

Michigan's AmeriCorps

Technical Assistance:
Writing a Strong
AmeriCorps Application



Michigan Community
Service Commission

OVERVIEW & INTENDED AUDIENCE

This webinar is intended for new Michigan's AmeriCorps applicants to support the writing and submission of their Preliminary Application.

For more information about AmeriCorps prior to writing an application, please see our "Hosting an AmeriCorps Program" webinar.



GRANTMAKING TIMELINE

- Intent to Apply, Financial Management Survey & a copy of the applicants' most recent independent audit due
- Preliminary applications due
- Peer review
- Applicants notified if they can proceed
- Full applications due (if selected to submit comprehensive competitive application)
- Staff review, feedback provided, edits made
- Prime applications due to CNCS (via MCSC)
- Competitive funding notifications from CNCS
- Competitive grant awards made

*Applicants not funded through competitive process will be considered for formula funding.
Formula grant awards are made in July or August.*

PRELIMINARY APPLICATION COMPONENTS

The preliminary application is the first draft of your application. It is similar to the comprehensive application, but is a condensed version that allows you to present your program model for peer review.

If you are selected to submit a comprehensive application, you will receive further instructions on how and when to do so.

PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS INCLUDE:

- Cover page
- Narrative
 - Executive Summary
 - Program Design
 - Need
 - Theory of Change
 - Member Experience
 - Organizational Capability
 - Background and Staffing
 - Member Supervision
- Logic Model
- Budget

Your application should not exceed 7 pages of narrative. This does not include the cover page, logic model, or budget.

Double spaced, 1-inch margins, standard essay font size and type.



PRELIMINARY APPLICATION SCORING

Component	Points
Cover Page	0 points
Narrative	80 points
Executive Summary	0 points
Program Design	50 points
Need	15 points
Theory of Change	20 points
Member Experience	15 points
Organizational Capability	30 points
Background and Staffing	15 points
Member Supervision	15 points
Logic Model	20 points
Budget*	0 points
TOTAL	100 points

** Budget is not reviewed and scored by peer reviewers. You will receive feedback from MCSC staff on your initial budget.*

COVER PAGE

You should use the cover page template as the first page of your narrative.

Includes:

- Contact information
- Size of program
- Focus area
- Amount of requested and match funds

The Corporation for National and Community Service has 6 **focus areas**, as well as **funding priorities** each year.

In addition, the MCSC may identify **state priorities**.

You are not required to submit an application that aligns with these focus or priority areas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fill in the blanks in the blanks in the template provided:

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 [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)].*

**If the program is not operating in a CNCS focus area, omit this sentence.*

NARRATIVE: PROGRAM DESIGN

Program Design includes:

- Need – the problem the program will address
- Theory of Change
 - Proposed intervention
 - Target population
 - Anticipated outcomes
 - Evidence
 - Rationale for using AmeriCorps
- Member Experience
 - Gain skills
 - Recruitment
 - Inclusive



NARRATIVE:
PROGRAM
DESIGN:
Need

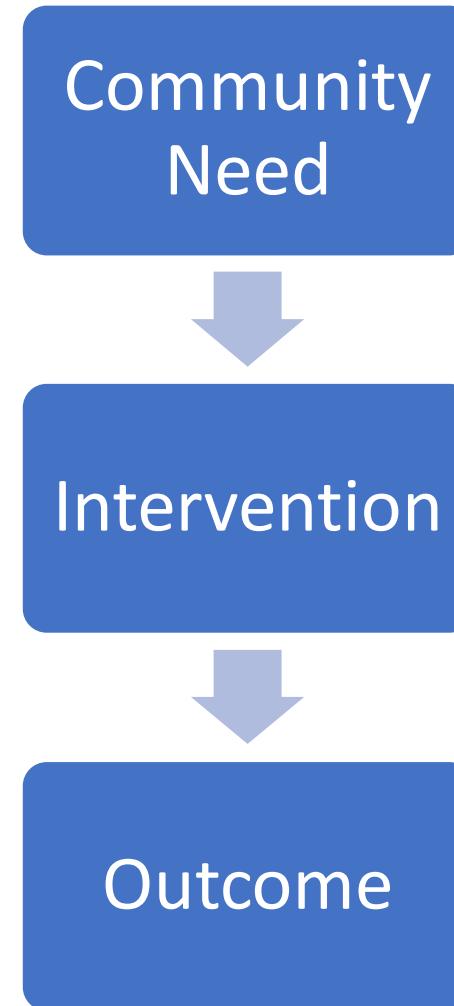
Describe the NEED you have identified.

