FY 2019 Grant Application Guidelines
Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

• AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps Members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities.
Disclosures

• **Estimated Available Funds**
  • The application process is highly competitive.
  • The level of funding is subject to the availability of the annual appropriation received by MCSC (pending).
  • Typically, grant requests exceed the annual appropriation MCSC receives to award grants.
  • Publication of the NOFO does not obligate MCSC (or CNCS) to award any specific number of grants or to obligate the entire amount of funding available.
  • MCSC reserves the right to fund applicants at a lower level than the grant request.
  • MCSC reserves the right to refocus funding in the event of disaster or other compelling need for service.
  • MCSC reserves the right to deduct points for noncompliant items in the grant application as well as disqualify applicants that do not adhere to the grant application guidelines.
Eligibility

• Elitegible Organizations:
  • Public / private nonprofit organizations with 501(c)3 status
  • Faith- / community-based organizations
  • Educational institutions
  • State or local government agencies

• Ineligible Organizations:
  • Organizations convicted of a federal crime
  • Organizations described in Section 501(c)4 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engage in lobbying activities pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995
• **DUNS Number & EIN**
  - All applicants are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
  - To obtain a DUNS number, call (866) 705-5711 or apply online at [http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform](http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform).
  - All applicants are required to have a Employer Identification Number (EIN).
    - This is also referred to as the Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Taxpayer Identification Number.

• **SAM Registration**
  - All federal grant recipients, including sub-grantees of state commissions, are required to maintain a valid System for Award Management (SAM) registration.
    - To register with SAM online, go to [https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/](https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/)
    - Organizations must have a DUNS number prior to registering with SAM.
Grant Application: General Guidelines

• Grant Award / Project Period
  • Generally, a grant covers a 3-year period, with an initial award and subsequent “continuation” awards (with an application for continued funding).
    ○ Continuation funding is not guaranteed.
  • The project period proposed in the grant application should be for one year.
  • The project start date may not be prior to August 1st.
    ○ The project period may not exceed 12 months.
    ○ Example: 8/1/2019 - 7/31/2020 or 9/1/2019 - 8/31/2020
Grant Application: General Guidelines

• Application Narrative Formatting
  • The narrative must be in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
  • The narrative must have one-inch margins with double-spaced text.
  • The narrative must follow the sequence outlined in the NOFO.
  • The narrative sections must be labeled with the appropriate headings.
  • The narrative should not include graphs, charts, tables, or artwork.
  • The pages must be numbered.
  • The narrative must adhere to the estimated number of pages in Microsoft Word to comply with character limits in eGrants, as follows:
    ○ Approximately 10 pages in Microsoft Word. Continuation applicants 5 pages in Microsoft Word
    ○ The page limit does not apply to the coversheet, performance measures, budget, evaluation plan and/or report (re-compete applicants), or other attachments outlined in the NOFO.
Executive Summary

• Please fill in the blank of these sentences to complete the Executive summary. This needs to be word for word. MCSC will deduct point for applicants that do not adhere to the template.

• Note: Fixed Amount grant applicants must list their Other Revenue because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program.

• Note: Most common mistake:
  • Not using the template word for word.
Program Design
Theory of Change

- Put in plain words what are the proposed intervention(s). This includes:
  - the design = proposed plan/project/program
  - target population = who will benefit from your program
  - roles of AC Members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers = what they will be doing to help serve the beneficiaries.

- Explain how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcome(s) indicated in your application; that will occur as a result of the AmeriCorps program.

- Explain how the proposed outcomes show meaningful progress in addressing the community problem/need(s) identified.

- Explain how the ACMs will produce significant and unique contributions to existing interventions (not necessarily from your organization) that are also addressing the same problem/need identified in your application.

**Note:** The most common mistakes were:
- The proposed interventions did not align with the community problem/need.
- The proposed outputs/outcomes are not clearly articulated.
Program Design
Evidence Base

• State the evidence tier in which they believe they qualify;

• Clearly indicate and describe the evidence that supports the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible; and

• Describe the complete body of evidence that supports their proposed intervention including evidence from lower tiers.

