

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
FY 2020 Day of Service Funding Opportunities
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service (MLK)
September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance (September 11)
Revised **March 23, 2020**

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides the Notice of Funding Opportunity (Notice) and the Day of Service Application Instructions as the primary sources of information about the requirements of this grant competition. This FAQ resource is intended to provide further clarification, and does not replace or override the information contained in the published documents.

Key Resources (not exhaustive):

- [2020 Day of Service Grant Competition](#) webpage with the Notice, Application Instructions, webinar recording and presentation, FAQs, etc.
- [MLK Day of Service](#) webpage
- [September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance](#) webpage
- [Results of Prior CNCS Grant Competitions](#) including MLK and September 11 [some requirements were different in prior years]
- [Press Release of FY19 Day of Service Competition Awards](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations](#) for Title II on Grants and Agreements
- [eGrants](#) log-in page
- [System of Award Management \(SAM\)](#) log-in page (use Internet Explorer 11 or higher, Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.)
- [Operational and Financial Management Survey](#)
- DayofService@cns.gov mailbox for all general questions related to this competition
- [Criminal History Check \(CHC\) Resources](#) for regulations, guidance, training, and CHC FAQs
- [Criminal History Checks State by State](#) for a list of background check prices by state
- CHC@cns.gov mailbox for questions related to the National Service Criminal History Checks

1. General Application Submission and Notice Questions

1.1 Is the submission deadline impacted by COVID-19?

The application deadline remains/remained Wednesday, March 25 at 5pm EST. Please read the amended Section *D.4.c. Late Applications* of the NOFO In order to provide administrative relief to applicants affected by the loss of operational capacity and increased

costs due to the COVID-19 crisis, these applicants will overcome the presumption of non-compliance due to lateness if they:

- submit their application by Wednesday, April 1, 2020, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time in eGrants AND
- submit to LateApplications@cns.gov in no more than 200 words a compelling written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstance(s) that caused the delay, including a description of the loss of operational capacity and increased costs due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Other Applicants that are late must follow the late application instructions in the Day of Service Notice of Funding Opportunity, Section D.4.c. Late Applications, including submission of the application and written explanation or justification of the extenuating circumstances within 24 hours of the Application Submission Deadline, Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

1.2 How did the NOFO change when it was amended?

In February, the NOFO was amended to correct the approximate amount of funds appropriated and add in language regarding the purpose of September 11th Day of Service grants. The amount of funds appropriated for Day of Service awards is approximately \$3,200,000. The purpose of the September 11th Day of Service Grants and program design review criteria were expanded to include reflecting on the sacrifice of those who lost their lives or family members on September 11th. New language is shown on pages one and ten of the NOFO. These changes were included as 42 U.S.C. 12653 (k)(3) states "The Corporation may consult with and make grants or provide other forms of support to nonprofit organizations with expertise in representing families of victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and other impacted constituencies, and in promoting the establishment of September 11 as an annually recognized National Day of Service and Remembrance."

The NOFO was amended a second time in late March to address COVID-19 and late applications. See FAQ 1.1 above.

1.3 How often is this competition offered?

CNCS assesses needs and available appropriations annually as part of determining whether to do new competitions or not. CNCS posts all competitive funding opportunities [here](#) and encourages individuals to subscribe to this [list-serve](#) to receive updates via email directly.

1.4 What is the project period for these grants and when are service activities occurring?

The project period is the total length of time the recipient is proposed for funding to complete activities approved under the award. These grants will have a three-year project period.

For new grantees, year one Day of Service activities will take place in calendar year 2021 as follows: MLK activities in January 2021 and September 11 activities in September 2021. Subsequent continuation funding is dependent on the availability of Congressional appropriations and satisfactory performance. Any proposed changes in scope will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Grantees awarded in FY2019 and awarded continuations will carry out the second year of their service activities in calendar year 2021.

