AmeriCorps*Texas 2019-2020 Program Design

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AmeriCorps Program Grants

- Grants provide funding to high-quality programs that are developed by an applicant who designs a set of activities that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence- informed approach to creating community impact and solving local issues by engaging individuals in service as AmeriCorps members.

One of the things that makes the AmeriCorps program unique is that those who engage in service have the ability to be **impacted** as much as the beneficiaries they serve.

These individuals commit to serve with your organization to **Get Things Done**!

You have the opportunity to launch your members into a **lifetime of service**.

It is your **responsibility** to ensure that members have a meaningful service experience with your program.

Basic Guiding Questions

Being able to clearly and concisely respond to the AmeriCorps Notice criteria is critical to having a successful application. However, there are some basic questions that you and those at your organization who will be involved in the program must be able to think through and clearly answer before you can respond to the criteria.

- What issue is your program attempting to address?
- Why is it an issue for your community?
- What will your AmeriCorps members be doing?
- Why do you think that the members' activities will make an impact on the issue?
- Who at your organization will be responsible for recruiting, interviewing, selecting, collecting paperwork from, and supervising your AmeriCorps members?

Application Criteria

- Program Design
  - Theory of Change and Logic Model (*28 points*)
  - Evidence Base (*16 points*)
  - Member Experience (*6 points*)
- Organizational Capability
  - Organizational Background and Staffing (*9 points*)
  - Compliance and Accountability (*8 points*)
  - Culture that Values Learning (*6 points*)
  - Member Supervision (*2 points*)

Theory of Change

- A Theory of Change is a theory (or hypothesis) for how an intervention can address or solve an identified problem. A theory of change articulates a problem, a proposed intervention, and the change (outcomes) that is expected to result from delivering the intervention. Underlying the theory is a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, about why the intervention is likely to lead to the outcome(s).

- Respond to:
  - How the proposed intervention is responsive to the identified community problem.
  - The applicant’s proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) leveraged volunteers.
  - The applicant’s intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant’s theory of change.

Theory of Change

- Respond to:
  - The expected outcomes articulated in the application narrative and Logic Model represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem identified by the applicant.
  - The rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver the intervention(s) is reasonable.
  - The service role of AmeriCorps members will produce significant contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.

Logic Model

- A summary of the community problem.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
  - Locations or sites in which members will provide services
  - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core activities the define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
  - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention)
  - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., number of hours per session or sessions per week)
  - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)

Logic Model

- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e., number of beneficiaries served, types and number of activities conducted).
  - Outputs: Counts
    - Number of people served.
    - Number of products created.
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.
  - Outcomes: Change
    - Attitude/Belief (*Increased interest in school*)
    - Knowledge/Skill (*Improved reading scores/grades*)
    - Behavior (*Increased school attendance*)
    - Condition (*Successful completion of high school*)
- If applicable, identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators

Logic Model

- The logic model is a visual representation of the applicant's theory of change. Applicants may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the Logic Model. Applicants are not required to measure all components of their theory of change. The applicant's performance measures should be consistent with the program's theory of change and should represent significant program activities.
- In the application narrative, applicants should discuss their rationale for setting output and outcome targets for their performance measures.
- Rationales and justifications should be informed by the organization's performance data (e.g., program data observed over time suggests targets are reasonable), relevant research (e.g., targets documented by organizations running similar programs with similar populations), or prior program evaluation findings.

Logic Model

- The logic model can not exceed 3 pages as the pages print from eGrants.

Logic Model

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	Resources that are necessary to deliver the program activities (interventions), including the number of locations/sites and number/type of AmeriCorps members.	The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including duration, dosage and target population.	Direct products from program activities.	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions. These outcomes, if applicable to the program design, will almost always be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in behavior or action. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year.	Changes in condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.

add a new row

Theory of Change and Logic Model | Think About

- Why AmeriCorps?
- Why are the member types you have requested the best types to meet this need?
- What will your members do on a daily, weekly basis to address the need?
- What will their term of service look like?
- What are the minimum knowledge and skill requirements that you are looking for in a member?
- What characteristics are you looking for in a member?
- How will you ensure that you have a diverse corps of members?
- What do you need to do to ensure an inclusive service environment?

