

Learn and Serve America  
2004 Homeland Security Initiative  
FAQ

Technical Assistance Calls – Pre-NOFA

Q: The initial description of funds availability mentioned the digital divide as a potential focus for this grant competition. Can a proposal outlining projects related to the digital divide be successful in this grant competition?

A: After consultation with Corporation staff and a review of current priorities, this grant competition will focus solely on homeland security related projects.

Q: How do you define homeland security?

A: For the purposes of this grant competition, we use the term homeland security in the broadest sense. Projects may address the mitigation, prevention, response or clean-up of both man-made and natural disasters. Projects seeking to educate students and communities on issues related to safety and security are also considered within the realm of this definition. The proposed activities must fall within a larger community or campus-wide safety/security initiative.

Q: What programmatic elements are required?

A: Projects must engage K-12 students in meaningful service in their communities. Projects that offer opportunities for youth/adult partnerships, especially the involvement of seniors, are encouraged. In addition, demonstration models and pilot projects that may be replicated and/or expanded are expected.

Q: Are grantees required to pre-select sub-grantees?

A: It is not required that grantees pre-select sub-grantees, though it is definitely an advantage given the shortened grant cycle (2 years, rather than 3 years). If grantees do not pre-select, a detailed plan for finding quality sub-grantees must be included in the proposal. Training and technical assistance must be provided to selected sub-grantees, and are the responsibility of the grantee.

Q: Are grantees required to contract with an external evaluator?

A: No. An external evaluation is not a requirement. Grantees will be held accountable for the performance measures outlined in the proposal. The collection and reporting of data necessary to demonstrate progress and results are a critical part of the evaluation component, and many grantees find that this responsibility is best performed by an external evaluator.

Q: How can the sustainability of a project be demonstrated?

A: The ability of grantees to continue service-learning activities funded by a federal grant after the grant cycle is completed is only one aspect of sustainability. Other evidence of sustainability

may include the integration of policy changes, the level and type of training available, and the institutionalization of service-learning as evidenced by student/teacher assessments that are part of a program evaluation.

Q: Are Higher Education institutions that provide service-learning opportunities to college students eligible for this grant competition?

A: Only if the primary service-learning activities of the college students are directed at engaging youth (K-12) in service-learning activities. This grant competition is supported by funds specifically for youth (K-12) in school based settings.

Q: If an organization currently has a service-learning grant from Learn and Serve America, would that organization still be eligible for this new grant competition?

A: Yes, such a program would be eligible to apply. Current funding does not exclude an organization from applying for this new NOFA. However, the proposed project must not be duplicative of the program that currently receives funding.

Q: What amount of funding is available through this NOFA for service-learning programs?

A: Grants will range from \$300,000 - \$500,000 per year for a total of two years. Grantees will be eligible to reapply for funds in the 2006 competitive grant round; however, funding is not guaranteed.

#### Technical Assistance Calls – Post-NOFA publication

#### **Eligibility**

Q: Are national non-profit organizations eligible?

A: Yes. Non-profits which have been in existence for at least one year, make grants in two or more states, and have experience with service-learning are eligible as a Grantmaking Entity (GME). Please note, grantees are required to make subgrants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in partnership with at least one additional local public or private nonprofit organization to implement, replicate, or expand service-learning activities in local communities.

Q: Define experience with service-learning.

A: Experience leading youth in service with a reflection component and learning objectives.

Q: Are private, non-profit elementary schools eligible?

A: They are not eligible as the primary applicant (fiscal agent), but they may be a subgrantee in partnership with an LEA. Private schools should check with their state commission for national and community service (state commissions) or state education agency (SEA) to identify a primary applicant.

Q: Are universities and community colleges eligible?

A: Yes, as GMEs. Again, application as a GME requires that the applicant has been in existence for at least one year, plans to make subgrants in two or more states, and is experienced in service-learning. Please note, grantees are required to make subgrants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in partnership with at least one additional local public or private nonprofit organization to implement, replicate, or expand service-learning activities in local communities.

Q: Is the District of Columbia considered a state in regards to meeting the two state requirement for GMEs?

A: Yes.

Q: Are State Commissions eligible to apply?

A: Yes, as GMEs. There is precedent for a state commission making subgrants in more than one state.