1.5 What are the different ways that an organization can implement a Day of Service award?

There are four ways an organization can implement a direct Day of Service award (Notice, page 3). Types of award:

- a. **Pass-through entity:** A pass-through entity selects subrecipients on a competitive basis through a sub-grant. Pass-through applicants should clearly describe their plan for subawarding in their application narratives. Subawards are to be made in annual amounts of \$1,000 or more, per year. A pass-through entity does not plan activities for the Day of Service. Instead, only the subrecipients plan Day of Service activities. Pass-through entities are required to monitor their subrecipients. All of the CNCS requirements of the pass-through entity will be passed down to the subrecipients.
- b. **Subgranting organization:** A subgranting organization selects subrecipients on a competitive basis through a sub-grant. Subgranting organizations should clearly describe their plan for subawarding in their application narrative. Subawards are to be made in annual amounts of \$1,000 or more, per year. A subgranting organization plans activities for the Day of Service and their subgrantees also plan activities for the Day of Service. Subgranting organizations are required to monitor their subrecipients. Subrecipients are responsible for all of the same requirements as CNCS direct grantees. Applicants do not have to subgrant (see 1.3.d. Sole entity).
- c. **Partnership coordinators:** A partnership coordinator works with partner organizations but may select them on a noncompetitive basis.
- d. **Sole entity:** A sole entity does not provide any subaward funding. Instead, the applicant organization plans and implements all Day of Service activities.

1.6 Do all partnerships or subgrantee agreements need to be in place and partners named at the time the application is submitted?

Applicants do not have to select or identify subgrantees at the time of application. They should clearly describe their plan for subawarding in the application narrative. Applicants should still be able to identify at least ten different service locations.

Applicants that want to apply with a formal partner(s) must name the partner(s) and include a plan that identifies how the partnership will be structured to carry out the grant.

1.7 My organization is considering applying for both MLK and September 11 funding. How do we submit applications for both Days of Service?

To apply for both Days of Service funding opportunities, you will need to submit two separate applications in eGrants. Applicants may not submit more than one application to CNCS for each Day of Service.

1.8 Can applicants submit an application directly to CNCS and also apply to be a sub-grantee of another CNCS direct grantee?

Yes. Direct applicants to CNCS may also apply to other direct applicants and/or direct grantees as sub-grantees. If organizations apply to be both a direct grantee and a sub-grantee, the applications should be for different and distinct activities.

1.9 Are current CNCS grantees and sponsors eligible to apply for these grants?

Yes. All current CNCS grantees and sponsors are eligible to apply for these grants. These would be new grants for new activities, so current CNCS grantees will need to submit new applications, rather than amend existing CNCS awards.

1.10 If a current grantee organization includes personnel on this grant that previously had national service criminal history checks (CHCs), do the CHCs have to be completed again?

In general, personnel currently working for an organization, but on another CNCS grant, who have previous CHCs completed in accordance with CNCS' CHC requirements (Notice, pages 15-16) do not have to be checked again if they will also be working on this grant for that organization. There are two exceptions. First, if personnel have episodic access to vulnerable populations on the current CNCS grant and will have recurring access on this grant. In that case, the personnel would also have to have all three required checks completed (Notice, page 16). The second is if the personnel have had a break in service of longer than 120 days. If there is such a break, then a new check must be performed. Additional information and resources to support CHCs is available [here](#).

1.11 Can current AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers participate in grant-funded Day of Service activities?

Yes, provided the Day of Service activities are clearly identified. The hours served or worked by staff can only be attributed towards one CNCS grant.

1.12 Does this affect the forward funding for year three of current Day of Service grants?

No. Current Day of Service grantees will receive guidance for the 2020 continuation process separately. Current grantees may apply for new grants for new activities as part of this competition.

1.13 After we submit our intent is there a way to get a list of other organizations that are interested so that we can network together?

For competitive grant processes, CNCS cannot share information about other potential applicants and applicants. After funding decisions have been publicly announced, all applicants and the results of competitions will be posted on the [Results of Prior CNCS Grant Competitions](#) webpage.

1.14 Can I receive individual technical assistance to answer my questions about this competition?

No, there is not a one-on-one technical assistance process as part of this grant process. Questions submitted to DayofService@cns.gov will be answered via email and posted in this FAQ resource on the [competition website](#) as appropriate to ensure all applicants receive the same information. This FAQ will be updated and reposted regularly.