This is a community “problem” you propose to address with an AmeriCorps program.

Include any available data to support your claim.

NARRATIVE:
PROGRAM
DESIGN:
Theory of
Change

Demonstrates cause and effect relationship





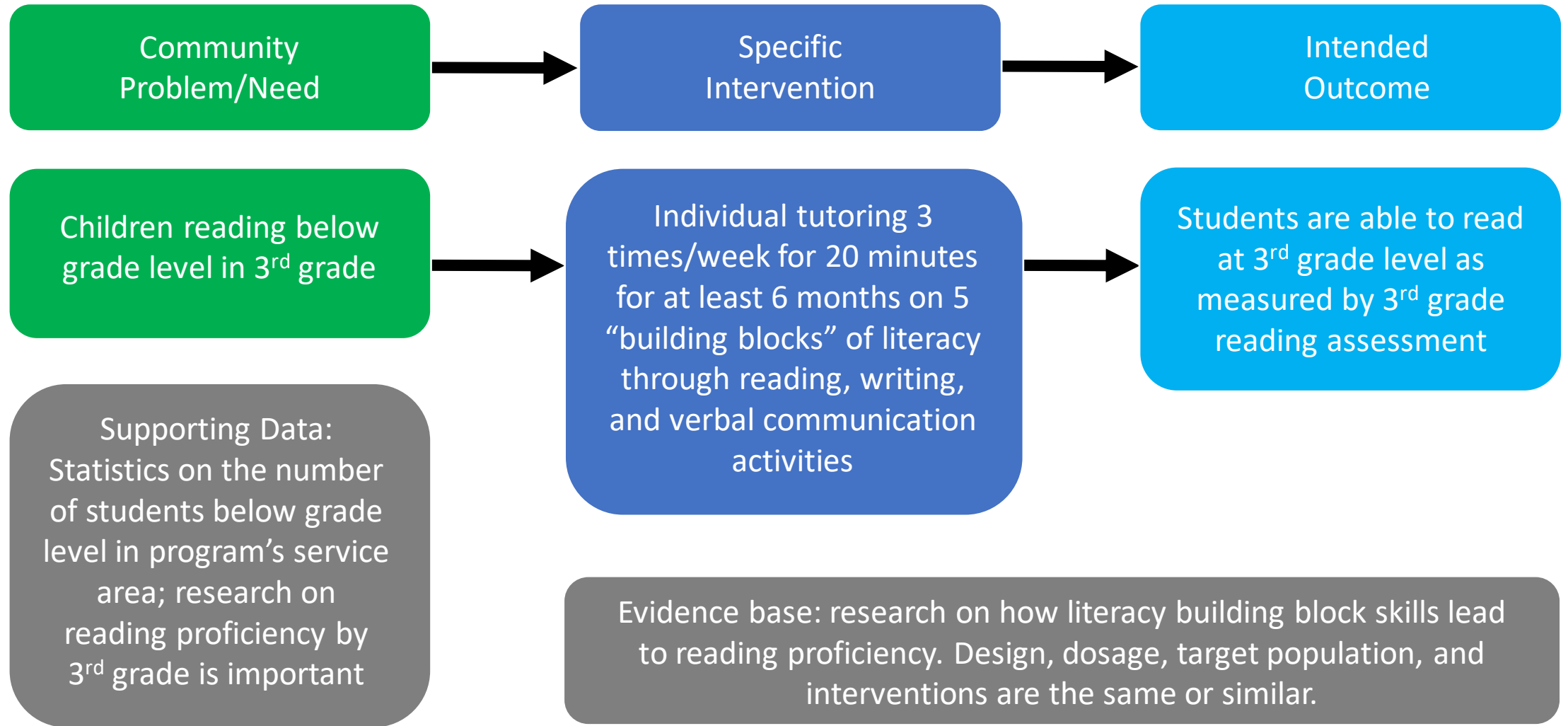
NARRATIVE:
PROGRAM
DESIGN:
Theory of
Change