Q: Can a faith-based organization apply alone?

A: Yes, but only as a GME, with the intention of subgranting to LEAs, as discussed above. Through this NOFA, we are funding intermediaries – applicants who plan to make grants.

Q: We are a non-profit connected with the public schools, are we eligible?

A: Contact the state commission or state education agency and encourage them to apply as the grantee. If you apply as a GME, you are committing to subgranting rather than implementation of service-learning projects. If you are interested in implementation, contact a GME, SEA or state Commission about applying. If you are a strong subgrantee with a plan and are willing to work on the application they might be interested in submitting a proposal if they aren't already.

Q: Do the estimated 6-10 grant awards include GMEs and SEAs?

A: Yes.

Q: What if I approach the GME or SEA about initiating an application, but they already have subgrantees lined up to carry out different activities than my organization wants to implement?

A: One grantee can subgrant for different sets of activities with different subgrantees.

Q: Do subgrantees need to develop partnerships?

A: Yes. LEAs must partner with at least one additional organization. The LEA partners may include private schools, for-profit businesses, other non-profits, and institutions of higher education. The LEA partnerships are responsible for implementation, replication, and/or expansion of service-learning activities in local communities.

Q: Regarding a subgrantee partnership, if I subgrant to an LEA, does the LEA then subgrant?

A: We do not recommend that the LEA then provide subgrants. Instead, memoranda of agreement or contracts are more appropriate.

Q: You suggest pre-selection of subgrantees? Is this required?

A: No, applicants are not penalized for not pre-selecting subgrantees as long as their proposal outlines a strong plan for how to select subgrantees. However, if an applicant has pre-selected subgrantees, it will be to that applicant's advantage to indicate so in the application.

Q: How many subgrants need to be made?

A: There is no required number of subgrants per grant. However, for this competition we encourage a smaller number of larger subgrants as opposed to many small subgrants.

Q: I am working with local schools and school districts within three states. How do I know which ones are LEAs?

A: The definition of an LEA varies state by state. We recommend contacting the State Education Agency (SEA) or the specific school district to determine if they are an LEA.

### **eGrants Questions**

Q: If my organization has an account with eGrants, must we establish a new account for this NOFA?

A: No, you can use your existing account to create an application for this NOFA. If you are part of a larger organization that has an eGrants account, you may need to have the account manager add your new prospective project director added to the "people" category within eGrants so that they may gain access for application and submission.

Q: Do we need to submit a letter of intent to apply via eGrants?

A: No, an email to [jpeoples@cns.gov](mailto:jpeoples@cns.gov) is sufficient.

Q: The Application Instructions state the following, "The person who signs this form must be the applicant's authorized representative. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office." How do we get this item on file?

A: With eGrants, a section of the application refers to Assurances which must be accepted by someone authorized to commit the agency to the grant agreement. By reading these documents and selecting "I Agree" prior to submission, an authorizing official will have "signed" the proposal.

Q: Does the 42,000 character count limit for the narrative component of this application include spaces?

A: Yes, spaces are included in the character count. Performance measure narrative is not included in that count, but the performance measure section contains its own character count limit as well.

Q: Where can I find additional help with eGrants?

A: Applicants may call the CNCS eGrants help desk at 1-888-677-7849. Applicants may also contact technical assistance “eGrants coaches” during this NOFA at 888-333-8272. Coaches will be available March 1, 2004 through the submission date. Finally, an eGrants user manual is available at [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

## **General**

Q: Can we submit our grant proposal for preview and feedback?

A: No. We are CNCS is not able to give feedback prior to formal review. Please contact our technical service provider if you would like more information on the types of program models and activities that are already existence.

Q: The NOFA addresses a link between activities and academic instruction. Can you give examples of successful programs?

A: Please refer to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org). The Program Directory is located at: <http://www.servicelearning.org/article/archive/45/>.

Q: Can you provide examples of the scope of a successful program such as the number of students involved?

A: Please refer to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org). You may also wish to review the list of current grantees on the Learn and Serve America web site – [www.learnandserve.org](http://www.learnandserve.org).

Q: Where can I go for technical assistance in developing the homeland security aspects of a project for this application?

