

# Youth Engagement Zones

## Frequently Asked Questions



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE**

### The Application

**1. Where can we find the application materials?**

The *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)*, *Application Checklist*, and related materials are available at:  
[http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)

**2. Can attachments or hyperlinks be included with an application?**

No. If this information is important, you should work it into the narrative.

**3. Will we be notified by LSA whether we are funded or not?**

Successful applicants will be notified. Applicants that are not funded will also be notified and receive feedback from the application review. We anticipate making announcements in late June.

**4. If we are a successful grantee, when is the projected program start date?**

All programs will need to begin on or before September 30, 2011.

**5. Who will score the Learn and Serve America applications? Will each application be read by more than one person?**

Applications will be read by more than one reviewer. They are all rated against the published selection criteria. Successful applications are selected through an extensive process that will include multiple levels of review as well as approval by the Corporation's Chief Executive Officer. Avoid using abbreviations or language that may not be familiar to reviewers. In the final review stages, the Corporation will also seek to balance the grant portfolio with a geographically and programmatically diverse group of grantees.

**6. If we have more questions as we move through this application process, whom should we contact?**

Contact the National Service Hotline at **800-942-2677** or visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/questions/app/ask>. If you have a specific question related to the content of the application, please email [YEZ@cns.gov](mailto:YEZ@cns.gov).

**7. Are deadline extensions possible?**

CNCS may consider an application after the deadline, but only if the applicant submits a letter explaining the extenuating circumstance that caused the delay. The letter must be sent to [LateApplications@cns.gov](mailto:LateApplications@cns.gov) within the 24-hour period following the deadline. Late applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

We recommend that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the application as a word processing document, then copy and paste the document into eGrants no later than 10 days before the deadline.

Contact the National Service Hotline at **800-942-2677** or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask> if a problem arises while creating an account, preparing, or submitting an application. Be prepared to provide the application ID and organization's name. National Service Hotline hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET Monday through Friday.

If technical issues will prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

In the event of prolonged unavailability of the eGrants system on the date of submission, the Corporation reserves the right to extend the eGrants submission deadline. A notice will be posted in eGrants and on <http://www.nationalservice.gov>.

## Youth Engagement Zone Structure and Partnership

### 1. How should we determine the parameters of our Youth Engagement Zone?

It is up to your organization and partners to determine the parameters of the Zone itself. Evaluate what is reasonable and achievable in relation to the program's stated outcomes, the target demographic, and the approximate size of the grant awards. The goal of this initiative is to engage youth that do not already have opportunities to participate in service-learning – either through school or community-based programs. Your proposed program design should provide concentrated support to youth within a particular Zone (as opposed to all of a metropolitan area). A successful Zone is one in which at least one community-based entity, one community college and one or more secondary schools are part of the program design.

### 2. Who should we designate as the Lead Applicant?

It is up to your partnership to determine who will serve as the legal grant recipient. The Lead Applicant must be a public or private non-profit organization that has administrative capacity, organizational commitment and a physical location in the Zone.

### 3. Does the Lead Applicant need to be located within the Zone?

Yes. The Lead Applicant itself must be located within the Zone.

### 4. If we are a large organization with branches (school district, state-wide non-profit, etc.) can we apply on behalf of one or more of our subsidiaries?

No. The Lead Applicant should be the affiliate located in the Zone.

### 5. Can you describe the partnership?

The Corporation seeks applications from two types of partnerships:

\* Existing partnerships of two or more community entities that have an established track record of working together to address a particular community issue. They will seek to engage youth in service activities that address that issue(s).

\* Existing partnerships of youth-serving organizations / social service providers that have an established track record of collaboration. They will seek to engage the youth they serve in service activities that address community needs.

### 6. Who must be involved in the partnership?

The Youth Engagement Zone partnership *must* include at least one of each of the following: Local Education Agency, a Community College, and a Community-Based Entity. It *may* also include any number of other entities such as institutions of higher education, community or faith-based organizations, Indian tribes, local or municipal governments, etc.