1.15 How do I create an eGrants account?

New users can create eGrants accounts [here](#). Existing users should use their current accounts. Please contact the National Service Hotline at: 1-800-942-2677 for any technical issues with eGrants.

1.16 Where can I learn more about the CNCS **criminal history check (CHC) requirements?**

More information about the requirements and resources are available [here](#). Please note that CNCS has approved a contract with [two vendors](#) to provide all required checks and encourages grantees to use them.

1.17 The Notice references a 10-page limit. What is included in that limit?

Please refer to pages 5-6 of the Notice for information about what is and is not included in the 10-page limit.

1.18 Are performance measures required? If so, where should I include information about performance measures?

Yes, performance measures are required. Please include performance measures for review and scoring in the narrative under Program Design. **You can see more information and examples of performance measures on our [Performance Measure webpage](#).** Additionally, the eGrants system requires applicants to select, enter information, and validate a minimum of one Performance Measure in the Performance Measures Module in order to submit an application in the system. The content of the Performance Measures Module will not be reviewed, and applicants will not be responsible for the targets set in the module. Applicants will only be evaluated on performance information in the application narrative. Screenshots are available on the [competition website](#) in the application instructions.

1.19 Under performance measures on page 10 of the Notice, it states that reviewers will assess whether “measurable outputs are identified that result from delivering the intervention including specific identified targets for each year of the award.” Does this mean we should identify the estimated number of volunteers each year? Do you want us to track retention of volunteers each year?

Yes. Please identify how many volunteers you anticipate engaging each year as well as the number of volunteers you plan to serve in multiple years.

1.20 In the Executive Summary component of eGrants, must Focus Areas be selected from one or more of the following: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, veterans and military families, and other community priorities.

No. If the application does not fall within a focus area, you do not need to include that sentence in the Executive Summary.

1.21 If an applicant submits an application for both the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, do the grants have to be for equal funding amounts?

No, applicants can apply for just September 11 or MLK Day and, if you apply for both, you do not need to apply for equal funding for each planned day of national service. CNCS will review all applications received for both Days of Service using the review criteria outlined in the Notice. Funding decisions will be made accordingly. CNCS may also use these funds in support of the Day of Service and/or refocus some of the funds in the event of disaster or other compelling needs.

1.22 This is my first time applying for Day of Service funding. I already receive CNCS funding, and I do not believe my proposal will exceed \$75,000.00. Do I need to complete an Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)?

As outlined on page 9 of the Notice, only New and Recompeting Day of Service applicants requesting over \$75,000 and All New to CNCS applicants regardless of funding level are required to submit an Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS) and supporting documents located at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management> - select the **Word doc version** of the Operational and Financial Management Survey under the Pre-Award/Application Certification Forms section. If you are submitting the Operational and Financial Management Survey, please follow the guidance on page 9 of the Notice on sending the documents via email to AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov and send it in a **Microsoft Word document – not pdf**.

1.23 I am unable to apply for this funding through www.grants.gov.

CNCS does not accept applications to our Notices of Funding Opportunities through Grants.gov. Other federal agencies use Grants.gov for application submissions, however, CNCS only uses Grants.gov to post a synopsis of the Notice and then direct potential applicants to the competition webpage where they can access the entire Notice. CNCS only accepts applications submitted through eGrants. It is listed in the Notice that applicants must submit an application through eGrants (page 8).

1.24 Can I apply for Day of Service activities that will take place in 2022 and 2023?

No. An applicant cannot apply now in FY 2020 for projects in 2022 and 2023. The three-year project period is based on satisfactory performance in the prior year(s) and CNCS receiving Congressional appropriations. However, please include any information about your plans to continue or deviate your projects in 2022 and 2023 if you have that information. CNCS will focus on your activities in 2021 but should be advised if the plan for future years is different.

1.25 If I plan to do service projects in more than one state, should I use the state my headquarters are in for “project state” in eGrants?

Yes. Please include expected locations of the projects in the “Areas affected by the project” field in the Application Information component of eGrants.