The Theory of Change shall address:

- The proposed intervention including design, dosage, target population, and roles of AmeriCorps members.
- How the proposed intervention is likely to lead to the anticipated outcomes.
- Briefly, the evidence available to suggest that the proposed intervention will contribute to meaningful progress in addressing the identified community need.
- The rationale for utilizing AmeriCorps members to deliver the intervention.

Please note that if invited to submit a comprehensive application, applicants will be asked to provide specific evidence for their proposed intervention. The evidence will be assessed by evidence tier based on the strength and relevance of the evidence.

THEORY OF CHANGE EXAMPLE





NARRATIVE:
PROGRAM
DESIGN:
Member
Experience

Describe how:

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers.
- The program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the geographic or demographic communities in which the program will operate.
- The applicant will foster an inclusive service culture where different backgrounds, talents, and capabilities are welcomed and leveraged for learning and effective service delivery.



NARRATIVE: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

Organizational Background and Staffing

Describe the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps program, as well as providing oversight and monitoring.

Member Supervision

Describe how AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor, and how AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations and expectations.

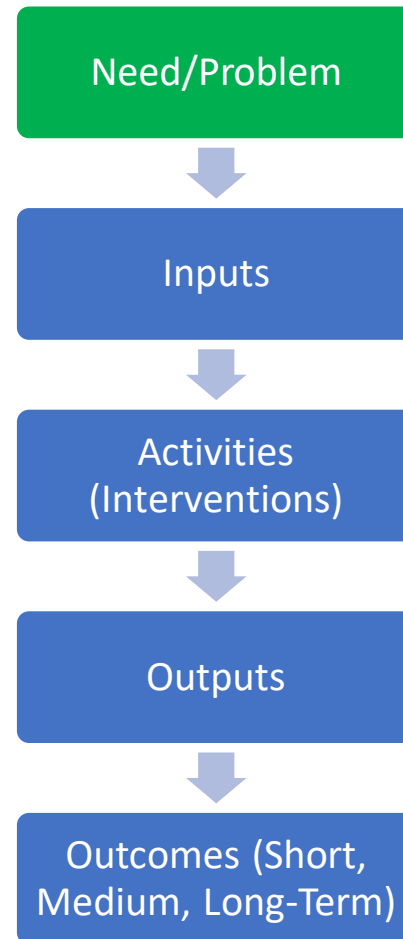
LOGIC MODEL

The logic model is a visual representation of the applicant's theory of change.

The Logic Model shall depict:

- A summary of the **community need**.
- The **inputs** or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including but not limited to:
 - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
 - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core **activities** that 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., the 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)
- The measurable **outputs** that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served, hours of service delivered, types and number of activities conducted.)
- The **outcomes** that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