• **Note:** Applicants should pay particular attention to the requirements for each tier of evidence. All requirements must be met in order for applicants to be assigned to a tier. Applicants who do not fully describe their evidence base may not be assigned to a tier for which the applicant otherwise may have qualified.
• When describing research studies or evaluations in the application narrative, applicants must include the following information in order to earn points:
  • 1. The date the research or evaluation was completed and the time period for which the intervention was examined (Preference is given to studies conducted within the last six years.);
  • 2. A description that shows the study's relevance to the proposed intervention;
  • 3. A description of the target population studied (e.g. demographics);
  • 4. The methodology used in the study (e.g. outcome study, random assignment, regression discontinuity design, propensity score matching, etc.);
  • 5. A description of the data, data source, and data collection methods;
6. The outcomes or impacts examined and the study findings; and
7. The strength of the findings (e.g. effect size, confidence level, statistical power of the study design and statistical significance of findings).

**Note:** Most common mistakes:

- are putting down the wrong evidence base tier
- not having adequate research to back up your tier.
Program Design
Notice Priority

• Explain how your proposed program fits within one or more of the national and/or state funding priorities listed.

• Note: Most common mistakes:
  • were putting old funding priority
  • leaving it blank.
Program Design
Member Experience

• AmeriCorps Members will gain skills as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
  • AmeriCorps Members will have access to meaningful service experience that includes education about the community problem/need and the community in which they serve.
  • AmeriCorps Members will have access to opportunities for reflection that involves the intentional processing of member experience and the incorporation of lessons learned.

• The applicant will recruit AmeriCorps Members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the program operates.
• The applicant will also foster an inclusive service culture where different backgrounds, talent and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and effective service delivery.

• **Note**: Most common mistake were:
  • Vague on skills members will gain
  • Vague on recruitment of members
• The organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
  • Refer to the Additional Documents section of this notice for the guidelines relating to community support/commitment documentation.

• **Note:** Most common mistake:
  • Very vague on staff roles and structure of staff.
Organization Capability
Compliance and Accountability

• The organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the sub-grantee (applicant organization) and service site location(s).

• The applicant will hold itself/sub grantees and service site location(s) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.

• Note: Most common mistakes:
• Very vague on policies on holding the organization or service sites accountable for compliance issues
• Never addressed
Organization Capability
Cultural that Values Learning

• The applicant's board, management, and staff collects and uses information for learning and decision-making.
• The applicant's management and staff produces frequent reports on how well the organization is implementing its programs and strategies.
Member Supervision

• Explain how supervisors will provide ACMs with high quality guidance and support to provide effective service.

• Explain how AmeriCorps supervisors will be sufficiently trained and/or prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.

• **Note:** Most common mistakes were:
  • over 1/3 of the applicant did not explain how AmeriCorps supervisors will be sufficiently trained and/or prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.
  • Very vague explanation of how supervisor would provide guidance.
COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

Budget

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

**Note:** Most common Mistakes:
- Mathematical errors
- Budget not in compliance with budget instructions
- Adequate information is not given to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Wrong Mileage
- Forgot to put required amount for Region or National training for 1 of 3 years
Evaluation Plan

- If the applicant is competing for the first time, please provide a data collection plan that includes the following:
  - A description of the applicant’s data collection system and how it is sufficient to collect high quality performance measurement data during the first three years of the grant. If the applicant does not yet have a data collection system, describe the plan and timeline for developing a high quality system.
  - A description of how the applicant will use performance data (including CNCS performance measures and other process and outcome measures if applicable) to improve its program in the first three years of funding.
- First-time applicants should be aware that CNCS may require submission of data collection instruments if a grant is approved for funding.
- If the applicant is re-competing for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of “re-compete applicant” in the Eligibility Information section of this notice), the applicant must submit its evaluation plan.
Evaluation Plan Continued..

• Evaluation Plan Components: Evaluation plans must include as much information as possible for each of the following:
  • A short description of the theory of change - why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results;
  • Outcome of interest - clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation;
  • Research questions to be addressed by the study - concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes;
  • Study components -
    • A proposed research design for the evaluation including a rationale for the design selected, an assessment of its strengths and limitations, and a description of the main components;
    • Description of the sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures; and
    • An analysis plan;
    • Qualifications needed for the evaluator; and
    • The estimated budget.
• If the applicant is re-competing for a subsequent time, the applicant must submit its evaluation report and a learning memo as attachments and must also submit an evaluation plan for the next three-year period to MCSC per the submission guidelines by the application deadline.