A: Project TAHS is the Technical Assistance provider for homeland security. Assistance can be obtained by calling 1.800.656.3011 or by email at [tahs@aiweb.com](mailto:tahs@aiweb.com).

Q: What is the matching requirement?

A: First time LSA grantees must provide a total program match of 10% the first year, 20% the second year, 30% the third year and 50% in the fourth and all subsequent years. Applicants who are past recipients of LSA funds must meet match levels in accordance with the number of years previously funded by LSA.

Q: Is the grantee required to generate the match, or can it be collected from subgrantees?

A: Grantees may pass the match requirement on to subgrantees according to their contractual arrangement.

Q: What constitutes match?

A: Match is fairly flexible. It can be cash or in-kind as long as it can be documented. The source(s) of match may be federal (non Corporation for National and Community Service - CNCS), state, or local (public or private). No funds that are supplied by CNCS (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, or Learn and Serve America) may be used toward a match for a program funded by CNCS.

Q: I noticed there is a 15% cap on planning/capacity building. Does staff time fit into this category?

A: Note that staff time may be prorated between the Capacity Building, Implementation and Administration sections as appropriate. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 requires that the majority of funds for LSA School-Based competition be used for implementation of service-learning programs at the local level. A maximum of 15% of grant funds may be used for training and capacity building by the grantee. State Education Agency applicants and GME's must budget 10-15% (a waiver for up to 20% is available for SEAs) for planning and capacity-building activities in support of overall program activities. The remaining funds must be used to provide subgrants to LEAs partnerships. As an exception, some staff expenses may be included under implementation if the staff time is for training and technical assistance to service-learning coordinators.

Q: Where should I account for training and technical assistance and evaluation expenses?

A: Training and technical assistance expenses should be included in Section I. of the budget - Planning and Capacity Building. Evaluation expenses must also be included in the Planning and Capacity Building section of your budget.

Q: Please explain the indirect cost rate calculation.

A: Applicants can choose to use one of two methods to calculate allowable administrative costs – a Corporation Fixed Percentage method (Option A) or a Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate method (Option B). Select only one of these options. The Corporation/federal share of administrative costs is limited by statute to 5% of total federal funds actually expended under this grant. If you choose Option A, you may charge, for administrative costs, a fixed 5% of the total of the federal funds expended. In order to charge this fixed 5%, the grantee match for administrative costs may not exceed 10% of all direct cost expenditures. These rates may be used without supporting documentation and are in lieu of a formally approved indirect cost rate. Please refer to the budget instructions:

<http://www.nationalservice.org/whatshot/PDFs/LSASchool-BasedHSBudgetInstructions.pdf>

Q: Some universities have a higher indirect cost rate. Can the Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate be used?

A: Yes. Assuming the Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate is current and you are able to substantiate it, you may charge 5% of indirect costs to the Corporation and the balance would be included under grantee match.

Q: The NOFA says the Corporation may make up to 10 awards of up to \$500,000 for each of two successive years. Just to clarify, does that mean the full award could be \$1,000,000 for the two year grant period?

A: Yes. The second year of funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. All funding estimates are projections for the guidance of potential applicants. The Corporation is not bound by any estimate in the NOFA.

Q: The program guidance suggests the use of the Logic Model to develop performance measures. Is this a requirement, and would the worksheets be submitted?

A: Use of the Logic Model is not required, but strongly encouraged. If you look at what is asked for in the performance measures, you will see how much utility the model has. You would not submit the logic model worksheets as eGrants will not accept attachments.

Q: The NOFA refers to four phases of emergency management. Do all phases need to be addressed in my application?

A: No. Generally, you may leave it up to the LEAs to identify the community needs. However, a quality proposal will identify community need that you hope to address.

Q: Are there areas/activities that will be prioritized in funding decisions?

A: No, no criteria area is rated with higher priority. However, the activities must be part of a larger homeland security initiative or project on campus or in the community. For example, an anti-bullying project alone cannot be funded. It must be part of a larger campus or community initiative to increase safety in the school or community.

Q: Can I mail attachments or appendices if they arrive prior to the deadline?

A: No. Appendices and attachments will not be reviewed.

Q: Do the subgrantees need to sign off on the application?

A: No. Subgrantee acceptance is not part of the proposal. We expect that grantees will create well-developed grant guidelines for subgrantees to follow.