



AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Requirements

Sarah Yue, Program Impact Manager | 10/29/2019



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Definition of Evaluation for AmeriCorps Programs (45 CFR § 2522.700)

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- “Uses **scientifically-based research methods** to assess the effectiveness of programs.”
- “Unlike performance measures, evaluations estimate the impacts of programs by **comparing the outcomes for individuals receiving a service or participating in a program to the outcomes for similar individuals not receiving a service or not participating in a program.**”
- “Intended to establish a **causal relationship** between your program and a desired (or undesired) program outcome.”



- Impact Evaluation
 - Capable of assessing causal relationship between program activities and outcomes
 - Requires control group or statistically matched comparison group
 - Includes randomized controlled trials (RCT) and/or quasi-experimental designs (QED)
- Outcome Evaluation
 - Non-experimental assessment of program outcomes
 - Includes pre-post assessment with no comparison group, or comparison groups that are not statistically matched
- Process Evaluation
 - Assesses how a program is implemented

Evaluation Types: Source



- Independent evaluation
 - Uses an external evaluator with no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in, the administration, management, or finances of the grantee or of the program being evaluated
- Internal evaluation
 - Performed in-house by the grantee (i.e., by staff from the grantee's own organization or other stakeholders, such as board members, partners, or volunteer affiliates) without the use of an independent external evaluator

AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Requirements

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- Specified in AmeriCorps Regulations: [45 CFR §§2522.500 -.540 and .700-.740.](#)
- Purpose: “to strengthen your AmeriCorps program and foster continuous improvement, and help identify best practices and models that merit replication, as well as programmatic weaknesses that need attention” (§ 2522.500)
- Requirements differ based on:
 - Type of funding (competitive vs. formula)
 - Type of grant
 - Size of grant
 - Program history

Requirements by Type of Funding



- Direct grantee (national direct, Indian Tribe, or state/territory without a commission)
 - Evaluation conducted during the grant cycle and submitted with the next recompetete application
- State competitive subgrantee
 - Evaluation conducted during the grant cycle and submitted with the next recompetete application
- State formula subgrantee
 - Evaluation requirements established by the state commission

Requirements by Type of Competitive Grant



- Cost Reimbursement
 - Internal evaluation or independent (external) impact evaluation, depending on grant size
- Full-Cost Fixed (cost/MSY > \$800)
 - Internal evaluation or independent (external) impact evaluation, depending on grant size
- EAP or No Cost Slots (cost/MSY < \$800)
 - Internal evaluation

Requirements by Size of Competitive Grant (non-EAP)



- Large grantee (\$500,000 or more per year)
 - Independent (external) impact evaluation
 - Small grantee (less than \$500,000/year)
 - Internal or independent evaluation
- *How size is calculated:
- Average yearly CNCS funding received during the grant cycle in which the evaluation is conducted
 - Will be affected by changes in continuation funding, if any

Requirements by Competitive Program History



- First three-year competitive grant cycle
 - No evaluation required
 - Should build strong data collection systems and begin the evaluation planning process
- Second three-year competitive grant cycle for same project*
 - Evaluation plan required with competitive grant application
 - Must be approved by CNCS within 1 year of grant award
 - Evaluation must be completed during this grant cycle

*"Same project" is defined in [45 C.F.R. § 2522.340](#)

Requirements by Competitive Program History



- Subsequent competitive grant cycles for same project
 - Evaluation report required with competitive grant application
 - From most recent grant cycle
 - Report will be assessed as part of grant application review process
 - Evaluation plan required with competitive grant application
 - Should build on/complement previous evaluation efforts
 - Must be approved by CNCS within 1 year of grant award
 - Evaluation must be completed during each grant cycle

Requirements Common to All Competitive Evaluations



- Must evaluate significant (not necessarily primary) service activities
- Must cover at least one year of CNCS-funded activity for the same project
 - “one year” = activities that take place during one program year (not necessarily 12 months)
- Must include site(s) supported under the grant
 - Evaluations of site(s) supported under a different legal grant will not meet the evaluation requirement, even if it is the same program model
- Must align with the approved evaluation plan
- Must produce a report that adequately describes the evaluation conducted
 - Report should include introduction, description of design/methods, and section on findings and results

Determining Evaluation Requirements for Grant Applicants

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- Things to consider:
 - Type of grant (cost reimbursement/fixed amount/EAP)
 - Size of grant (amount of CNCS funding)
 - Program history
- Must be considered for:
 - Most recent competitive grant cycle for the same project (if applicable)
 - Competitive grant application

Determining Evaluation Requirements for Grant Applicants



Example 1: A state subgrantee is in their 3rd year of competitive funding after having been funded in formula for 6 years. In their current competitive grant cycle, the subgrantee is receiving \$325,000 in CNCS funding per year through a cost-reimbursement grant. The subgrantee is requesting the same amount per year in their recompetete application but is switching to a full-cost fixed amount grant.