1.26 Do organizations need to apply through state service commissions or can they apply directly to CNCS?

Organizations may apply directly to CNCS. State service commissions may also apply to CNCS. All applicants can implement Day of Service projects as outlined in 1.3 above.

1.27 I am a current Day of Service grantee. Should I select “existing, new, renewal?”

No. Current Day of Service grantees should select “Continuation/Renewal” from their eGrants homepage. More information can be found starting on page 16 of the application instructions.

1.28 If we are not required to submit documents in eGrants, what should we select under Documents?

Please advance to the next screen without selecting anything here unless you are submitting documents via email to AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov (Notice, pg. 9). Information about submitting Operational and Financial Management Surveys is in 1.21 above.

1.29 Day of Service is not an option in the Project Initiative Type in eGrants. What should I select?

Any of the responses that are available in the project initiative section of the project information is acceptable.

2. Budget

2.1 Is there funding to back this opportunity? The NOFO states “The 2020 President’s Budget proposed the elimination of CNCS. The actual level and timing of grant funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations.”

Yes, CNCS received a \$3.2 million appropriation for FY20 to support these grant awards. Grants awarded this year will be able to use their awarded funds for their first year of service activities occurring in calendar year 2021.

2.2 What amount should be included in the budget narrative?

Enter your request for the year one. There is no minimum or maximum threshold for this competition. CNCS encourages funding requests in the range of \$20,000 to \$200,000 for year 1 of funding. You will submit your funding request for years 2 and 3 later when you submit a continuation application. For more information, see 1.3 and 1.23 above.

2.3 When are the funds released for these grants?

The notice of grant award provides grantees with the authority to incur expenses allocated in the budget. These grants will be awarded on a cost reimbursement basis, so grantees may submit payment requests to the [Payment Management System](#) after they incur the expenses.

2.4 Where can I learn what budget items are allowable and unallowable?

Please review the Notice carefully and consider if the cost is reasonable, necessary, allocable and allowable per [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#). In considering these items see especially 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.403, 200.404, 200.405. Please include detailed descriptions of proposed expenses in your budget narrative to enable reviewers to determine whether they are reasonable, necessary, allocable and allowable.

2.5 Are criminal history checks or backgrounds checks an allowable cost in the budget?

Yes, you may include them in your budget as an allowable cost. You can use federal or matching funds to pay for them.

2.6 Please provide an example of what it means to match 70% of the total project budget, as required in statute for MLK.

An applicant must provide at least 70% of the total project budget for MLK grants. As an example, if an applicant requests \$60,000 in CNCS funding, the grantee share would be \$140,000. This brings the total project budget to \$200,000. The eGrants budget will help you identify the CNCS and match percentages as you enter the information.

Please note that there is no match requirement for September 11 applications this year.

2.7 Are there requirements about how much of the match can be cash and how much can be in-kind?

No. The match can be any combination of cash or in-kind or could be solely cash or in-kind.

2.8 How should our organization's plan to act as a pass-through entity, provide subgrants, or work with partners be represented in the budget?

If you intend to provide funding to any other organizations, this should be represented in the budget as a line item (or multiple line items) in the Other Support Costs section of the budget. The line item (or multiple line items) should include detail to show the number of organizations you intend to support and the amount of funding provided to each.

2.9 Can a different department within the organization be considered a contractor for the purposes of the budget?

Unless your department has a contract or other agreement with the other internal department, the costs related to this grant should be included in the Project Personnel Expenses and Personnel Fringe Benefits budget sections.

2.10 While volunteer time generally cannot be used as in-kind match, the webinar said it can be for an organizational function like an accountant. Please confirm and clarify.

The time that volunteers perform activities as part of the service project itself cannot be considered in-kind, however the time that support organizations carrying out the project that they would otherwise have to pay for may be counted as in-kind providing they meet the criteria outlined in [200.306 Cost Sharing or Matching](#). More information about in-kind contributions is available [here](#).

2.11 I know I should only request funding for the first year of my project in this application. If I request \$50,000 for year one, will I receive \$50,000 in years two and three as well?