Theory of Change

Service Term	MSY Value	Service Hours
Full-Time	1.00	1,700
Three-Quarter Time	.700	1,200
Half-Time	.500	900
Reduced Half-Time	.38095	675
Quarter-Time	.26455	450
Minimum-Time	.21164	300

- To meet the minimum MSY requirement, you may use any combination of member types.
- New programs must request a minimum of 10 MSYs, by year 3 you must have a plan in place to support 20 MSYs per year.

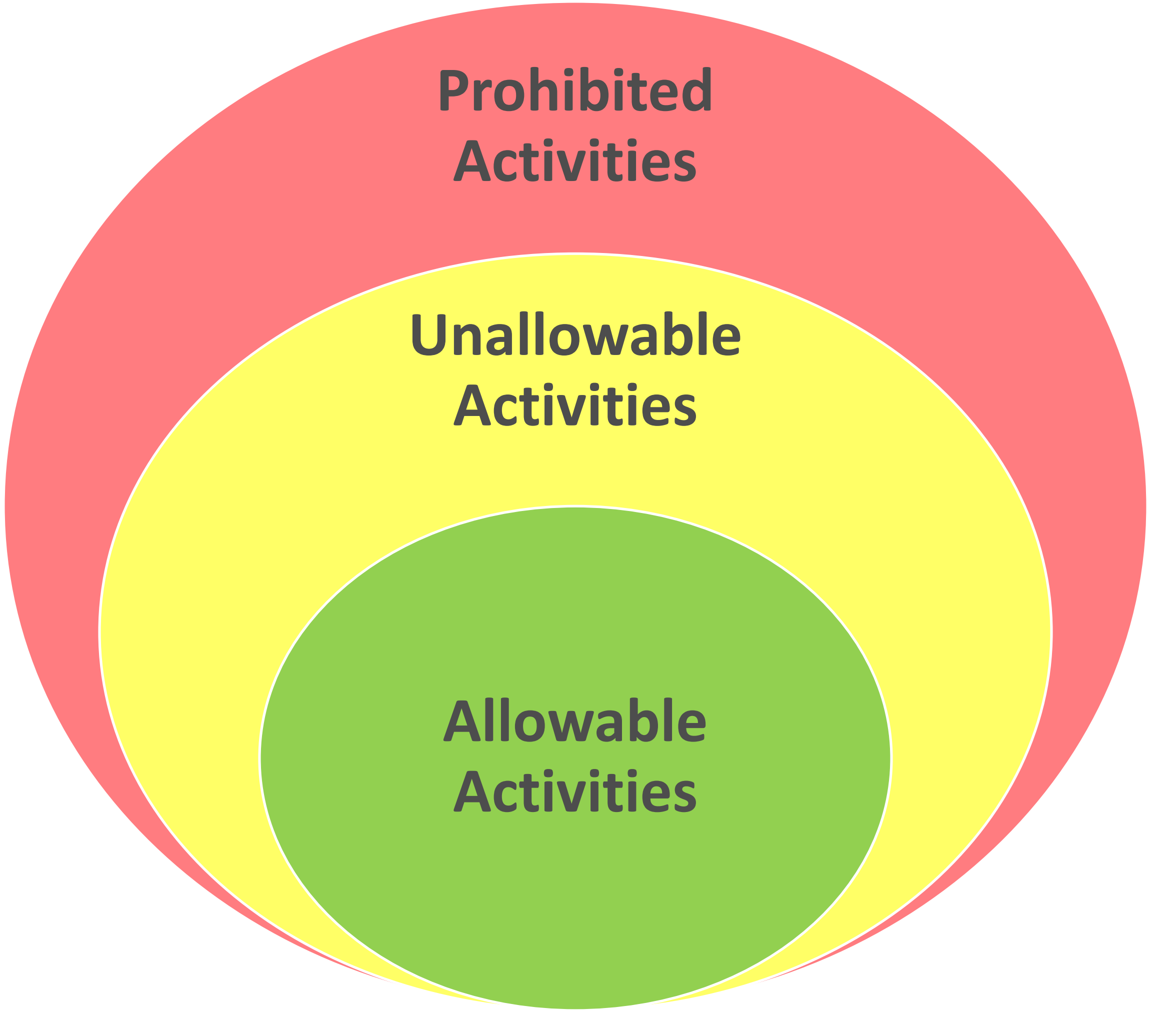
Theory of Change

- **Member Length of Service/Duration**
  - The program must define the period that the member must commit to the program to **successfully complete** the program requirements.
  - For example, if successful completion of a program requires a 11 month length of service, members in that particular program **are not eligible for an education award simply upon completion of their hours** after 10 months.
  - The length of service **must allow for sufficient opportunity** for the member to meet the service hour requirement.
  - In planning for the member's term of service, the program must account for holidays and other time off, and must provide each member with **sufficient opportunity to make up missed hours**.
  - The program requirements must meet the minimum set by the Corporation.

Project Period		
Budget Period 1	Budget Period 2	Budget Period 3
Member Term of Service	Member Term of Service	Member Term of Service

- Member Length of Service/Duration
  - The term of service duration must fall within the 12 month program budget period. The project period is comprised of up to 3 budget periods.
  - The earliest that a Budget Period can start for a new program is September 1, 2019.

Member Activities



Prohibited Activities

- Attempting to influence legislation.
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing service agreements for services or collective bargaining agreements.
- Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.

Prohibited Activities

- Providing a direct benefit to:
  1) A business organized for profit;
  2) A labor union;
  3) A partisan political organization; or
  4) A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (*except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative*)
  5) An organization engaged in the religious activities described above, unless Grant funds are not used to support the religious activities.
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using Grant funds to conduct a voter registration drive
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services

Prohibited Activities

- Nonduplication
  - AmeriCorps members can not duplicate an activity that is already available in the locality of the program.
- Nondisplacement
  - AmeriCorps members can not displace an employee or volunteer.
  - AmeriCorps members can not perform any service or duty or engage in any activity that would otherwise be performed by an employee as part of their assigned duties.

Questions?

Evidence Base

The assessment of an applicant's evidence base has two steps.

1. The applicant will be assigned to an evidence tier.