LOGIC MODEL

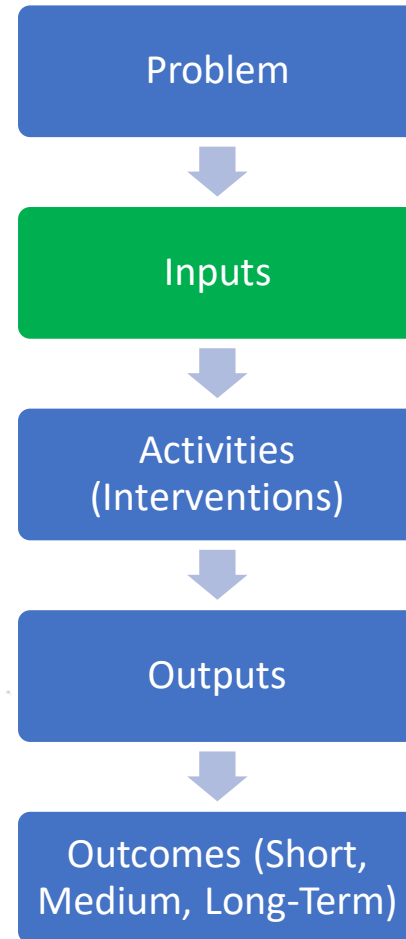


Start with the **Identified Community Need (Problem)**

Ask yourself:
What need is the program proposing to address?
Be specific.

What data do you use to demonstrate need?

LOGIC MODEL



Inputs (or resources) include the human, financial, organizational, and community resources available for carrying out a program's activities.

- Funding
- Program staff
- AmeriCorps members
- Service sites
- Training
- Volunteers

Ask yourself:

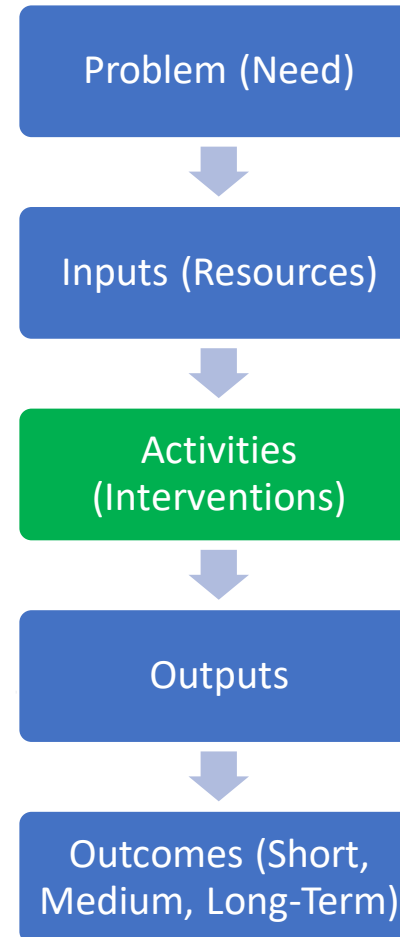
What are your inputs?

What do you already have to put into the program?

What will you get if your program is funded?

What is your plan for volunteer engagement?

LOGIC MODEL



Activities (interventions) are the processes, tools, events, and actions that are used to bring about a program's intended changes or results.

Ask yourself:

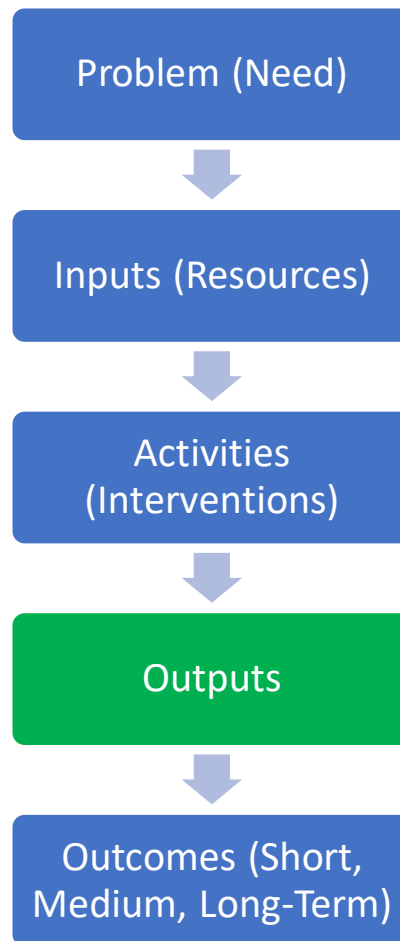
What are the proposed interventions?