• The learning memo describes how you are using the evaluation to improve and to inform your activities in the next funding cycle. The learning memo must be in a 12-point font or larger and should not exceed three pages of double-spaced text. The learning memo should include:
  • A short summary of key learnings from the evaluation.
  • An explanation of how the program will incorporate key learnings into its strategy, design or implementation.
  • An explanation of how these changes will improve the program.
  • A discussion of how learning from the evaluation may inform next steps in the program’s long-term research agenda.
MCSC and CNCS expect applicants to use National Performance Measures as part of their comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work as well as make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve their goals.

All applications must include at least one aligned performance measure (output and outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary intervention. Applicants are not expected to select performance measures to correspond to each and every potential Member activity or community impact. MCSC and CNCS values the quality of performance measures over the quantity of performance measures.
Performance Measures Continued...

• Applicants must include all their information about their proposed performance measure in the Performance Measure Worksheet. All information requested in the Performance Measure Instructions must be included in the text of the performance measures themselves, and it must be evident in the performance measure text that all definitions and requirements outlined in the Performance Measures Instructions are met. Providing performance measures information elsewhere in the narrative cannot be in lieu of providing full information in the Performance Measure Worksheet(s).

• The Performance Measure Instructions and Performance Measure Worksheet (to be submitted with the application) are available at http://www.movolunteers.org/grants.htm.
Logic Model

• Format Requirements: The logic model must be in landscape format with no less than a 10-point font in Times New Roman. The logic model must not exceed 3 pages. Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one logic model chart which incorporates each intervention.

• Logic Model Components: The logic model must depict:
  • Problem/Need: A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative.
  • Inputs: The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
    • Number of locations or sites in which AmeriCorps Members will provide services
    • Number of AmeriCorps Members that will deliver the intervention
• Interventions: The core activities that define the intervention or program model that AmeriCorps Members will implement or deliver, including:
  • The duration of the intervention (e.g. the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention);
  • The dosage of the intervention (e.g. the number of hours per session or sessions per week); and
  • The target population for the intervention (e.g. disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level).
• Outputs: The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (e.g. number of beneficiaries served, hours of service delivered, types and number of activities conducted). If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
• Outcomes: Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention. If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators. Applicants may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the logic model as follows:
  • Short-term: A change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or opinions.
  • Medium-term: A change in behavior or action resulting from new knowledge.
  • Long-term: A meaningful change often in condition, situation, or status in life.

• Note: Most common Mistakes:
  • Not following font size and page limit directions
  • Forget to put the Community need.
New and Re-compete Documents

- Coversheet
- Application Narrative
- Performance Measures Worksheet
- Budget Worksheet
- Logic Model
- Sources of Evidence (if applicable)
- Community Support or Commitment Documentation
- Evaluation Report (re-compete only)
- Evaluation Plan (re-compete only)
- Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate Documentation (if applicable)
- Financial Management Capability Documentation
Continuation applicants are only required to submit an updated executive summary and the continuation narrative, as outlined. The continuation narrative should include all of the following, as applicable:

- Identify whether this is Year 2 or Year 3 of a three-year grant cycle in the heading.
- Did the program enroll 100% of the Member slots awarded in the last full year of program operation? If no, provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement.
- Did the program retain 100% of the Member slots enrolled in the last full year of program operation? If no, provide an explanation and describe the plan for improvement.
- Was the program 100% compliant with 30-day enrollment and exit requirements? If no, provide an explanation and the plan to ensure future compliance.
• Is the applicant proposing a change in operating sites or service locations? This includes expansion to new sites. If yes, describe these changes and provide a justification for the change. The justification should include the need that will be met at any new sites, the activities of the Members, and organizational capacity to support new sites.

• Is the applicant proposing a change in program scope or design? If yes, describe the change and provide a justification.

• Is the applicant requesting an expansion (increase in Members, increase in funding, and/or an increase in Cost/MSY)? If yes, describe the changes and provide a justification. Please note that requests for increases in funding are at the discretion of MCSC and are subject to the availability of funding.
Continuation Documents

- Coversheet
- Application Narrative
- Performance Measures Worksheet
- Budget Worksheet
- Logic Model
- Community Support and Commitment Documentation (if proposing new sites)
- Financial Management Capability Documentation (most recent A-133 audit / audited financial statements)
• **Note:** The “last full year of program operation” refers to the last complete year of program operation. It does not refer to the program year currently in progress at the time of application submission. Continuation applications that reference the incorrect program year will be deemed noncompliant and MCSC reserves the right to not review the application.