2. The quality of the applicant's evidence and the applicant's overall capacity to collect and use data (including performance measurement and evaluation data) will be assessed and scored

Evidence Base | Evidence Tier

- An evidence tier will be assessed for each applicant for the purpose of applying the strategic characteristics (moderate/strong evidence) and understanding the relative strength of each applicant’s evidence base and the likelihood that the proposed intervention will lead to outcomes identified in the logic model.
- Applicants who have evaluation reports of the same intervention described in the application may submit up to 2 of those reports to qualify for the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tier.

Evidence Base | Evidence Tier

- In order to qualify for consideration, the intervention evaluated in the submitted report(s) must match the intervention proposed by the applicant in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:
  - Characteristics of the beneficiary population
  - Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
  - Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
  - The context in which the intervention is delivered
  - Outcomes of the intervention

Evidence Base | Evidence Tier

- In the application narrative, applicants must
  - Summarize the study design and key findings of any evaluation report(s) submitted
  - Describe any other evidence that supports their program, including past performance measure data and/or other research studies that inform their program design.
  - Applicants who submit evaluation reports for consideration must also describe in the Evidence Base section of the application narrative how the intervention described in the submitted reports is the same as the intervention described in the application.
  - Applicants should provide citations for the studies they describe, if applicable; however, reviewers will not review any documents external to the application other than the reports submitted in accordance with the Notice instructions.

- **Pre-preliminary evidence** means the applicant has not submitted an outcome or impact evaluation of the same intervention described in the application, although the applicant may have collected some performance data on the intervention (e.g., data on intervention outputs and/or outcomes). Applicants in this tier must describe in the Evidence Base section of the application how their program design is evidence-informed (see definition above). Applicants may also cite prior performance measure data if applicable.

Evidence Base | Evidence Tier

- **Preliminary evidence** means the applicant has submitted up to two outcome evaluation reports that evaluated the same intervention described in the application and yielded positive results on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. The outcome evaluations may either have been conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant. The study design must include pre and post-assessments without a comparison group or a post assessment comparison between intervention and comparison groups. In some cases a retrospective pre-post assessment may be considered, but its use must be justified in the text of the evaluation report.

