AmeriCorps
State, National, and Tribal Programs
Evaluation Requirements
Learning Objectives

By the end of this tutorial, participants will be able to:

• Understand the broader federal policy context within which AmeriCorps operates

• Describe the AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Requirements
Tutorial Overview

This tutorial will cover:

1. Federal Regulations
2. Defining Evaluation
3. Evaluation Designs
4. Evaluation Requirements
5. Additional Resources
# Federal Policy Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Administration</th>
<th>Federal Laws, Policies and Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Clinton (1993 – 2001)</td>
<td>Government Performance and Results Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| President Obama (2009 – 2017) | Memoranda  
• Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act 2010  
• M-10 -01 Increased Emphasis on Program Evaluation  
• M-12-14 Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget  
• M-13-17 Next Steps in the Evidence and Innovation Agenda |
The Code of Federal Regulations, or CFR, is the collection of all administrative rules and regulations from the various departments and agencies of the Federal Government. It is organized by titles, chapters, and parts that cover specific regulatory areas.
Primary focus of this tutorial:

Evaluating Programs: Requirements and Procedures (§§.700 -.740)

CNCS finalized these regulations July 8, 2005
Definition of Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is the process of systematically and regularly collecting and monitoring data related to the direction of observed changes in communities, participants (members), or end beneficiaries receiving your program’s services. It is intended to provide an indication of your program’s operations and performance.

§2522.700
...evaluation uses scientifically-based research methods to assess the effectiveness of programs by comparing the observed program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program.

§2522.700
## Comparing Performance Measurement and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measurement</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is it?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system of tracking progress in accomplishing specific pre-set targets (activities, outputs, and/or outcomes)</td>
<td>A formal scientific process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data about how well a program was implemented (process evaluation) or how effectively the program accomplished desired outcomes/impacts (outcome/impact evaluation)</td>
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| **Why is it typically used?** |            |
| To gauge program delivery, quality, participant satisfaction and engagement; to improve products, services, and efficiency; to inform/enhance decision making, and support planning and program development | To assess program effectiveness and determine whether the program is responsible for changes found |

| **How does it work?** |            |
| Monitors a few vital signs related to program performance objectives, outputs, and/or outcomes | Comprehensively examines programs using systematic, objective, and unbiased procedures in accordance with social science research methods and research designs |

| **Who typically does it?** |            |
| Program staff | An experienced researcher (often external to the program) who has formal training in evaluation |

| **When is it done?** |            |
| Ongoing Basis | Periodically |
Building Evidence of Effectiveness

Evidence Informed

Identify a strong program design
- Gather evidence supporting the intervention
- Design/Adopt a strong program
- Develop a Logic Model
- Create Implementation Materials
- Pilot implementation

Ensure effective implementation
- Document program process(es)
- Ensure fidelity in implementation
- Evaluate program’s quality and efficiency
- Establish continuous process improvement protocols

Assess program’s outcomes
- Develop indicators for measuring outcomes
- Conduct pre-/post-intervention evaluation to measure outcomes
- Conduct process evaluation

Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes
- Examine linkage between program activities and outcomes
- Perform multiple pre- and post-evaluations (time series design)
- Conduct independent (unbiased) outcome evaluation(s)
- Conduct meta-analysis of various studies

Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes
- Establish causal linkage between program activities and intended outcomes/impact (e.g. Conduct quasi-experimental evaluation using a comparison group, evaluation with random assignment (RCT), regression analysis, or other appropriate study design)
- Conduct Multiple independent evaluations using strong study designs
- Measure cost effectiveness compared to other interventions addressing same need

Assess program’s outcomes

Evidence Based

Attain strong evidence of positive program outcomes
<table>
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<th>Evaluation Study Designs</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Ability to make statements about causal attribution</th>
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<td>Experimental Design Studies</td>
<td>Randomly Assigned Groups</td>
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### Evaluation Study Designs and Causal Impact

**Randomly Assigned Groups**

- Random assignment to treatment and control groups
- Controls for differences between the two groups so differences in outcomes can be attributed to whether or not individuals participated in the program
# Evaluation Study Designs and Causal Impact

## Quasi-Experimental Design Studies

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<td>• Uses two groups, but no random assignment, often due to practical considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Carefully match the two groups at beginning of evaluation to be confident they are basically the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subsequent observed differences between groups will be due to whether or not individuals participated in program services</td>
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Evaluation Study Designs and Causal Impact

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<tr>
<td>• Do not meet the requirements for experimental or quasi-experimental designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can also include process and implementation evaluations that make sure plans are followed</td>
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[Performance Measures - Outputs]

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[Performance Measures - Outcomes]

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## Evaluation Study Designs and CNCS Requirements

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<td>Large Grantees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental Design Studies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Quasi-Experimental Design Studies*</td>
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*Fulfills CNCS evaluation requirement for large grantees if a reasonable comparison group is identified and appropriate matching/propensity scoring is used in the analysis.*
Evaluation Requirements

• AmeriCorps State Competitive and National Direct Programs (including Education Award Programs)
  – Over $500, 000
  – Under $500,00

• State Commission Formula Programs
...you must arrange for an independent evaluation of your program, and you must submit the evaluation with any application to the Corporation for competitive funds...

§ 2522.710
Evaluation Requirements

National Direct and State Competitive (less than $500K) or Education Award Programs

...you must conduct an **internal** evaluation of your program, and you must submit the evaluation with any application to the Corporation for competitive funds...

§ 2522.710
Strengthening the Evidence Base

National Direct and State Competitive (less than $500K) or Education Award Programs

- Encourage use of experimental or quasi-experimental designs but not required

- Select a study design most appropriate for developmental phase of AmeriCorps program (process, implementation, outcome or impact)
Evaluation Requirements
State Commissions

...you must establish and enforce evaluation requirements for your State Formula subgrantees, as you deem appropriate.

§ 2522.710
Evaluation Requirements

• The Corporation may, in its discretion, supersede these requirements with an alternative evaluation approach, including one conducted by the Corporation at the national level.

• Grantees must cooperate fully with all Corporation evaluation activities.

§ 2522.710
# Evaluation Study Designs and CNCS Requirements

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# Evaluation Requirements

## What is Due When? § 2522.730

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<th>If you are competing for...</th>
<th>Submit evaluation plan</th>
<th>Submit evaluation report</th>
<th>If funded...</th>
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<td>Your first three-year competitive grant (and you have had less than three years formula funding)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Begin the evaluation planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your first three-year competitive grant (and you have had three or more years of formula funding)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your second three-year competitive grant</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your third three-year competitive grant</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A competitive AmeriCorps grant beyond your third three-year grant</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.</td>
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Supporting Grantees

• **Grantees that have not completed the evaluation requirements in the proper timeframe** are strongly encouraged to provide any evaluation findings available and provide an evaluation plan for the next grant period that would fulfill the requirements.

• **Evaluations that show null or negative findings** will not automatically lead to an unacceptable assessment of your program. CNCS expects such findings to be used for program improvements.
Resources Available

• Evaluation FAQs: nationalserviceresources.gov/evaluation-americorps

• Electronic CFR: www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr
  – Select Agency List from left navigation bar
  – Scroll down to CNCS, select 45 CFR Chapters XII, XXV
  – Scroll down to XXV, select 2500-2599
  – Select 2522
  – Select Subpart E – Evaluation Requirements

• CNCS Program Officer
Resources Available

• Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) – whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/index-gpra

• Program Assessment Rating Tool – georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/omb/expectmore/part.html

• Memoranda
  – Increased Emphasis on Program Evaluation whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-01.pdf