What are the member activities?

Example:

- Workshops on healthy food options
- Food preparation consultations
- Referrals to food programs and resources

LOGIC MODEL



Outputs are the direct products of a program's activities and may include types, levels, and targets of the activities to delivered by the program.

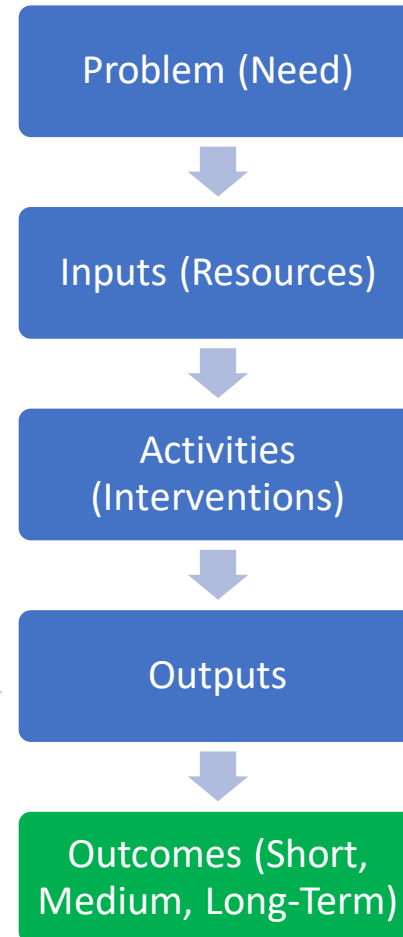
Ask yourself:

What are the proposed interventions?
What are the member activities?
What are the volunteer activities?

Example:

- Number of individuals attending health food workshops
- Number of individuals receiving food preparation consultations
- Number of individuals receiving referrals to food programs and resources

LOGIC MODEL



Outcomes are the expected changes in the population served that result from a program's activities and fall along a continuum, ranging from short to long-term results:

Short-term: changes in knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes

Medium-term: changes in behavior or action

Long-term: changes in condition

Ask yourself:

What are the intended outcomes?

What are the intended short, medium, and long-term results?

What is the change you expect to see?

Example:

- Short-term: number of individuals with increased knowledge of healthy food choices
- Medium-term: number of individuals with increased adoption of healthy food practices
- Long-term: number of individuals with increased food security

SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL

PROBLEM/NEED	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES (INTERVENTIONS)	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MED-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, and attitudes. 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.
35% of the population in Big City USA is food insecure.	<p>\$200,000 AmeriCorps funding</p> <p>\$300,000 state funding (match)</p> <p>1 program dir. 1 program asst.</p> <p>15 AmeriCorps members</p> <p>300 volunteers</p> <p>8 service sites</p>	<p>Conduct healthy food choice workshops and cooking demos weekly for 12 months to food insecure populations</p> <p>Provide food education consultations twice a month for 12 months to food insecure populations</p> <p>Provide food resource referrals weekly to food insecure populations</p>	<p>52 healthy food choice workshops</p> <p>24 food consultations</p> <p>52 food resource referrals</p> <p>600 individuals served</p>	<p>400 participants increase knowledge of healthy food choices</p> <p>300 participants increase skills in food preparation</p> <p>400 participants improve attitudes toward trying new foods</p>	<p>200 participants increase food resource management practices: meal planning, price comparison</p> <p>200 participants increase at-home meal preparation</p>	<p>Improved food security for families</p> <p>Increased healthy food environment for children</p>

BUDGET NARRATIVE

IMPORTANT BUDGET INFORMATION AND TIPS

Use the template provided. Follow the instructions carefully.

A **Member Service Year (MSY)** is a full-time equivalent member slot.

The maximum **Cost per MSY** is detailed in the Preliminary Application Instructions.

Example: You request 10 full-time members and 10 half-time members.