- **Moderate evidence** means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented evaluation reports that evaluated the same intervention described in the application and identified evidence of effectiveness on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant’s logic model. Evidence of effectiveness (or positive findings) is determined using experimental design evaluations (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)) or Quasi-Experimental Design evaluations (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site.) The evaluations were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

- **Strong evidence** means the applicant has submitted up to two evaluation reports demonstrating that the same intervention described in the application has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state-level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented experimental design evaluation (i.e., Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)) or a Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation (QED) with statistically matched comparison (i.e., counterfactual) and treatment groups. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs of the same intervention described in the application in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of evaluation findings must be consistently positive on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. Findings from the RCT or QED evaluations may be generalized beyond the study context. The evaluations were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

- For applicants who are assessed as being in the Preliminary, Moderate, or Strong evidence tiers, reviewers will score the submitted evaluation reports using the following standards:
  - The submitted reports are of satisfactory methodological quality and rigor for the type of evaluation conducted (e.g., adequate sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, appropriate use of control or comparison groups, etc.);
  - The submitted reports describe evaluations that were conducted relatively recently, preferably within the last six years.
  - The submitted reports show a meaningful and significant positive effect on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest.

- For applicants who are assessed as being in the Pre-Preliminary evidence tier, reviewers will score the narrative provided in the Evidence Base section of the application using the following standards:
  - The applicant uses relevant evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to inform their proposed program design;
  - The described evidence is relatively recent, preferably from the last six years;
  - The evidence described by the applicant indicates a meaningful positive effect on program beneficiaries in at lease one key outcome of interest.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

- First time applicants are required to submit information about their data collection plan that must include 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.

Questions?

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.
- The program 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, talents, and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and effective service delivery.

Member Supervision

- AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations.

Member Supervision | Think About

- Who will supervise your members?
- How will your supervisors be selected?
- When will your supervisors be trained?
- Who is responsible for training the supervisors?
- How will you provide ongoing support, training and oversight to the supervisors?

Questions?

- eGrants will not allow any kind of formatting (bold, italics, bullet points, charts, graphs, pictures, etc.). Therefore, the best way to distinguish the narrative sections is to use CAPITALIZED HEADINGS.
- Respond to each of the criteria in the order in which it is asked, this is the order that reviewers will be looking for the information.
- Do not provide information that is not specifically requested. You have very limited space so you must be succinct.
- Print out your application before you submit. Do NOT exceed 10 pages as the pages print from eGrants. 10 pages in Word does not equal 10 pages in eGrants.

Resources

- Google Scholar
  - https://scholar.google.com/
- Learning Pathways for Program Start-Up
  - http://s3.amazonaws.com/resource_center_video/taag/program-start-up/index.html
- How to Develop a Program Logic Model
  - https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/HowtoDevelopaLogicModel508.pdf
- The Evidence Continuum
  - https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/evidence-continuum
- Mandatory Supplemental Guidance
  - https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019%20MSG_Clean_FINAL_508ed.pdf

Resources

The AmeriCorps program is a Federally funded program. As such, the following requirements apply to the program activities and funds expended as part of the program.

- National and Community Service Act of 1990 (amended by Serve America Act)
  - 42 USC 12501 et seq., and 45 CFR 2510 et seq.
- AmeriCorps Regulations
  - 45 CFR 2520-2550
- Uniform Grants Guidance
  - https://www.ecfr.gov
- AmeriCorps Terms and Conditions
  - 2018 General Terms and Conditions
  - 2018 Specific Terms and Conditions
  - 2018 OneStar Terms and Conditions

Informational Sessions

- AmeriCorps Budget Informational Session
  - Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at 10:00am CST
- Creating the Application Informational Session
  - Tuesday, February 19, 2019 at 10:00am CST
- AmeriCorps Open Forum Session
  - Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 10:00am CST

Questions?

For Assistance After this Webinar

- For questions about this opportunity, contact:
  - Elisa Gleeson
  - Senior Grants Management Specialist
  - OneStar Foundation
  - Email: elisa@onestarfoundation.org
  - Phone consultation available by appointment only. Email Elisa to schedule.