	Most recent competitive grant cycle	Competitive grant application
Type of grant	Cost-reimbursement	Full-cost fixed amount
Size of grant	\$325,000	\$325,000
Program history		3 years of competitive funding for the same project

Determining Evaluation Requirements for Grant Applicants

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Evaluation requirement:

Must submit an evaluation plan (any type of evaluation)*

**The state commission may establish additional evaluation requirements for the subgrantee that go beyond the CNCS requirements.*

Determining Evaluation Requirements for Grant Applicants



Example 2: A National Direct grantee has operated the EnviroCorps program for the past 15 years. This year they have acquired a new partner and are proposing to expand their project to 2 new states and increase the size of their cost-reimbursement CNCS grant from \$400,000 to \$600,000 per year. Their recompetete application also describes adjustments to member training and supervision, plus a shift in the way environmental improvements will be assessed by the program.

	Most recent competitive grant cycle	Grant application
Type of funding	Competitive	Competitive
Type of grant	Cost-reimbursement	Cost-reimbursement
Size of grant	\$400,000	\$600,000
Program history		15 years of competitive funding for the same project

Determining Evaluation Requirements for Grant Applicants

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Evaluation requirement:

- **Must submit an evaluation report (any type of evaluation)**
- **Must submit an evaluation plan for an independent impact evaluation**

Alternative Evaluation Approaches (AEAs)



- For cases where the evaluation requirements in the CFR do not fit a program's structure, developmental stage, and/or information needs
- Bases for approval of an AEA:

Large Grantees Only	All Grantees
Program structure	Timing
Previous impact evaluation	
Replication	

- Applicable for a single three-year grant cycle
- Guidance on how to request an AEA:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Alternative-Evaluation-Approach-FINAL.pdf>



- CNCS Evaluation Policies webpage:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/cncs-evaluation-policies>
- [AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation FAQs](#):
provide additional context and details on how the ASN evaluation requirements are implemented
- [Alternative Evaluation Approach \(AEA\) Guidance](#):
outlines the process for requesting an AEA and the bases for CNCS approval of AEA requests

Most Significant Updates to ASN Evaluation Policy Guidance

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- Redefines “average annual program grant” to be based on the grant cycle during which the evaluation is implemented
 - Existing grantees who are redefined from “small” to “large” will receive automatic AEAs for their CURRENT grant cycle (i.e., for the evaluation they are conducting now)
- Eliminates requirement to submit an AEA request to conduct a member-focused evaluation
 - Evaluations focused on member outcomes are allowable if this is a significant component of the grantee’s theory of change and logic model

Most Significant Updates to ASN Evaluation Policy Guidance

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- Eliminates automatic exemption from the impact evaluation requirement for grantees who previously completed impact evaluations
 - Grantees must request an AEA if they wish to conduct a non-impact evaluation
 - AEA approval will be contingent on assessed evidence tier and quality for recompetete application
 - Existing grantees who have already received exemptions will receive automatic AEAs for their CURRENT grant cycle (i.e., for the evaluation they are conducting now)

Resources to Support Evaluation Efforts



- Evaluation Resources & Training Page:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>
 - Evaluation Core Curriculum
 - Other evaluation-related resources

EVALUATION RESOURCES & TRAINING

Evaluation is a powerful tool for improving a program and increasing its ability to serve people more efficiently and effectively. It gives programs an opportunity to test their interventions, adjust services to best meet community needs, and collect data to support their work.

For assistance, please contact AmeriCorpsEvaluationTA@norc.org

The Evaluation Cycle



Resources to Support Evaluation Efforts

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- Individualized Evaluation Technical Assistance
 - Available free of charge to all competitively funded ASN grantees and subgrantees
 - Can include:
 - Answering questions on evaluation design and approach
 - Providing feedback on evaluation materials and data collection tools
 - Advising on data collection and/or analysis procedures
 - Discussing approaches for identifying an external evaluator
 - Requesting assistance with evaluation plan development or revision
 - Requested via TA Portal:
<https://americorpsevaluationta.norc.org>

Sharing Evaluation Guidance and Resources with Subgrantees



- CNCS expects commissions and prime grantees to:
- Disseminate CNCS evaluation policy guidance to subgrantees
 - Train subgrantees on evaluation requirements and best practices
 - Provide support to subgrantees on evaluation planning/implementation
 - State subgrantees may only submit requests through the TA Portal after consulting with their State Commission
 - Factor evaluation requirements into state-specific review processes
 - Help subgrantees use evaluation results for program improvement

Questions?