### 7. For the purposes of this grant competition, what is a Local Education Agency (LEA)?

An LEA is defined by the State, but is generally a school district. For this competition, an LEA characterized by an overall  $\geq 70\%$  free and reduced price lunch eligibility and  $\leq 70\%$  graduation rate *is a required partner*. You may, however, choose to focus your program activities on one or more secondary schools within that LEA, as opposed to the LEA in full.

### 8. For the purposes of this grant competition, what is a Community College?

A community college is an accredited public institution of higher education, primarily featuring a two-year Associate's Degree or certificate program. The institution must have existing connections to the LEA and/or youth-serving organizations. A list of community colleges can be found on the American Association of Community Colleges website: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx>.

**9. For the purposes of this grant competition, what is a Secondary School?**

The definition of this term depends on the state. In many states it is middle or junior high and high school, but some states include only high school.

**10. Can our program target only middle schools?**

Yes, if the state definition of secondary schools includes middle schools and this targeting is appropriate to the scope and design of the program.

**11. For the purposes of this grant competition, what is a Community-Based Entity?**

A community-based entity is a public or private non-profit organization that has experience addressing unmet educational, environmental or public safety needs. Examples might include institutions of higher education, community or faith-based organizations, Indian tribes, local or municipal governments, etc.

**Eligibility**

**1. How do we know if our organization is eligible?**

Eligibility guidelines can be in the NOFO (page 4).

**2. If our LEA meets one but not both of the “70% & 70%” requirements, are we eligible? Or, most of the schools within the partnering LEA meet the “70% & 70%” requirement, but some don’t. Are we eligible to apply?**

No. The eligibility factor is whether the partner LEA is characterized by an overall  $\geq 70\%$  free and reduced price lunch eligibility and  $\leq 70\%$  graduation rate.

**3. Are we eligible if one or more of our partners already engage in service-learning programs, or students in the secondary school(s) are required to complete service hours?**

The goal of this initiative is to provide service-learning opportunities to youth that do not already have access to them. The grant will serve a geographic area where less than 30% of the secondary students are already engaged in service-learning.

**4. Does our project need to reach a certain number of youth to be eligible?**

No, there is no specific requirement or numerical target.

**5. What are the end goal requirements for a successful grantee?**

School-based service-learning should become part of the curriculum in the secondary school(s); OR, community-based service-learning activities will engage no less than 90% of the secondary school students in the zone as part of the program.

**Budget**

**1. Is the estimated funding range \$700,000 to \$1,500,000 per year or for three years?**

Awards ranging from approximately \$700,000 to \$1,500,000 should provide funding for 3 years of operations.

**2. What criteria should be used when developing a budget?**

Cost-effectiveness and how the budget supports your proposal should be the basis for budget development. The NOFO contains detailed budget instructions. Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your proposal narrative and all costs should be justified within your application narrative sections.

**3. Is there a minimum grant amount we must apply for? Do we have to apply for the stated figure?**

This initiative is intended to provide some fairly comprehensive assistance to communities seeking to engage young people in service-learning activities. Your request should probably stay within the estimated range to be competitive.

**4. What is the required match?**

Applicants must propose to provide at least 50% of the total program budget as cash or in-kind matching funds – i.e. a dollar-for-dollar match. (For example, if the applicant is requesting \$700,000 from the Corporation, the budget should also include \$700,000 in matching resources for a total program budget of \$1,400,000.)

**5. Could you define in-kind match support?**

In-kind match support is defined as the value of a non-cash contribution to the program. Examples would be equipment, supplies, staff time and benefits and the value of goods and services directly benefiting the program.

**6. What rules apply to in-kind support?**

The rules that apply to in-kind match are the same as those that apply to the use of grant funds.

Contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, will be accepted as part of the Grantee’s matching share for Program Operating Costs when such contributions meet all of the following criteria:

- i. They are verifiable from Grantee records;
- ii. They are not included as contributions for any other federally-assisted Program;
- iii. They are necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient accomplishment of Program objectives; and
- iv. They are allowable under applicable cost principles.

**7. Must the matching resources come from the lead applicant?**

The lead applicant is responsible for the full matching share of the grant but the nature of this competition is to encourage collaboration. Any partners that support the program may contribute cash or in-kind match at any level. If the lead applicant can’t supply the entire amount, they should identify assets in the community in order to fulfill the match.

