

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Federal Agency Name: Corporation for National and Community Service
Funding Opportunity Title: FY2016 Training and Technical Assistance –
Commission Investment Funds
Announcement Type: Initial Announcement
CFDA Number: 94.009

Important Dates:

- A Notification of Intent to Apply is due by *April 22, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time*. Please refer to Section D for instructions for submitting the Notification.
- Applications are due by *May 10, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time*.
- All applicants will be notified by June 30, 2016.
- **Disclosure:** Publication of this Notice of Federal Funding Availability (Notice) does not obligate the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to award any specific number of grants or to obligate any particular amount of funding.

A. DESCRIPTION

1. Purpose of Funding

The FY2016 Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Commission Investment Fund grants (referred to as TTA grants) expand the capacity (knowledge, skills, and resources) of state commissions and Alternative Administrative Entities in priority performance areas defined by CNCS. These funds support CNCS's overall approach to help commissions implement their duties as required by the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended. (See 42 U.S.C. 12638.)

The central and critical question for the TTA grant is 'what service delivery problem is going to be improved or fixed entirely as a result of the investment of the TTA funds?' CNCS is particularly interested in activities that will forge new collaborations and partnerships or develop new skills and knowledge to produce significant and demonstrable improvements within the one-year grant period. The TTA grants may be used to support: commission staffing and staff development in priority performance areas; training events (topics identified below); and collaborative activities. It is extremely important that these funds are invested in activities that will be sustained beyond the one-year grant period – and in the event that future TTA grants are not available from CNCS.

The TTA grants may not be subgranted out to AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps or other service programs, or other nonprofits for their own training needs or purposes.

To provide consistent staff and program development opportunities, and save time and money, commissions are required to use the existing CNCS core curriculum on performance measurement, evaluation, and data quality control for all activities funded by the TTA grant. In addition, commission staff and/or contract employees are required to receive training on the curriculum from CNCS staff. The training will likely be provided at the annual AmeriCorps State and National Symposium in Alexandria, VA, on September 20-23, 2016. Commissions should

budget travel funds for those personnel who will need to attend the CNCS training.

2. Program Authority

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA), as amended. (See 42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.) The full text of the NCSA is available online at <http://uscode.house.gov>. The full regulations are available online at <http://www.ecfr.gov>.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Available Funds

CNCS will award approximately \$5.7 million in FY2016 Training and Technical Assistance Commission Investment Fund grants.

2. Estimated Award Amount

Funds will be awarded on a sliding scale to support State Service Commission TTA. The scale is based on the total number of AmeriCorps State and National members enrolled in the state in the 2014-2015 grant year. CNCS will make awards in the range of \$90,090 - \$130,102. The scale is provided in the Appendix.

3. Project Period

CNCS anticipates making one-year grant awards. Applicants must submit applications for funding that are based on a one-year project period and a one-year budget. While CNCS anticipates awarding one-year grants, it is possible that actual award periods will vary as a result of program requirements, the availability of appropriations, or specific circumstances of an individual application.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Only State Service Commissions are eligible to apply.

Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime may not receive assistance described in this Notice.

Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

2. Cost Share or Matching

There is no cost share or matching requirement.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Content and Form of Application Submission

a. Application Content

Complete applications must have the following components:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Face Sheet
- Narrative
 - Executive Summary
 - Program Design
 - Organizational Capability
 - Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
- Standard Form 424A Budget
- Performance Measures
- Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications

b. Application Fields and Instructions

- **Executive Summary:** Use the text below and fill in the blanks to complete your Executive Summary. In addition, please indicate the total amount of CNCS funds requested and whether or not you intend to apply to host a regional national service training conference in 2017.

[Name of commission], the [state] Service Commission, will provide the following training and technical assistance activities with the Commission Investment Funds: [insert list of activities selected from choices below]. The [state] commission is requesting \$[total dollar amount] to support training and technical assistance activities. The [state] commission [intends or does not intend] to apply to host a regional national service training conference in 2017.

- **Program Design:** Priority Performance Areas and Activities (commissions are required to address one or more priority areas with proposed TTA activities)

- Priority Performance Area #1: Increase AmeriCorps services in rural or under-served areas of the state

Activities:

- provide in-person training for potential grant applicants
- provide online training for potential grant applicants

- Priority Performance Area #2: Increase collaboration and cross-stream partnerships

Activities:

- coordinate local, state, or regional training events or service projects (involving at least two types of service programs)
- provide local, state, or regional commission or program staff peer exchanges

- Priority Performance Area #3: Strengthen subgrantees' ability to conduct high quality performance measurement and evaluation in

order to improve programs and build evidence

It is important for commissions to know that the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation will have very limited capacity for one-on-one technical assistance in 2016-2017, and CNCS highly encourages commissions to request TTA funds to shore up their staff and subgrantee knowledge and demonstrable skills in the areas of performance measurement and evaluation.

Activities:

- training must make use of existing CNCS training resources (e.g. Performance Measurement Core Curriculum, Evaluation Core Curriculum, etc.). Funds may not be used to develop new performance measurement or evaluation training resources.
- technical assistance should be designed to strengthen subgrantees' ability to collect and use data to improve programs and build evidence. Technical assistance may be provided on an individualized basis or to groups of subgrantees with similar needs and capacities. Activities may include:
 - developing or refining logic models
 - developing or improving data collection systems
 - developing and testing data collection instruments
 - conducting evaluability assessments
 - developing evaluation plans and conducting evaluations
- evidence review process: funds may be used to conduct an evidence review that is part of the commission's AmeriCorps State and National grant review process provided that the results of the evidence review are used to provide applicants that receive funding technical assistance that meets the above requirements. Funds may not be used to support any other part of the commission's grant review process.

Commissions receiving funds for any of the above activities are required to budget funds for the lead staff member or contractor to attend at least one CNCS-sponsored training per year. This training will likely be provided in conjunction with the AmeriCorps Symposium in Alexandria, VA (September 20-23, 2016).

Commissions are encouraged to consider the following activities:

- develop and coordinate a network of local evaluation experts to provide training and technical assistance
- combine resources with other commissions to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of technical assistance requiring specialized expertise (e.g., quasi-experimental or experimental evaluation design) or targeting a common group of subgrantees (e.g., small programs, rural programs, or multi-

focus intermediaries)

- Priority Performance Area #4: Promote a positive AmeriCorps member experience and life-long commitment to service

Activities:

- provide local, state, or regional professional development/training events or service projects

- Priority Performance Area #5: Improve commission capacity to design, deliver, and measure the effectiveness of training and technical assistance

Activities:

- hire commission staff in TTA role
- hire contract employees or establish partnerships with local experts to provide TTA to commission and/or subgrantee staff
- upgrade or purchase information management system
- train commission staff and/or subgrantees on information management system

- Optional: Regional National Service Conference in 2017. CNCS will review the list of commissions that indicate they would like to lead a regional national service conference in 2017 via the *Notification of Intent to Apply, due on April 22*. CNCS will invite one commission within each regional cluster to complete the regional conference application narrative and budget (to be provided and completed separately).

- **Organizational Capability:** Describe the process and timeline necessary to complete each activity described in the Program Design section. That is, if you indicated that you will purchase a database or training system to support your state's TTA, briefly describe the procurement process and timeline you will need to complete this activity. Similarly, if you propose hiring contract or commission staff, please briefly describe the personnel process and timeline you will need to accomplish this task. Descriptions provided in this section will help CNCS assess the feasibility of completing all TTA activities described within the grant period.
- **Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy:** CNCS staff will assess this criteria in the budget review. No narrative is required in this field; insert N/A in eGrants.

2. Performance Measures

The Application Instructions contain details for completing the performance measure modules in eGrants. Unless otherwise noted below, enter the required PM outputs and outcomes listed below

verbatim in eGrants as applicant-determined measures.

a. Priority Performance Area #1: Increase AmeriCorps services in rural or under-served areas of the state

Required output:

-Number of organizations receiving training for potential grant applicants

Required outcome:

-Number of organizations receiving training that applied for AmeriCorps grant

b. Priority Performance Area #2: Increase collaboration and cross-stream partnerships

Required aligned output and outcome:

-Number of local, state or regional training events or service projects and number of commission or program staff participating in training events or service projects that improved their knowledge of the national service network

Required aligned output and outcome:

-Number of commission or program staff participating in peer exchanges and number of commission or program staff participating in peer exchanges that implemented a new resource or solution acquired from colleagues

c. Priority Performance Area #3: Strengthen subgrantees' ability to conduct high quality performance measurement and evaluation in order to improve programs and build evidence

Performance Measurement

Commissions using grant funds to strengthen subgrantees' performance measurement practices through training and/or technical assistance must select at least one of the required outputs below. Each required output must be paired with at least one of the corresponding optional outcomes or a high quality applicant-determined outcome developed by the commission. All performance measures must: 1) align with the commission's theory of change; 2) demonstrate logical alignment of outputs and outcomes for the proposed activities in the theory of change; 3) contain outcomes that represent significant changes in the condition of the subgrantee organization that are measurable at the end of a one-year funding period.

Aligned PM 1:

Required Output:

- Number of subgrantee organizations receiving performance measurement training and/or technical assistance

Optional Outcomes (Choose the following or propose an applicant-determined outcome):

- Number of subgrantee organizations that improved performance measures as a result of training and/or technical assistance

Note: Common areas of improvement for performance measures include:

- Logical alignment between performance measure outputs/outcomes and the program's theory of change
- Relevance/significance of performance measure outcomes in relation to the program's

theory of change

- Data collection plan (including proposed instrument) that will yield valid and reliable data for the outputs/outcomes
- Compliance with Performance Measure Instructions and other CNCS performance measure guidance

Commissions may wish to use the CNCS Performance Measures Checklist to assess performance measure quality.

Aligned PM 2:

Required Output:

- Number of subgrantee organizations receiving training and/or technical assistance on data collection practices

Optional Outcome (Choose one of these outcomes or propose an applicant-determined outcome):

- Number of subgrantee organizations that improved data collection plans
- Number of subgrantee organizations that satisfactorily implemented approved data collection plans

Evaluation

Commissions using grant funds to strengthen subgrantees' evaluation practices through evaluation training and/or technical assistance (including technical assistance that incorporates the findings of evidence reviews conducted during the commission's grant review process) must select at least one of the required outputs below. Each required output must be paired with at least one of the corresponding optional outcomes or a high quality applicant-determined outcome developed by the commission. All performance measures must: 1) align with the commission's theory of change for the performance area; 2) demonstrate logical alignment of outputs and outcomes for the proposed activities in the theory of change; 3) contain outcomes that represent significant changes in the condition of the subgrantee organization that are measurable at the end of a one-year funding period.

Aligned PM 1:

Required Output:

- Number of subgrantee organizations receiving evaluation training and/or technical assistance

Optional Outcome (Choose one or more of these outcomes or propose an applicant-determined outcome):

- Number of subgrantee organizations with an approved plan to improve their position on the evidence continuum, either by moving up a step or by strengthening evidence at their current level
- Number of subgrantee organizations that improved their logic model as result of training and/or technical assistance. (Note: An improved logic model is one that more accurately reflects actual program processes and/or outcomes, or the program's overall theory of change. A logic model that is an accurate reflection of program theory and practice is a critical component for a successful evaluation.)
- Number of subgrantee organizations with an approved evaluation plan in place (for an evaluation that will meet CNCS or State Service Commission Formula requirements for

the grant)

d. Priority Performance Area #4: Promote a positive AmeriCorps member experience and life-long commitment to service

Do not complete a performance measure in eGrants for this priority area. Commissions will report the output data in a demographic field provided in the Grantee Progress Report. The demographic field will capture the number of members participating in events or service projects. CNCS will use data collected from the Member Exit Survey to measure the outcome of this performance area.

e. Priority Performance Area #5: Improve commission capacity to design, deliver, and measure the effectiveness of training and technical assistance

Required output:

- Number of commission staff receiving training

Required outcome:

- Number of staff demonstrating increased knowledge and ability to deliver high quality TTA to subgrantees and community organizations

3. Connection to Commission Support Grants

The TTA grants do not replace training and technical assistance activities described in the Commission Support Grants (CSG). Rather, the TTA grants should build on the commission's capacity to provide new, expanded, and/or tailored, high quality assistance to programs and communities across the state in specific priority areas. It is possible there will be a connection between general TTA provided with CSG funds – and in order to meet the CSG performance measures(s). Examples of the types of activities that may be appropriate for each fund source are provided below.

Because of the potential overlap between the allowable activities under a CSG and a TTA grant under this Notice, commissions may want to reprogram activities budgeted under their current CSG awards. By funding those activities through a TTA grant under this Notice, commissions may reduce the need for TTA activities currently budgeted in their CSG. Commissions should keep in mind that they can only reprogram up to 10% cumulatively of their CSG approved budgets without seeking CNCS approval, but that changes to budgets beyond those levels will require CNCS approval, including the need for a grant award amendment.

Commission Support Grants	Commission Investment Funds
<i>Purpose:</i> Support the operations of commissions and AAEs	<i>Purpose:</i> Expand capacity (knowledge, skills, and resources) of commissions, AAEs, and service programs in priority performance areas
<i>Examples of Activities:</i> Personnel: Commission Executive Director Commission Program Officer	<i>Examples of Activities:</i> Personnel: Commission staff or contract employees (e.g., Training Officer, performance measurement/evaluation contract support)
Grant Outreach and Selection: Promote national service in general and complete grant selection processes (e.g., public information sessions/calls, grant review meetings, commission meetings)	Cultivate new MSY placements in under/un-served communities, especially those in rural areas and those that do not receive other national service resources
Compliance and Performance: Monitoring and continuous improvement (e.g., site visits, desk audits, and subgrantee staff orientation and coaching on all aspects of AmeriCorps grant and program management; regular grantee meetings and on-going communications)	Commission staff training and subgrantee orientation, training, coaching, and technical assistance on performance measurement and evaluation (*commissions are highly encouraged to deepen their own staff capacity to provide high quality, direct, and on-going assistance to their subgrantees in these areas)
Collaboration and Sustainability: Cross-stream initiatives (e.g., service projects and professional development for national service programs and participants) Commission succession planning (e.g., professional development for commission staff)	Cross-stream training events or professional development opportunities for commission or program staff Additional commission staff attendance at National Conference on Service and Volunteering

4. Page Limits

Applications *may not exceed six (6) double-spaced pages* for the Narrative, including the SF-424 Face Sheet and Executive Summary as the pages print out from eGrants. The page limit does not include the Budget Form, Budget Narrative, or Performance Measures.

CNCS strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the “Review and Submit”

page prior to its submission in order to check that it does not exceed the page limit.

5. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online:

<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, CNCS suggests registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number, all applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM. To register online go to <https://www.sam.gov/portal/pulbic/SAM/>.

6. Submission Dates and Times

a. Notification of Intent to Apply

All commissions are asked to submit a Notification of Intent to Apply (NOI). The NOI will serve two important purposes: (1) it will provide CNCS with documentation of the total amount of funds to be requested under this announcement (i.e., whether all commissions will request the full allocations for their states); and (2) it will provide an opportunity for commissions to indicate their interest in leading a regional national service training conference in 2017.

The Notification of Intent to Apply is due by ***Friday, April 22, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time***. Please submit the intent to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/commissionttainvestment>. The Notification must include the full legal name of the commission, the name and email address of the person completing the form, the total CNCS funds to be requested (within the allowable limits), and if the commission will apply to lead a regional national service training conference in 2017. There are more details on the regional conferences in Section D.

b. Application Submission Deadline

Applications are due by ***Tuesday, May 10, 2016, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern***.

c. Late Applications

CNCS may consider an application after the deadline. The applicant should submit a letter to LateApplications@cns.gov explaining the extenuating technical circumstances that caused the delay. CNCS must receive the letter within one business day after the deadline. If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, the letter should include the eGrants ticket number provided by the National Service Hotline. Communication with CNCS staff, including an applicant's CNCS Program Officer, is not a substitute for sending the letter.

7. Funding Restrictions

Funding provided under this Notice is subject to, and bound by, all applicable AmeriCorps and CNCS regulations, policies, terms and conditions, and guidance.

8. Other Submission Requirements

a. Electronic Application Submission in eGrants

Applicants must submit applications electronically via eGrants (<https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>). CNCS recommends 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 document, then copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants field no later than 10 days before the deadline.

The person who submits the application must be the applicant's authorized representative. The authorized representative must be using eGrants under his or her own account in order to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

Contact the National Service Hotline at (800) 942-2677 or via (https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_for_questions) if a problem arises when creating an account or preparing or submitting the application. National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, applicants must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

If extenuating circumstances make it impossible for an applicant to submit in eGrants, applicants may send a paper copy of the application via overnight carrier to the following address:

Corporation for National and Community Service
ATT: AmeriCorps State and National – Commission TTA Investment Application
250 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Please use a non-U.S. Postal Service carrier to avoid security-related delays. All deadlines and requirements in this Notice also apply to paper applications. Paper applications must include a cover letter detailing the circumstances that make it impossible to submit via eGrants. CNCS does not accept applications submitted via fax or email.

b. Submission of Additional Documents

Additional documents are not required. Do not submit supplementary material such as videos, brochures, or any items not requested in this *Notice*. CNCS will not review or return them.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Applications will be reviewed on the basis of the information submitted in response to the instructions in Section D.

2. Stages in the Review Process **Compliance Review**

CNCS staff will review all applications to determine if the applicant:

- is an eligible organization
- submitted an application by the submission deadline
- submitted an application that contains all required elements and follows the instructions provided in this Notice

Internal Review

CNCS Staff Reviewers will assess the applications based on the Program Design, Organizational Capability, and Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy. Staff Reviewers will also consider the comprehensiveness and feasibility of the application, as well as the priorities detailed in this Notice. All Staff Reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

Clarification Process

CNCS may ask some applicants to provide clarifying information. This information is used by CNCS staff to make funding recommendations. It is expected that clarification steps in this process will address overall TTA proposed activities as well as the proposed performance measures.

Funding Determination

The program will submit funding recommendations, based on the application review results, for approval by the CNCS CEO.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The Notice of Grant Award signed by the CNCS Grant Officer is the authorizing document for grant activities. An awardee may not expend federal funds until the start of the Project Period identified on the Notice of Grant Award.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Notice of Grant Award incorporates the approved application as part of the binding commitments under the grant award, as well as the requirements of applicable sections of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and other applicable statutes. Awards will also be subject to the specific terms and conditions attached to the award.

Grants under this program are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance, now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205). This final guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122 (the former Cost Principles), A-110 and A-102 (the former Administrative Requirements), A-133 and A-50 (the former Audits and Audit Follow up), and A-89 (the former Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information).

3. Use of Material

To ensure that materials generated with CNCS funding are available to the public and readily accessible to recipients and non-recipients, CNCS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and

materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so (2 CFR §200.315).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

For more information or a printed copy of related material(s), email ttofafa@cns.gov. The TTY number is (800) 833-3722.

For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, call the National Service Hotline at (800) 942-2677. National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Potential applicants can also use this link:

https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_for_questions. Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Technical Assistance

CNCS will host a technical assistance call to answer questions about the Notice and Application Instructions. The call will be held on *April 11, 2016, at 2:30-3:30 p.m. Eastern Time*, and it will be recorded. To participate, call 888-906-7802, passcode 6509067. The recording will be available one hour after the call ends; the recording will be available until May 5, at 800-879-7966.

2. Re-Focusing of Funding

CNCS reserves the right to re-focus program dollars in the event of disaster or other compelling needs.

APPENDIX

State	Fund Limit		State	Fund Limit		State	Fund Limit
AK	\$90,090		CT	\$110,095		AZ	\$130,102
AL	\$90,090		GA	\$110,095		CA	\$130,102
AR	\$90,090		HI	\$110,095		CO	\$130,102
DE	\$90,090		IA	\$110,095		DC	\$130,102
GU	\$90,090		IN	\$110,095		FL	\$130,102
ID	\$90,090		KY	\$110,095		IL	\$130,102
KS	\$90,090		MO	\$110,095		LA	\$130,102
ME	\$90,090		MS	\$110,095		MA	\$130,102
MT	\$90,090		NJ	\$110,095		MD	\$130,102
ND	\$90,090		NM	\$110,095		MI	\$130,102
NE	\$90,090		NV	\$110,095		MN	\$130,102
NH	\$90,090		OK	\$110,095		NC	\$130,102
PR	\$90,090		OR	\$110,095		NY	\$130,102
RI	\$90,090		SC	\$110,095		OH	\$130,102
VT	\$90,090		TN	\$110,095		PA	\$130,102
WY	\$90,090		VA	\$110,095		TX	\$130,102
			WV	\$110,095		UT	\$130,102
						WA	\$130,102
						WI	\$130,102