Appendix A: 2017-2018 AmeriCorps*State Application Peer Review Form

Legal Applicant/Program Name:		Reviewer Number:	

Executive Summary (Required – 0 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N
Please review the required CNCS template for Executive Summaries in the *Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications*. Did the applicant follow the CNCS template for the Executive Summary?	YES ☐ NO ☐

Need (6 points)

Please briefly describe the need(s) identified in this proposal.

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The community problem/need is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and has been well documented with relevant data.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 6 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Intervention (10 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The proposed intervention is clearly described.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The proposed intervention aligns with the identified community need.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 10 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Theory of Change and Logic Model (38 points)

Theory of Change (Narrative)	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant's proposed intervention is clearly articulated including the design, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The applicant's intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change. [The theory of change should be either evidence-informed or evidence-based, meaning that the proposed intervention is guided by the best available research evidence that supports its effectiveness in the evidence section.]	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The proposed outcomes represent meaningful progress in addressing the community problem/need identified by the applicant, and the applicant has provided rationale for selecting output and outcome targets.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The applicant's AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem/need.	YES ☐ NO ☐	

The Logic Model depicts . . .	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
A summary of the community problem/need outlined in the narrative	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including, but not limited to: • # of locations or sites where members will provide services • # of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including: • duration of intervention (e.g., total # of weeks, sessions) • dosage of intervention (e.g., number of hours per sessions) • target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level)	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served) and, if applicable, included National Performance Measures to be used as outcome indicators	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill (short-term), attitude/behavior (medium-term), or condition (long-term) as a result of the intervention, and, if applicable, identified National Performance Measures to be used.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 38 maximum points, my score for these sections is:		

Evidence-Base (15 points)

The goal of this section is to determine the relevance and strength of the evidence provided as it relates to the proposed intervention. Please use the *Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications* & *Evidence Base Checklist* to answer the questions below.

Criteria	Evidence Base	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
From a scale of no evidence to strong evidence, applicant has provided enough evidence to support the proposed intervention on what level? Please provide rationale for selecting this evidence level in the comments.		
The applicant provided a description of evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the target population and community problem.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The applicant has provided and described data that they have collected relevant to their intervention, including performance measurement data and/or program evaluation.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The description of the evidence base includes: • Date research or evaluation was completed & time period for which the intervention was examined • Description of the target population studied • Methodology used in the study (e.g., outcome study, random assignment, propensity score matching, etc.) • Description of data, data source, data collection methods • Outcomes or Impacts examined and study findings • Strength of the findings (e.g., effect size, confidence level, statistical power of study design, statistical significance)	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Based on the evidence level you selected above, please score this section from 0 to 15. 0-3 – No evidence 4-7 – Pre-preliminary evidence 8-11 – Preliminary evidence 12-14 – Moderate evidence 15 – Strong evidence		

Notice Priority (5 points)

Please use the *Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications* to answer the questions below.

Please identify which (if any) of the CNCS Priority Funding Areas the applicant is addressing.

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant's proposed program fits within one or more of the 2017 AmeriCorps funding priorities described in the *Supplemental Information*.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed in the *Supplemental Information*.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 5 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Member Training (8 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
AmeriCorps members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
AmeriCorps members <u>and</u> volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to AmeriCorps requirements including the rules regarding prohibited activities.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 8 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Member Supervision (4 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 4 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Member Experience (10 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
AmeriCorps members will have access to opportunities for reflection and connection to the National Service network.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 10 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (4 points)

Criteria	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
Members will know they are AmeriCorps members.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.	YES ☐ NO ☐	
Out of 4 maximum points, my score for this section is:		

Additional Comments and Overall Appraisal of Proposal – Please add any additional comments that were not captured above and evaluate the quality of the proposal in its entirety. Aside from your comments in the individual sections, consider how well the whole proposal flows. Do all of the sections support each other? Provide your assessment of the proposal as a whole by highlighting the principal strengths and/or weaknesses.

Summary of Points Awarded – Transfer the points given to each section above to this grid.

Narrative Item	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Reasons for deduction of points / suggestions for improvements (optional)
Need	6		
Intervention	10		
Theory of Change and Logic Model	38		
Evidence Base	15		
Notice Priority	5		
Member Training	8		
Member Supervision	4		
Member Experience	10		
Commitment to AC Identification	4		
Total Score	**100**		***Please ensure that your points awarded add up correctly.***

Use the standards below to select the category you feel best describes the proposal. Reconsider your overall rating, and ensure it is supported by your analysis and comments in the preceding sections. Please select only one.

