or off-campus, and whether or not that home is in the same state as the college is located. Programs may not opt to use any other basis for identifying the student's residence state, e.g., such as the student's family home. The state to check does not change because a student is on semester or summer breaks temporarily residing elsewhere, and there is no test needed to measure duration of residence while attending school [as defined by CNCS in most recent NSCHC FAQs].

Intent: The intent of this policy is to protect beneficiaries, California's communities, members, programs and the Commission by enforcing the requirement of a mandatory deadline for the full completion of all background checks prior to the member's start date, for which service hours cannot be accrued until eligibility of each member passing these checks is verified by the grantee.

Implementation Issues: Potential members may not have their checks cleared in a timely manner and some programs may be denied access to the appropriate state(s) designated repositories, and therefore, cannot complete the required checks. Grantees are encouraged to plan accordingly to complete background checks during the member recruitment and selection process.

Background: Under the Serve America Act (SAA), all grantees must conduct National Service Criminal History Checks on participants and program employees in AmeriCorps. All employees, participants, and others who receive a salary, national service education award, living allowance, or stipend under CNCS grants, even if the activities don't involve service with vulnerable populations, must receive the checks prior to beginning employment or service. Regulations have been in effect since November 2007 requiring checks on individuals in recurring contact with a vulnerable population, and expanded requirements went into effect on October 1, 2009, establishing coverage of all employees and participants, including those without contact with a vulnerable population. Beginning in April 21, 2011, programs will also be required to conduct FBI background checks on covered individuals who will have recurring contact with vulnerable populations.

Program Design Policy 13. Responsible Use of AmeriCorps Grant Resources[37]

Grantees are expected to enroll member slots awarded and to vigorously pursue the highest retention rates attainable by the program model. Unexpended funds resulting from not fully enrolling and/or retaining members cannot be used to support other areas of the budget without prior approval from CV.

CV staff are responsible to monitor member enrollment and retention, and adjust budgets to maintain awarded/contracted cost per member.

Intent: The intent of this policy is to assist responsible use of grant resources including member slots, education awards, and AmeriCorps funds.

Implementation Issues: None noted.

Background: AmeriCorps programs are selected for funding through a competitive process. Once awarded, grant resources (e.g. member slots, education awards, funds, etc.) are committed to the proposed program design. Not fully using contracted member slots is the loss of those national resources (e.g. slots, education awards, AmeriCorps funds) to the California community. Further, those resources are not able to be redistributed to other grantees.

[37] Adopted per AmeriCorps Committee Meeting 8.22.12; 10.02.14

Program Design Policy 14. Supporting Unawarded Operating Cost Increases[38]

Grantees 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.

Intent: The intent of this policy is three-fold: 1) to have grantees find match for additional costs not included in the original award; 2) to ensure that grantees meet the terms of their contracted match requirement; and 3) to prevent the diminishing of national service resources to cover increases to personnel compensations.

Implementation: A few grantees may not be able to meet awarded contracted match level due to inability to fully enroll or retain members. Grantees would need to meet personnel raises through resources outside of the contracted AmeriCorps budget.

Background: 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. It's expected that a program's budget in the second and third years of the grant may have adjustments to better reflect actual costs, and a grantee must be prepared to cover increases in the bottom line operating costs.

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[38] Adopted per AmeriCorps Committee Meeting 8.22.12; 8.15.13