• **Note:** If any changes are proposed in the previous year performance measures (e.g. number of Member positions, target values of outputs/outcomes, etc.), continuation applicants must submit an updated logic model.

• **Note:** Continuation and re-compete applicants must submit the most recent internally audited financial statements (internal or external) and/or the A-133 audit report (if applicable).

• **Note:** Continuation must submit one single-sided original AND three (3) single-sided copies of the complete application.
Professional Corps

• If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application must demonstrate that the community in which it will place AmeriCorps Members serving as professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals.

• In the executive summary: Fixed Amount grant applicants (EAP, Full-time Fixed, and Professional Corps Fixed) should list their Other Revenue (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but must still raise significant additional resources to operate the program.

• **Note (Professional Corps):** MCSC and CNCS assumes that Professional Corps will cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non-CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their application. MCSC and CNCS will consider Professional Corps’ programs’ requests for operating funds of up to $1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant legal applicant financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources.
Professional Corps

• **Note:** The living allowance or salary provided to AmeriCorps Members in Professional Corps programs does not count toward the matching requirement.
  
  - Professional Corps Grantees must provide AmeriCorps Members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum but may exceed the maximum living allowance.
  - Professional Corps Member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the Members serve, and are not to be included in the budget.

• CNCS requires Professional Corps programs to cover the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non-CNCS. CNCS will only consider operating funds of up to $1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non-CNCS resources based on the materials reviewed by the Office of Grant Management.

• CNCS reserves the right to determine whether an applicant is a Professional Corps and whether the legal applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that they cannot effectively operate an AmeriCorps program without receiving CNCS operating funds. Given the high demand for AmeriCorps funding there may be specific circumstances where CNCS determines that either a legal applicant is not a Professional Corps program or is unlikely to demonstrate a need for operational funds due to other funding resources. Where CNCS’s due diligence review of a Professional Corps application shows that the applicant has a historically high level of support from non-CNCS sources, and as a result has levels of unrestricted funding that is in excess of the requested level of CNCS funding, CNCS may choose to not provide additional operational funding.
Fixed Grants

• Fixed Amount Grants: While applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance to Members that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements. Most Fixed Amount grant applications are not required to indicate that amount in the application and should request those positions as “without living allowance” in the budget.

• Fixed Amount grantees are required to provide quarterly progress reports and an internal or external evaluation report.

• If an applicant is applying for a Full-time Fixed Amount grant, the application must reflect that only full-time or less-than-full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. Consideration for a Full-time Fixed Amount grant is at the discretion of MCSC.

• **Note** Fixed Amount grant applicants (EAP, Full-time Fixed, and Professional Corps Fixed) should list their Other Revenue (see Mandatory Supplemental Guidance) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but must still raise significant additional resources to operate the program.

• **Note:** Fixed grants are by invitation only!
Helpful tips: Common mistakes

- Spelling and grammar
- Vague responses, not being clear and concise
- Not answering sections, period.
- Mathematical errors
- Not supplying all the required documentation
- Consistency throughout the whole grant application.
- NOT FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS!!!!!!
- **Note:** Have an outside party read your grant application
Grant Submitting Guidelines

• Applications are **due to MCSC by 3:00 PM (CST) on Friday, March 8, 2019.** Applications received after the deadline will not be considered for funding. A grant application received at 3:01pm is late and will not be considered for funding.

• **All Applicants:** All applicants must email the application narrative in Microsoft Word format to [don.stamper@ded.mo.gov](mailto:don.stamper@ded.mo.gov).

• **New and Re-compete Applicants** must submit one single-sided original of the complete application AND seven (7) single-sided copies of a partial application.

• **Continuation Applicants** must submit one single-sided original AND three (3) single-sided copies of the complete application.

• **Note:** MCSC will neither review nor return additional attachments submitted beyond the requirements set forth in this notice.

• **Note:** Do not use staples. Please use binder/paper clips to attach application materials.
Technical Assistance

- Technical assistance is available to applicants throughout the grant application period until **February 28, 2019 at 4:30 pm (CST)**. Applicants may direct questions to MCSC staff between the hours of 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM (CST), Monday - Friday.

- **MISSOURI COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMISSION STAFF**
  - Don Stamper, Executive Director
    - (573) 751-5012, don.stamper@ded.mo.gov
  - Christine Gardner, Marketing, Outreach, & Events Coordinator/Advisor to AC Programs
    - (573) 526-7559, christine.gardner@ded.mo.gov
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