**8. May we use other Corporation program funds to match LSA programs?**

No. You cannot use Corporation funds (LSA, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps) to match LSA programs. However, you may be able to use other federal funds as a match only if the other agency permits such use.

**9. If we have previously received LSA funding, will our application be reviewed differently?**

All applications will be evaluated using the criteria set out in the NOFO. You can view this document at:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)

**10. We would like to include as part of our Learn and Serve America application a partnership with AmeriCorps. Is this allowed?**

Yes, but you cannot use Corporation dollars from one program to match dollars in another program. However, LSA funds may be used to provide for the supervision and training of national service participants engaged in the service-learning program. Learn and Serve America encourages applicants to collaborate with other Corporation programs since it improves their ability to meet program goals. If you are applying for grants from a variety of programs, you cannot make the success of your program dependent upon receiving a grant through another competition and you should make certain that the activities fall within the scope of your approved program. (Please contact your Program Officer if you are unsure.)

**11. What portion of a person’s salary may be used for the program?**

Only the portion that supports the Learn and Serve America YEZ program.

**12. Can funds be used to pay for participant incentives, stipends or other wages?**

No. Learn and Serve funds cannot be used to pay stipends, allowances, or other financial support paid to any program participant except as reimbursement for transportation, meals, and other reasonable out-of-pocket expenses directly related to program participation. Minor expenses for identification of service-learning participants or recognition of excellent or outstanding participant service are allowable. The purpose of this grant is to promote volunteerism and voluntary civic engagement among young people.

**13. If we plan to purchase two computers at the cost of \$5,000 each, would this be an equipment cost?**

Yes. If the acquisition cost is \$5,000 or more per unit, it is considered equipment. If it is less than \$5,000 per unit, it is considered supplies. Purchases of equipment are limited to 10 percent of the total LSA share.

**14. Can you clarify the calculation of the administrative/indirect cost?**

Details are provided in the NOFO. The applicant may choose one of two methods to calculate the administrative/indirect cost section. Corporation Fixed Percentage Method, or Federally Approved Indirect Cost (IDC) Rate Method. With method 2, whether or not you use the entire IDC rate to calculate administrative costs is up to you. The instructions are found on the competition website:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)

## Evaluation

**1. Where can we get help in developing an independent evaluation?**

There are resources available through Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: NSLC resources. In addition, publications from the United Way of America and the Kellogg Foundation provide an overview of outcome-based evaluation, including an introduction to performance measurement, steps for measuring program outcomes, examples of outcomes and outcome indicators for various programs, and the resources needed for measuring outcomes. The Corporation also encourages programs to partner with organizations and individuals in your local area who can provide evaluation assistance. For example, many programs have successfully partnered with local higher education institutions that are routinely engaged in evaluating the effectiveness of programs.

**2. How can we pay for an independent evaluation?**

Programs may request funds for evaluation in their application.

**3. Is there a preference for external rather than internal evaluations?**

There is no requirement. Your strategy depends on the proposed program design, the organization and its capacity. Some internal evaluations can be very useful tools for improving programs. Be sure the evaluation relates to the program and shows how the program will use evaluation findings to improve.

**4. If a community partner has completed an assessment, can this be mentioned?**

Yes, as long as it is relevant to your application.

## eGrants

**1. Where can we find help with eGrants?**

Contact the National Service Hotline at **800-942-2677** or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>. National Service Hotline hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET Monday through Friday.

**2. We're filling out the eGrants application and don't know our State Application Identifier. What should we put in this section?**

Please enter N/A for this section.

**3. Who can create an eGrants account for an organization?**

Work within your organization to find out who is best to set up an eGrants account. Once the account is set up, the organization may permit others to create user accounts connected to that organization account. A Grantee Administrator (a user role in eGrants, not a specific person within your organization) controls who can access the organization account.

**4. Can you periodically save what you enter in the eGrants system and return at another time to add information or complete the application?**

Yes. Though eGrants will prompt you to save when you exit a screen, we encourage you to save often as you work on your application. We suggest that applicants type information in a word processing document and, when complete and accurate, paste this information into the application.

**5. What is the character limit for an LSA application narrative?**

The NOFO details the specific character limits for each section:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)