

## Appendix A: 2015-2016 AmeriCorps\*State Application Peer Review Form

<b>Legal Applicant:</b>		<b>Reviewer Number:</b>	
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**Executive Summary (Required – 0 points)**

Question	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
Please review the required CNCS template for Executive Summaries in Attachment A. Did the applicant follow the CNCS template for the Executive Summary?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Problem/Need (18 points)**

Please briefly describe the problem(s) and/or need(s) identified in this proposal.

Question	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by the program.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in the communities where members will serve and the need has been well documented with relevant data.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 18 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Theory of Change and Logic Model (34 points)**

Please briefly describe the intervention and theory of change proposed.

Theory of Change (Narrative)	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
All elements of the logic model are logically aligned.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The Logic Model depicts . . .	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including number of locations or sites in which members will provide services and number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver including the duration of intervention (e.g. total number of weeks, sessions), the dosage of intervention (e.g. number of hours per sessions), the target population for the intervention (e.g. disconnected youth)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
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 <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill (short-term), attitude/behavior (medium-term), or condition (long-term) as a result of the intervention.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 34 maximum points, my score for these sections is:</b>		

**Evidence-Base (16 points)** Please use Attachment A: Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications to answer to answer the questions below.

Question	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.		
If you chose “moderate” or “strong” evidence base – did the applicant provide citations for required studies, evaluations, briefs, and/or peer-reviewed articles?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Based on the evidence level you selected above, please score this section from 0 to 16. 0 – No evidence                      12 – Moderate evidence 4 – Pre-preliminary evidence      16 – Strong evidence 8 – Preliminary evidence		

**Notice Priority (6 points)** Please use Attachment A: 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.

Question	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes how its proposed program is within one or more of the 2015 AmeriCorps funding priorities.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 6 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Member Training (8 points)**

Please briefly describe the training that the program will provide to AmeriCorps Members.

Question (Member Training)	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how members <u>and</u> volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 8 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Member Supervision (6 points)**

Please briefly describe the supervision that the program will provide to AmeriCorps Members.

Question	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will provide members with excellent guidance and support throughout their service.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 6 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Member Experience (6 points)**

Please briefly describe the program's plan to ensure a meaningful AmeriCorps member experience.

Question (Member Experience)	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 <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have opportunities to establish connections with each other and the broader National Service network to build esprit de corps.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 6 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (6 points)**

Question	Satisfactory Answer: Y/N	Comments including both strengths and weaknesses
The applicant clearly describes how members will know they are AmeriCorps members.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how the staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Out of 6 maximum points, my score for this section is:</b>		

**Additional Comments (optional)**

Please add any additional comments that were not captured above.

### Overall Appraisal of Proposal

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.

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**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)
Problem / Need	18		
Theory of Change and Logic Model	34		
Evidence Base	16		
Notice Priority	6		
Member Training	8		
Member Supervision	6		
Member Experience	6		
Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification	6		
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>100</b>		<i>Please ensure that your points awarded add up correctly.</i>

Using the standards below to evaluate the quality of the proposal as a whole and 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.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Exceptional Proposal – Recommend for Funding</b>	A comprehensive and thorough program design of exceptional merit with very significant strengths and no significant weaknesses. Proposal total score should be between 91-100 points.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Satisfactory Proposal – Recommended for Funding</b>	A program design that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support where the value of the significant strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses. Proposal total score should be between 80-90 points.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Weak/Non-responsive Proposal – Do Not Recommend for Funding</b>	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.

## Attachment A – Supplemental Information for Scoring AmeriCorps Applications for State Peer Reviewers

### **Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)**

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary. Do not deviate from this template.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [what 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.*

### **Evidence Base (16 points)**

Applicants will be awarded up to 16 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. Applicants shall provide a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge, and should describe how this evidence places them in one of the five evidence levels listed below. Applicants must fully describe how they meet the requirement of that level, using results from studies and evaluations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the evidence that supports the strongest evidence tier, and all relevant evidence presented must be included in this section.

This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong **must send up to two** studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section with the other required additional documents by the deadline.

For each report cited, 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 that are required to submit an evaluation report: The evaluation report will be considered as part of the evidence base of the program. Grantees may opt to include that evaluation report as one of the two studies, or submit two separate studies in addition to the evaluation report. In the latter case, all three studies will be reviewed against this criterion.

#### **The five tiered evidence levels are:**

**No evidence** (0 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

**Pre-preliminary evidence** (4 points) means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking. An example could be gathering feedback from program participants following their receipt of the intervention.

**Preliminary evidence** (8 points) means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program's contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence base consists of at least one non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program beneficiaries over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track program beneficiaries through a service pipeline and measure beneficiaries' responses at the end of the program; and 2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether beneficiaries have improved on an intended outcome.

**Moderate evidence** (12 points) means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence. The evidence base consists of one or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR two or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR one or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention. Examples of research that meet the standards include: well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e. a similar population that does not receive the intervention).

**Strong evidence** (16 points) means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence. This consists of one or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes.

The description of evidence in this section should include as much detailed information as possible. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from their strongest studies rather than only cursory descriptions of many studies. Reviewers will examine criteria that may include: a) how closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant; b) the methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.); c) the recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years; and d) strength of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a large and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels.

### **Notice Priority (6 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 2015 AmeriCorps Competition:**

- Disaster Services – improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity – increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically opportunity youth, both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members
  - Opportunity Youth are defined as economically disadvantaged individuals age 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months prior to service.
- Education – improving student academic performance including STEM
- Environment – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Service Corps – In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that they are a 21<sup>st</sup> CSC member organization.
- Veterans and Military Families – positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives
  - Applicant must apply with the Governor and one Mayor and a minimum of two nonprofit organizations to address a pressing challenge the Governor wishes to solve.
- Multi-focused intermediaries that demonstrate measurable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational structure—i.e. rural and other underserved communities.
  - Applicant must demonstrate that they will be serving in severely under-resourced communities, and how the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs. Applicant must demonstrate that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortia.
    - Describe how partnership will be organized and AmeriCorps resources will be allocated between the partnering entities.
    - Describe the proposed theory(ies) of change and program model(s).
    - Describe how they will utilize an identified consortium of nonprofits that are well positioned to achieve outcomes identified in the theory(ies) of change.

In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.