10 full-time members = 10 MSY

10 half-time members = 5 MSY

Total MSY request = 15 MSY

You must request a minimum of 10 MSY.**

The budget submitted with your Preliminary Application will not be peer reviewed. MCSC staff will review the budget and provide feedback if you are selected to submit a comprehensive application.

***See Preliminary Application Instructions for MSY conversions for each slot type*

BUDGET NARRATIVE

IMPORTANT BUDGET INFORMATION AND TIPS

CNCS Share

This is the amount of grant funds you are requesting.

Grantee Share (Match)

Match percentage = TOTAL of CNCS Share and Grantee Share

Example:

Total CNCS Share = \$150,000

$\$150,000 / 0.76$ (76% of total budget) = \$197,368 (total grant budget)

$\$197,368 - \$150,000 = \$47,368$ (total grantee share / required match)

AmeriCorps Funding Year	1,2,3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Grantee Share Requirements	24%	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Your detailed budget must provide a full explanation of associated costs including the purpose and the basis of your calculations.

Where appropriate, your calculations should be presented in an equation format, identifying the number of persons involved with the event, per person/unit cost, and/or the annual salary cost.

Example:

Item/Calculation	CNCS Share	Grantee Share	Total Amount
Member gear with AmeriCorps logo. Rates per member: pin @ \$2; business cards @ \$10; t-shirt @ \$15; name tags @ \$8; sweatshirt @ \$25, water bottle @ \$8 = \$68 per member x 20 members = \$1,360.	1000	360	1360

BUDGET NARRATIVE

BUDGET SECTIONS

Section I: Program Operating Costs

- A. Personnel Expenses
- B. Personnel Fringe Benefits
- C. Staff and Member Travel
- D. Equipment
- E. Supplies
- F. Contractual and Consultant Services
- G. Staff and Member Training
- H. Evaluation
- I. Other Program Operation Costs

Section II: Member Costs

- A. Living Allowance
- B. Member Support Costs

Section III: Administrative/Indirect Costs

Source of Match Funds

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I:

Program Operating Costs

A. PERSONNEL EXPENSES

List each staff position separately and provide salary and percentage of effort as a percentage of FTE devoted to this award.

Each staff person's role listed in the budget must be described in the application narrative.

Note that all programs are required to have at least one full-time staff person dedicated solely to the operation of the program. Any exception to this rule must be approved by MCSC.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

B. PERSONNEL FRINGE BENEFITS

Include costs of benefit(s) for your project staff. Identify and calculate each benefit percentage.

Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Worker's Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K. Holidays, leave, and other similar vacation benefits are not included in the fringe benefits rates.

Please provide cost calculations for benefits separately rather than as one lump sum item.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

C. Travel

Staff Travel

Costs allowable are transportation, lodging, subsistence, and other related expenses for local and outside the project area travel.

All travel and mileage rates must not be greater than the most recent State of Michigan travel reimbursement rates, as well as consistent with the organization's travel policy.

Please refer to the most current DTMB schedule of travel rates.

Must include costs to travel to 5 program director meetings, and one 2-day meeting including overnight accommodations.

Must include \$2,000 for travel to CNCS sponsored trainings.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

C. Travel Member Travel

Use the same allowable costs and amount/rate guidelines as Staff Travel.

Must include costs for LeaderCorps representative to attend 2 statewide meetings.

Must include costs for members to travel to Member Celebration in Lansing.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

D. Equipment

Equipment is defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year AND an acquisition cost of **\$5,000 or more per unit** (including accessories, attachments, and modifications).

Any items that do not meet this definition should be entered in Supplies.

Purchases of equipment are limited to 10% of the total CNCS funds requested.

BUDGET
NARRATIVE
Section I:
Program Operating
Costs

E. Supplies

Consumable supplies and materials, including member service gear and equipment that does not fit the definition in Equipment section.

AmeriCorps members must wear an AmeriCorps logo on a daily basis – preferably clothing with the AmeriCorps logo. This is a required budget expense. Federal funds can only be used for gear with AmeriCorps logo (except safety gear).