☐	**Exceptional Proposal – Recommend for Funding**	A comprehensive and thorough program design of exceptional merit with very significant strengths and no significant weaknesses. Total score should be between 91-100 points.
☐	**Satisfactory Proposal – Recommended for Funding**	Program design demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support where the value of the strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses. Total score should be between 80-90 points.
☐	**Weak/Non-responsive Proposal – Do Not Recommend for Funding**	A program design with very significant weaknesses and minimal significant strengths that have been identified. This option may also include a program design that is non-responsive to the published criteria. Proposal total score should be below 80 points.

Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications for State Peer Reviewers

Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)

Applicants must fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary and may not deviate from this template.

> The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [service activities the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing].
>
> This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)]. The CNCS investment of $[amount of request] will be matched with $[amount of projected match], $[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and $[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

**If the program is not operating in a CNCS focus area, applicant will omit this sentence. Fixed amount grant applicants will list Other Revenue rather than match amount(s).*

Evidence Base (15 points)

Use these guidelines along with the **Evidence Base Checklist** tool to determine the evidence tier the applicant has described. Applicants will be awarded up to 15 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the logic model. Applicants must:

1. State the evidence tier in which they think they qualify;
2. Clearly indicate and describe the evidence that supports the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible; and
3. Describe the complete body of evidence that supports their program intervention, including evidence from lower tiers.

All applicants must include as much detailed information as possible in the Evidence section of the application. **Applicants that have collected relevant performance measurement data must describe this data. Applicants that have conducted evaluations of their own program or that are replicating other evidence-based programs must describe these evaluations** as outlined in the evidence tier descriptions. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from up to two of the strongest and most relevant studies while also summarizing the remaining body of evidence that exists for the program. Studies must be evaluations of specific programs or interventions. Research that does not focus on a specific program or intervention, but rather focuses on a broader issue area or population, will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

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
2. A description that shows the study's relevance to the proposed intervention
3. A description of the target population studied (e.g., the demographics)
4. The methodology used in the study (e.g., outcome study, random assignment, regression discontinuity design, or propensity score matching)
5. A description of the data, data source, and data collection methods
6. The outcomes or impacts examined and the study findings
7. The strength of the findings (e.g., effect size, confidence level, statistical power of the study design and statistical significance of the findings).

Applicants must provide this information in the narrative even if they submit the study or evaluation. State level peer reviewers will not be given studies or evaluations, and CNCS external evaluators will not review studies or evaluations from programs that do not have a Moderate or Strong evidence base. If applicants do not fully describe their evidence base, they may be assessed at a lower evidence tier and lose points in this section. Applicants should provide citations for the

studies they describe, if applicable; however, peer reviewers will not review any links or cited documents referenced in the application.

Reviewers will examine the descriptions using the following criteria:

a. How closely the intervention evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant;
b. The methodological quality and rigor of the studies presented (e.g., sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, use of control or equivalent comparison groups, baseline equivalence and study attrition, etc.);
c. Strength and consistency of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a meaningful and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels;
d. The date of the study, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years.

Reviewers will examine the descriptions (and attached studies if requesting consideration for moderate or strong evidence base) using the following criteria:

a. How closely the intervention evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant;
b. The methodological quality and rigor of the studies presented (e.g., sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, use of control or equivalent comparison groups, baseline equivalence and study attrition, etc.);
c. Strength and consistency of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a meaningful and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels;
d. The date of the study, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years.

NO EVIDENCE (0-1 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

In order to receive points in this evidence tier, the applicant must describe how their program design is evidence-informed. An evidence-informed program uses the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but does not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the program itself. Applicants may describe up to two research or evaluation studies that inform their program design but they may not submit these studies as additional documents.

PRE-PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE (2-3 points) means the applicant has demonstrated data collection experience testing or tracking at least one aspect of its logic model. For example, the applicant has collected systemic and accurate data on one or more of the following: the community need the proposed intervention will address, the program intervention's activities and services delivered, participation in the intervention by the target population, and/or participant outcomes (for example, performance measurement data or a process evaluation assessing implementation of the intervention).

In order to qualify for this tier, the applicant must have collected data about their own program. The data collection process and results must be described fully, and the applicant should explain the link between data collection and the relevant component(s) of its logic model. Applicants should describe evidence for the pre-preliminary tier in the Evidence section of the application but they may not submit additional research study documents unless required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements.

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE (4-5 points) means the applicant has provided data from at least one outcome study of their own intervention that yielded promising results for the proposed intervention or that the applicant proposes to replicate a similar with fidelity to the evaluated program model. The ways to demonstrate preliminary level of evidence are as follows:

<u>Preliminary with Outcome Study</u>

The applicant must describe at least one outcome study that was conducted of their own intervention. This must include a detailed description of the outcome study data from pre and post-tests without a comparison group or post-test comparison between intervention and comparison groups. In some cases a retrospective pre-post test may be considered, but its use must be justified. This description should explain whether the outcome study was conducted internally by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant. Applicants must describe the studies fully but should not submit them unless required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements. Outcome evaluations submitted by applicants who were not required to meet CNCS evaluation requirements will not be considered when assessing evidence tier.

An outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement. In addition to describing up to two outcome studies of their own program or intervention, applicants must describe the performance measurement data they have collected and how the outcome study data goes beyond performance measurement.

Preliminary with Replication

The applicant must describe and submit at least one randomized controlled trial study or quasi-experimental evaluation (e.g., propensity score matching) that found positive results for the same intervention that the applicant plans to replicate. The applicant must describe how the intervention studied and the applicant's proposed approach are the same and how the applicant will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model. The study must have been conducted by an entity external to the organization whose program was studied. An applicant may be eligible for more points if they also submit evidence from a process evaluation demonstrating that they have implemented the replication with fidelity. The process evaluation should be described but not submitted.

Applicants who do not submit the required study or who do not describe fully how they are replicating the evidence-based program with fidelity will be considered for a lower tier. For the purposes of this RFP, "replicate" means that the key elements of the applicant's intervention are implemented as the evidence-based program model describes (e.g., in terms of content or curriculum, delivery process, and target population), and the applicant's adaptations are relatively minor. For example, an applicant implementing an intervention using certified teachers to administer the curriculum would not be considered replicating that program with fidelity if it replaces teachers with AmeriCorps members who are not certified teachers, because the documented success of the intervention relied on the specialization of certified teachers.

Applicants proposing to replicate an evidence-based program with fidelity must describe how their program is the same as, or very similar to, the program they will replicate in the following areas:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
- Training for the AmeriCorps members and/or other individuals (such as volunteers) delivering the intervention
- The context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Applicants must also describe how they will assess whether they are implementing the intervention with fidelity to the intervention they are replicating.

In cases where the applicant is part of a multi-site program (e.g., a national direct program operating in multiple states) that has conducted an evaluation that qualifies them for the moderate or strong evidence tier, but the evaluation did not include the applicant's proposed sites, the applicant must describe how they are replicating the evidence-based program with fidelity at all of the sites included in the application. In this case, an application for sites included in the evaluation would receive moderate or strong evidence, and an application for the sites not included in the evaluation would receive preliminary evidence.

MODERATE EVIDENCE (6-7 points) means the applicant has submitted up to two well-designed and well-implemented studies of their own program 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 (e.g., 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 studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

STRONG EVIDENCE (8 points) means the applicant has demonstrated that the 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 Randomized Control Trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design (QED) of their own program. Alternatively, the proposed intervention's evidence may be based on multiple (up to two) well-designed and well-implemented QEDs or RCTs of their

own program in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area. The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive on the key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant's logic model. Findings from the RCT or QED studies may be generalized beyond the study context. The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the organization implementing the intervention.

Notice Priority (5 points)

In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, CNCS has the following six (6) focus areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families.

Additionally, CNCS has Funding Priorities for the 2017 AmeriCorps Competition:

- **Disaster Services** – improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- **Economic Opportunity** – increasing economic opportunities for communities by engaging opportunity youth, either as the population served and/or as AmeriCorps members
- **Education** – improving student academic performance in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)
- **Environment** – 21st Century Service Corps (CSC), an effort to put young Americans and veterans to work protecting, restoring, and enhancing America's great outdoors. Applicants must demonstrate that they are a 21st CSC member.
- **Healthy Futures** – Reducing and/or Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse
- **Veterans and Military Families** – positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- **Governor and Mayor Initiatives** – Applicants must describe how their program involves the Governor, at least one Mayor, and at least two nonprofit organizations to meet a pressing challenge facing the state.
- **Multi-focused intermediaries** – demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure (rural and other underserved communities). The applicant must describe:
    - How the partnership/consortium will be organized and AmeriCorps resources will be allocated between the partnering entities (intermediary and consortium members).
    - The proposed theory(ies) of change and program model(s).
    - How the intermediary will utilize an identified consortium of nonprofits/eligible applicants that are well positioned to achieve outcomes identified in the theory of change.
- **Safer Communities**
- **Encore Programs –** programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older as AmeriCorps members.
- **Safer Communities –** activities that focus on public safety and preventing and mitigating civil unrest, and/or partnerships between police and community.
- **My Brother's Keeper –** addresses persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and to ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. Through this initiative, the Administration is joining with cities and towns, businesses, and foundations that are taking important steps to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way into the middle class. In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that their program addresses one or more of the five milestones:
    1. Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn
    2. Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade
    3. Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career
    4. Successfully Entering the Workforce
    5. Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances