



**Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and
Community Service**

**Puerto Rico AmeriCorps
Concept Paper Instructions 2019**

**2019 AmeriCorps State Formula
Program Operating Grants
(New Applicants Only)
Concept
Papers are due via email:
March 7, 2019 – 5:00 pm EST**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to AmeriCorps	3
Overview of the Puerto Rico Governor’s Commission	4
Funding Opportunity Overview	5
National Focus Areas	8
Prohibited Activities	9
Concept Paper Development Tips	10
Additional References	10
Puerto Rico Funding Concept Paper Instructions - All Elements Required:	
I. Cover Sheet	11
II. Narratives	12
A. Community Need/Problem	12
B. AmeriCorps Member Service/Solution	12
C. Program Management	12
D. Organizational Capability	12
E. Organizational Track Record	13
III. Budget Worksheet	13
IV. Theory of Change Logic Model	16
V. Organizational Chart	17
VI. Acknowledgement of Terms	17

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (called the Corporation or CNCS), an independent federal agency. The mission of the Corporation is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For more than 20 years, the Corporation—through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Social Innovation Fund programs—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

Through its grant-making efforts and support of traditional volunteerism, the Corporation:

- Directs the power of national service to solve a common set of challenges;
- Expands opportunities for all Americans to serve;
- Builds the enduring capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities to effectively use service and volunteering to solve community problems; and
- Embraces innovative solutions that work.

In order to maximize the impact of the investment in national service, the Corporation is focused on funding programs that can demonstrate an evidence-based approach to creating community impact and solving community problems. Applicants for AmeriCorps funding must demonstrate a well-researched need within the community, a sound plan to engage AmeriCorps members in meeting the community need, and the ability to design and implement effective evaluation systems to capture the outcomes of the AmeriCorps program and members' service.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations to recruit, train, and manage AmeriCorps members during a defined term of service. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in community service.

Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving, and AmeriCorps positions may be full-time, part-time, or less than part-time. Upon successful completion of their service, members may receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust.

The Corporation administers AmeriCorps funding through a network of State Service Commissions. These commissions review grant applications, select grant recipients for state funding or national competition, and monitor grant activities. The information in this document addresses AmeriCorps State funding in Puerto

Rico. The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (PR-CVCS) is the Puerto Rico Service Commission, known in Spanish as *Comision de Voluntariado y Servicio Comunitario*. Additional information about AmeriCorps, as well as details on all other funding and activities at the Corporation, may be found at www.nationalservice.gov.

PUERTO RICO GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Puerto Rico Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (PR-CVCS) funds and supports volunteer service efforts that engage all Puerto Rico citizens to strengthen our communities. Through the combined efforts of supporting traditional volunteerism and funding national service AmeriCorps programs, the PR-CVSC provides solutions to Puerto Rico's most pressing needs in the areas of disaster services, education, environmental awareness, healthy futures, economic opportunity, and veterans and military families.

Funding for National Service Programs

The PR-CVCS is the State Service Commission for the national service AmeriCorps program. The Commission reviews grant applications, completes grant selection, and administers all awards for AmeriCorps State funding each year. In the 2018 – 2019 grant year, the PR-CVCS funded 15 AmeriCorps programs.

Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism

The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service was created to review and approve all AmeriCorps State funding in Puerto Rico and to serve as a body of ambassadors for service and volunteerism in local communities. The Governor-appointed bi-partisan commission also assists in the development and implementation of a three-year strategic plan for service which sets funding and program priorities for allocation of AmeriCorps funds and promotes volunteerism and community service broadly.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

State Agency Name: Governors Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (PR-CVCS)- *Comision de Voluntariado y Servicio Comunitario*

Department: Executive

Instrument Type: Grant Concept Paper Instructions

Funding Opportunity Title: 2019AmeriCorps State Formula Funding

Posted Date: January 21, 2019

Concept Paper Deadline: March 7, 2019, 5:00 pm EST

Concept Paper Notification: The PR-CVCS will announce the results of the AmeriCorps Concept Paper review no later than March 15, 2019. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full AmeriCorps State Formula Grant Application.

Proposed Grant Period: October 1, 2019 – September 31, 2019

Estimated Total Program Funding: Dependent on FY19 federal funding

Maximum Allowable AmeriCorps Funds Requested: No limit per applicant; in general, a new program applicant would not be approved for more than 50 AmeriCorps member positions.

Minimum Required AmeriCorps Positions: 2 MSY minimum required

Matching Requirement: Overall match rate which starts at 24% for first three years of grant and annually increases as outlined in the AmeriCorps Regulations (§2521.60).

Minimum Living Allowance for Full-time AmeriCorps Members: \$13,992.00 (as of posting date and subject to change)

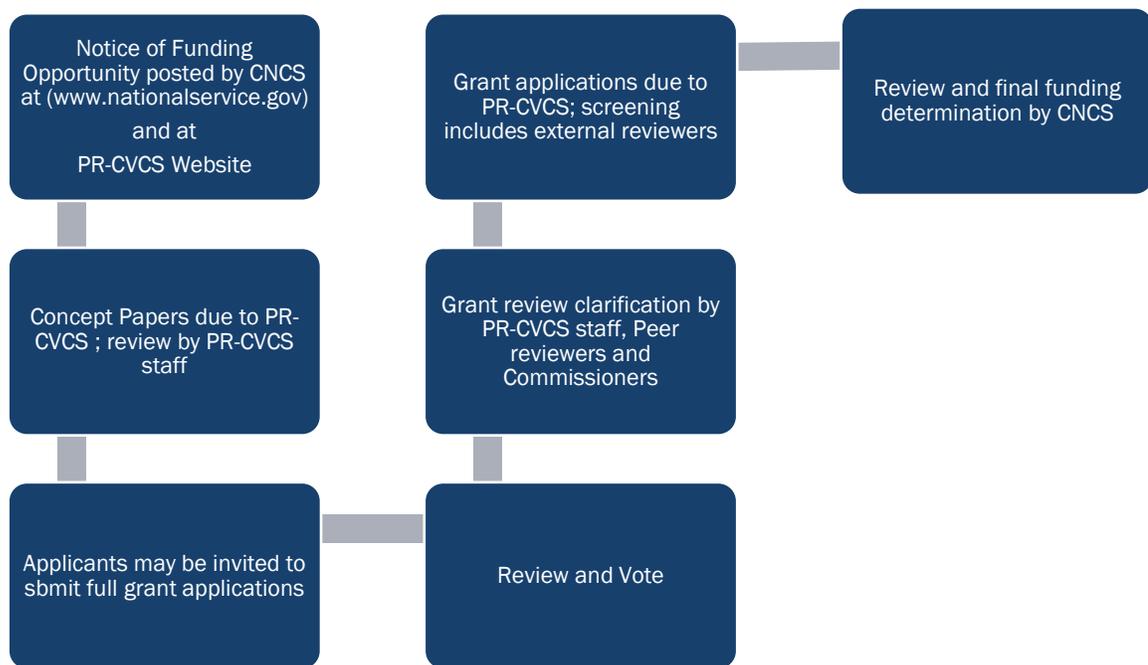
Maximum Federal Cost per Member Service Year (MSY): \$15,192.00 (as of posting date and subject to change)

***One MSY is equal to 1,700 AmeriCorps member service hours served over the course of the Grant Period (this is roughly equivalent to a full-time position for one year).**

Eligible Applicants: Public or private nonprofit organizations, including labor organizations; faith-based and other community organizations; schools or school districts; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; or partnerships or consortia of the above, including applicants that have never received funding from PR-CVCS or AmeriCorps, are eligible to apply. Intermediary organizations intending to re-allocate resources locally are also encouraged to apply for grants. Any 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, serve as a host site for member placements, or act in any type of supervisory role in AmeriCorps programs. The same project cannot be funded by multiple AmeriCorps grants.

AmeriCorps Funding Cycles: The PR-CVCS has two AmeriCorps grant cycles each year. The first is the National Competition and occurs in the fall. Applicants for this funding must be approved by the PR-CVCS and then compete against hundreds of other programs across the country. The second funding cycle is called the Formula Competition; this cycle occurs in the spring. Applicants for the Formula Competition will also be selected by the PR-CVCS, but they will not need to compete at the national level. The grant cycles include several levels of review and may involve external Peer Reviewers. Details of each grant cycle will be posted on the PR-CVCS website. The AmeriCorps funding cycles occur each year and are entirely subject to the appropriation and availability of federal AmeriCorps funds for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Specific deadlines, registration for training and technical assistance (in-person and online), and grant application instructions are posted on the PR-CVCS website. In general, these are the major steps in each grant cycle:



Concept Paper Deadline and Submission Requirements: The deadline for submission is **March 7, 2019**, at 5:00 pm EST. Concept Papers must be submitted via one single emailed PDF document to comisionvoluntariado@fortaleza.pr.gov . The Concept Paper must be typed and follow the style format of this document (justified, one-inch margins, TNR 12-point font, numbered pages). There are multiple elements of the Concept Paper (cover sheet, narratives, budget worksheet, theory of change logic model, organizational chart, and acknowledgement of terms); this entire packet of information must be submitted as one single PDF attachment. Each of these items is equally important in assessing whether or not a

Concept Paper applicant will be invited to complete a full grant application in *eGrants*. Attach the Concept Paper to an email with this subject line: 2019 AmeriCorps Concept Paper. Use this naming convention for the single PDF attachment: <Name of Legal Applicant Concept Paper>. You may also deliver the Concept Paper in hard copy format to the PR-CVCS, *Oficina de Voluntariado*, La Fortaleza, San Juan. Concept Papers received after 5:00 pm on March 7, 2019 will not be considered.

Concept Paper Review Process: The PR-CVCS will review each Concept Paper and notify the applicant of the outcome of the review via email. Applicants may be invited to submit a full grant application via *eGrants*. To determine whether an applicant should be invited to submit a full grant application, the PR-CVCS review team will address these questions:

1. Do the Legal Applicant and the proposed program meet the AmeriCorps funding eligibility guidelines?
2. Does the Concept Paper address one of the national priority funding areas?
3. Does the proposed AmeriCorps program include direct AmeriCorps member service that would lead to identified CNCS performance measure objectives?
4. Does the applicant identify the national performance measure(s) addressed by the AmeriCorps member service?
5. Does the proposal offer a new or expanded service to Puerto Rico citizens?
6. Does the proposal duplicate any existing efforts (funded by AmeriCorps or another source)?
7. Did the applicant fully address all required elements of the Concept Paper?
8. Does the proposal demonstrate an adequate understanding of required AmeriCorps program management and restrictions/prohibited activities?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each element of the Concept Paper?
10. How viable is the proposal, given the PR-CVCS experience with and knowledge of the AmeriCorps grant-making process?

Pending the outcome of this review, applicants may be invited to submit a full grant application for AmeriCorps State Funding; the full application is due on **April 25, 2019** via *eGrants* (the AmeriCorps online grants management program).

All correspondence concerning this Concept Paper will be conducted via email.

PR-CVCS Technical Assistance: For organizations invited to submit full grant applications, the PR-CVCS will provide an introduction to *eGrants* training session on March 16, 2017 from 1:30-3:00 p.m. This training is mandatory for all new applicants.

PR-CVCS Funding Orientation: The PR-CVCS will host two Funding Orientations to review the Concept Paper instructions and provide more

information on AmeriCorps for potential applicants. While these are not mandatory, it is highly recommended for those interested in applying to attend at least one of the orientations: January 24 & 25, 2019.

NATIONAL FOCUS AREAS

Applicants for AmeriCorps funding must address one of the national service focus areas and objectives of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The focus area is identified in bold below, and programs must provide at least one of the impact objectives listed after the issue area. This is a requirement for AmeriCorps funding

For each of these focus areas, the Corporation has identified specific objectives and, in many cases, standard performance measures that AmeriCorps programs must meet. For extensive information on CNCS funding goals, performance objectives, strategies, and priority measures, read the CNCS Strategic Plan at www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan.

1. **Disaster Services:** the CNCS overall goal is to fund programs that build the capacity of national service network organizations to help their states and localities prepare, respond, recover and mitigate disasters, and increase community resiliency.
2. **Economic Opportunity:** the CNCS overall goal is to fund programs that provide, support, and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people.
3. **Education:** the CNCS overall goal is to fund programs that provide, support, and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children.
4. **Environmental Stewardship:** the CNCS overall goal is to fund programs that provide direct services that contribute to increased energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, or improving at-risk ecosystems, and support increased citizen behavioral change leading to increased efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and economically disadvantaged communities.
5. **Healthy Futures:** the CNCS overall goal is to fund programs that provide direct services that enable seniors to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity; and improve access to primary and preventive health care.

6. **Veterans & Military Families:** the CNCS overall goal is to demonstrate the potential for CNCS-supported, national service interventions to positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength

2019-2020 AMERICORPS PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

1. Attempting to influence legislation;
2. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
3. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
4. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
5. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
6. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
7. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
8. Providing a direct benefit to— a. a business organized for profit; b. a labor union; c. a partisan political organization; d. a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and e. an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph C. 7. above, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
9. Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
10. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
11. Such other activities as CNCS may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds.

PR-CVCS Policy: Grantees must include a copy of, and training on, the AmeriCorps prohibited activities in member and site supervisor orientation/training at the beginning of the year. Compliance with the prohibited activities must be monitored throughout the program year.

CONCEPT PAPER DEVELOPMENT TIPS

AmeriCorps grant competitions are fierce; each year, there are significantly more applications than available funding will support. It is extremely important that your proposal is thoroughly completed and well-presented. Below are ideas to help you present your project in the best way possible:

- **ASSESS YOUR FIT WITH AMERICORPS:** Be sure that your proposal addresses the national priority funding areas and that you are familiar with AmeriCorps program requirements. Demonstrate this knowledge in your proposal.
- **PAINT A VIVID PICTURE OF YOUR NEED:** Help the reviewers understand who you are, what the needs of your community are, and how AmeriCorps can help better serve Puerto Rico citizens. Provide specific details on your agency, community, programs, partners, etc. Avoid generalities, there is no room in the Concept Paper for filler language.
- **FOLLOW THE RULES:** Provide the information in the order and format that it is requested. Do not attach any information that is not explicitly required; do not direct the Concept Paper reviewers to refer to web links for further information. No additional information will be considered in the review of your Concept Paper.
- **FOCUS ON YOUR PROPOSAL'S READABILITY:** Present your organization and program ideas in the best possible light so that the reviewers can focus on your content and the needs of your community. One important way to do this is to make your document very easy to read – help the reviewers stay focused on your ideas by presenting a well-written and very polished document. Engage a strong writer and proof reader to complete all elements of the Concept Paper (especially the narratives) and be sure that you have time to carefully check your document for grammar, spelling, etc. prior to submission. Avoid overusing acronyms and write the Concept Paper for a broad audience of readers who are not familiar with your organization or the community you serve.
- **DO YOUR RESEARCH:** Be sure to make use of the resources you have to learn about AmeriCorps and develop a strong proposal. You can also find all kinds of information on performance management, fiscal oversight, and more at the National Service Knowledge Network (www.nationalserviceresources.org).

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

In addition to the resources noted above, it will be very important for your organization to make sure you are aware of and in alignment with the program and financial management requirements for AmeriCorps funds. You should be sure to read all the current grant year Provisions at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing->

[americorps-grants](#). And you can find a link to all AmeriCorps Regulations online at <http://www.ecfr.gov>. You may also find the federal Notice of Funding Opportunity and full 2019 grant application instructions at www.nationalservice.gov.

PUERTO RICO AMERICORPS CONCEPT PAPER OUTLINE

The deadline for submission is March 7, 2019, at 5:00 pm EST. Applications must be submitted via one single emailed PDF document to comisiondevoluntariado@fortaleza.pr.gov. The Concept Paper must be typed and follow the style format of this document (justified, one-inch margins, TNR 12-point font, numbered pages). Attach the Concept Paper to an email with this subject line: 2019 AmeriCorps Concept Paper. Use this naming convention for the single PDF attachment: <Name of Legal Applicant Concept Paper>. Late Concept Papers will not be considered.

Type your answers directly into the Concept Paper outline. Do not delete the original outline, questions, etc.

I. PUERTO RICO AMERICORPS CONCEPT PAPER COVER SHEET (1-page limit)

Name of Legal Applicant (organization, company etc..)	
Address	
Website	
Executive Director	
Executive Director Phone	
Executive Director Email	
Contact for Concept Paper Review Process (if different than above)	
Contact Phone	
Contact Email	
Federal Identification Number /EIN	
DUNS Number	

SAM Registration (Specify expiration date)	
Areas Affected by the Project (Provide name of specific city or region)	
Delinquent on Any Federal Debt	YES/NO If yes provide an explanation)
Name of Proposed AmeriCorps Program (If different than Legal Applicant)	
Identify 1 National Focus Area addressed in Proposal (listed on page 8 above; select only one issue area for the concept paper)	

II. NARRATIVES (4-page limit – includes outline)

- A. Community Need/Problem: On what community problem(s) will you be working? What is the target community you will serve? Provide a brief summary of specific evidence to support the need for your proposed AmeriCorps program.
- B. AmeriCorps Member Service/Solution: Describe the structure of the proposed AmeriCorps program. Explain how this program will offer a new or expanded solution to the identified community problem. Include details on the number of AmeriCorps member positions requested, the locations of the members' service, and the types of direct services to be performed. Be sure to explain the connection between the community need identified in the section above and the members' direct service.
- C. Program Management: Describe how the legal applicant will oversee an effective program. Describe how AmeriCorps members will be recruited, selected, trained, and supervised throughout their terms of service. Describe how the program will ensure that it operates in accordance with all AmeriCorps regulations. If applicable, identify service sites, and describe site supervisor training and monitoring plan.
- D. Organizational Capability: Provide a description of the legal applicant's institutional capacity to operate or coordinate a program comparable to that proposed. Include the agency's budget total, number of staff members, and brief descriptions of agency programs and operations. Describe the plan to raise the required matching funds for the AmeriCorps grant, and list the partner organizations that will be involved with the program.

- E. Organizational Track Record: Briefly describe your expertise and accomplishment in the program activities you propose for the AmeriCorps program. Have you ever received support from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)? Support is defined as a director grant or placement of AmeriCorps members. If so, please specify the date(s) received, type, and amount of support (e.g. grant amount, number of VISTA placements). If you currently receive funding, what percentage of your total budget comes from CNCS?

For any type of current AmeriCorps grantee, sub-grantee, or service site (of the PR-CVCS, National, etc.), provide a summary of your program results to date. Specifically, provide the total number of AmeriCorps members you have managed (in and/or outside of Puerto Rico), the number of citizens you have served, and the number of service sites you have worked with since your program's inception (in and/or outside of Puerto Rico). In addition, provide a brief description of your measurable outcomes to date that answer this question: what has changed as a result of your work? It will be most important to reflect significant community impact here (i.e. do not provide a list of activities or outputs without any indication of significant change in the community or target population

III. BUDGET WORKSHEET (2-page limit – includes outline)

Complete the following simplified worksheet to illustrate the funding necessary to complete your proposed AmeriCorps program. You do not need to provide line item detail in this worksheet; simply estimate the amount of federal AmeriCorps funds you would request and the amount of matching funds you would commit should you be invited to submit a full AmeriCorps grant application. Be sure to carefully check your math on each row and in your total columns.

Note that there is a minimum requirement of 2 members in any combination of terms (e.g. full-time, part-time, minimum time). The maximum allowable amount of federal AmeriCorps funds requested per MSY is \$15,192.00 (*as of date of posting and subject to change in 2019).

AMERICORPS CONCEPT PAPER BUDGET WORKSHEET

SECTION I: PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS

Budget Item	AmeriCorps Funds Requested	Match Funds Proposed	Total Budget Proposed
Personnel – salary, fringe			
Staff travel			
AmeriCorps member training			
Evaluation			
Program support (office supplies, printing, etc.)			
Sub-total Section I	\$	\$	\$

SECTION II: MEMBER COSTS

Budget Item	AmeriCorps Funds Requested	Match Funds Proposed	Total Budget Proposed
Living Allowance Amount and Number of Members Requested:			
Full-time (1,700 hours/year) = 1 MSY Provide amount of living allowance x number of members			
Half-time (900 hours/year) = .5 MSY			

Other: identify type of position Provide amount of living allowance x number of members			
Sub-total Section II	\$	\$	\$

SECTION III: INDIRECT COSTS

Budget Item	AmeriCorps Funds Requested	Match Funds Proposed	Total Budget Proposed
<i>Limit AmeriCorps Funds to 5% of Total Budget</i>			
Total All Sections	\$	\$ Match must be at least 24% of total	\$

Cost per MSY	\$ Cost per MSY= Total AmeriCorps Funds Requested Divided by Total MSYs Requested. <i>Do not exceed maximum allowable cost per MSY (\$15,192.00*)</i>
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Source of Match Funds Proposed	Amount and type of match: Government, Private Giving, Private Foundation, Corporate, Other (Specify)
Example: ABC Foundation	\$15,000 Private Foundation
Total Match	\$ Amount here must be the same as Total Match Funds Proposed above

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE LOGIC MODEL (3-page limit-includes outline): For resources and tips on creating your Theory of Change, please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/toc-powerpoint.pdf> and <http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/theory-change>.

Problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-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/types 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, attitudes, and opinions. 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 condition or status in life. Depending on program design, these outcomes may or may not be measurable during the grant year. Some programs, such as environmental or capacity-building programs, may measure changes in condition over a period as short as one year.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (1-page limit)

Attach a one-page organizational chart that includes the job title and first and last names of all staff who will be involved with the proposed AmeriCorps program. Be sure that your chart indicates the Legal Applicant's organizational structure in its entirety and that it includes the placement of the AmeriCorps program staff within that structure. Provide a clear title or header on the document that identifies it as an element of the 2019 Puerto Rico AmeriCorps Concept Paper.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TERMS (1-page limit)

Submit this list of acknowledgements along with the signature as part of the Concept Paper PDF email by the deadline. You may copy paste it into your document.

With the submission of the AmeriCorps Concept Paper, I understand that:

- the Concept Paper serves two functions: (1) it is a planning tool to help organizations explore several key AmeriCorps program elements without the burden of submitting a full application online (which requires a minimum of 40 staff hours); and (2) it is a screening tool for the PR-CVCS to use to quickly assess the viability of applicants for AmeriCorps program funding competition;
- the PR-CVCS review criteria are published in the Concept Paper instructions;
- details on national AmeriCorps funding priorities and program requirements are published online (www.nationalservice.gov);
- the submission of a Concept Paper does not guarantee that the applicant will be invited to submit a full grant application;
- the submission of a Concept Paper or grant application does not guarantee that the applicant will receive funding;
- the PR-CVCS will correspond with the identified Concept Paper Contact via email;
- the Concept Paper review decisions are final;
- the PR-CVCS staff, in general, do not schedule one-on-one meetings with applicants regarding their submissions (prior to submission or after the final decisions have been announced);
- the PR-CVCS will provide a brief summary of application's strengths and challenges no later than 5 business days (for those **invited** to submit a full application) or 90 business days (for those **not invited** to submit a full application) following the announcement of the final Concept Paper review decisions.

I understand and agree to these terms:

Signature of Legal Applicant Contact or Executive Director/Date