Individually list any single item costing \$1,000 or more.

Service gear has a minimum and maximum amount per member (unless listed in Grantee Share)



BUDGET
NARRATIVE

Section I:
Program Operating
Costs

F. Contractual and Consultant Services

Include costs for consultants related to the project's operations, except training or evaluation consultants, who will be listed in Sections G and H.

There is not a maximum daily rate.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

G. Training Staff Training

Include the costs associated with training staff on project requirements and training to enhance the skills staff need for effective project implementation, i.e., project or financial management, team building, etc.

If using a consultant(s) for training, indicate the estimated daily rate. There is not a maximum daily rate.

These should be included as registration fees or training consultants.

Do not include travel costs for trainings.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

G. Training Member Training

Include the costs associated with member training to support them in carrying out their service activities. You may also use this section to request funds to support training in Life after AmeriCorps.

If using a consultant(s) for training, indicate the estimated daily rate. There is not a maximum daily rate.

These should be included as registration fees or training consultants.

Do not include travel costs for trainings.

Must include \$60 per member to attend MCSC events.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

H. Evaluation

Include costs for project evaluation activities, including additional staff time or subcontracts, use of evaluation consultants, purchase of instrumentation, and other costs specifically for this activity not budgeted in Section A.

This *does not* include the daily/weekly gathering of data to assess progress toward project objectives but is a larger assessment of the *impact* your project is having on the community, as well as an assessment of the overall systems and project design.

Indicate daily rates of consultants, where applicable.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section I: Program Operating Costs

I. Other Program Operating Costs

Allowable costs include:

Criminal history background checks for all members and individuals who receive a salary, education award, living allowance, or stipend or similar payment from the grant (federal or non-federal share).

Office space rental for projects operating without an approved indirect cost rate agreement that covers office space.

Utilities, phone, internet, postage, copying, and similar expenses specifically used for AmeriCorps members and project staff, and are not part of the organization's indirect cost allocation pool.

Recognition costs for members. Gifts and/or food in an entertainment/event setting are not allowable costs.



BUDGET
NARRATIVE
Section II:
Member Costs

A. Living Allowance

Identify the number of members you are supporting by slot type (i.e., full-time, half-time, etc.) and amount of living allowance they will receive.

While you are not required to provide living allowances for members serving less than full-time, it is recommended that you do as this aids in recruitment and retention of AmeriCorps members.

BUDGET
NARRATIVE
Section II:
Member Costs

B. Member Support Costs

You must provide members with the following benefits:

FICA: Unless exempted by the IRS with accompanying documentation, all projects must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance.

Worker's Compensation: Worker's compensation is required for Michigan's AmeriCorps members.

Health Care Coverage: The program *must* offer health care benefits to *full-time members* in accordance with AmeriCorps requirements. Except as stated below the program may not pay health care benefits to half-time members with CNCS funds. You may choose to provide health care benefits to less-than full-time members using other sources, but the cost cannot be included in the budget.

With approval from the MCSC, less-than-full-time members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (such as a full-time summer project) may be eligible for health care benefits supported with program funds. In the budget narrative, indicate the number of members eligible for the program's health care benefits. CNCS funds cannot be used to pay for dependent coverage. If health care is not budgeted for all full-time members, please confirm that all full-time members will have access to coverage.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Section III: Administrative/ Indirect Costs

Administrative costs are general or centralized expenses of the overall administration of an organization that receives CNCS funds and do not include particular project costs. These costs may include administrative staff positions. For organizations that have an established indirect cost rate for federal awards, administrative costs mean those costs that are included in the organization's indirect cost rate agreement.

Options for calculating Admin/Indirect Costs (choose one)

1. CNCS fixed percentage rate method OR
2. Federally approved indirect cost method

Regardless, CNCS share of admin costs is limited to 5% of total CNCS funds actually expended under this grant.

See Preliminary Application Budget Instructions for more details.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about applications, process, timeline, submission:

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