Generally, CNCS provides continuation grant funding at the same level as in year 1, however, continuation awards, including funding, are based on satisfactory performance in prior years and the availability of Congressional appropriations. **For more information, see FAQ 2.14.**

2.12 For the 9/11 Day of Service proposal, must our costs exactly match our request from CNCS, since no match is required? In other words, if the first year of the program costs

\$85,000, should we request \$85,000, even though most grants in the past topped out at \$50,000 per year (\$150,000 total)? If we ask for more than CNCS decides to give, would CNCS give us a lesser amount, or if the amount is too high, will CNCS reject the proposal overall (e.g., does requesting “too much” increase our chance of being denied a grant)? Should we request only \$50,000 and show that we will use resources from other sources?

There is no minimum or maximum budget request amount for this grant competition. CNCS will evaluate all applications, including budget requests, on the criteria in the Notice. While not required, September 11 applicants may include matching funds in their budgets. Please note, matching funds are subject to the same requirements as funds received from CNCS. As part of the clarification process, CNCS may propose different funding amounts or ask questions about your budget proposal, the scope of your grant and your past expenditures.

2.13 We were awarded funding for a Day of Service grant. Is it possible to change some of our budget line items?

2.14 I am a continuation grantee. I want to apply for additional funds. Can I do so?

In the FY2020 NOFO on page 17, it states, “Requests by existing continuation applicants for increases in the level of funding will be assessed using the review criteria published in this Notice.” Your continuation application will not go through the blended review process that new applications go through. However, you will need to include in your continuation application the rationale for the additional funds. MLK Day grantees will need to continue to meet the 70% match requirement. CNCS reserves the right to fund requests in full or part. For more information, see FAQ 2.11 above.

3. Program Implementation

3.1 Would [insert a specific type of activity] be considered appropriate for these grants?

CNCS cannot comment on specific project ideas in competitive grant processes. Please review the Funding Priorities and Performance Measures sections of the Notice (pages 1-2) to determine if your proposed activity(s) would be appropriate.

3.2 Is there a minimum number of volunteers that we are required to engage?

There is no minimum number of volunteers you are required to engage, however, CNCS seeks projects that will engage a significant number of volunteers (Notice, page 2) to maximize these resources.

3.3 Does our project have to address all of the items listed under “priority consideration” (Notice, page 2)?

No. CNCS will give priority consideration to applications that address at least one of the items listed under “priority consideration” (Notice, page 2). Inclusion of these items does not guarantee funding.

3.4 How are “service locations” (Notice, page 10) defined?

It is up to the applicant to define a service location. A service location may be a neighborhood, a city, regional to cover multiple states, or some other area. The idea is for each applicant organization to have service activities in at least ten different physical locations every year. These activities may occur on the same or different days and do not have to be the same locations each year. **If you are applying for both days of service, you may have the same ten service locations for both days.** Please refer to pages 1-2 of the Notice for more information on the expected timing of grant-funded activities. **See FAQ 1.6 above for applying to both days of service.**

3.5 Would college students count as “youth”, as that term is used in the priority section?

For the purposes of this competition, college students are considered youth.

3.6 Can an agency be a pass-through entity and also host a project as one of the ten required locations?

No. Based on the definition of pass-through entities in the Notice and in FAQ 1.3.a., pass-through entities cannot host service activities.

3.7 As a current Senior Corps grantee, can my Day of Service activities be intergenerational, or am I restricted to volunteers age 55 and older for these grants as well? If I can engage volunteers under age 55, do I need to track continued service activities?

This grant competition does not have any age limitations for any applicants. Intergenerational projects are great but you must track service activities as outlined in the Notice, available [here](#). You can engage younger volunteers for the Day of Service activities

as long as you keep your Senior Corps grantees' time and records separate from your Days of Service funding.

- 3.8 I am a current CNCS grantee. My intention is to enroll volunteers ages 55 and up into my RSVP project. Is it required that participating volunteers' continued service activity be tracked separately through the Day of Service award, or can their service be incorporated into my regular RSVP reporting?**

Yes, you must track and report all service activities attributable to the grant they are supporting. The volunteers' hours served can only be attributed towards one CNCS grant. However, a regular RSVP volunteer who is not receiving stipend can also serve an extra day of service on your National Day of Service grant(s).