

FY 2016 Notice of Funding Availability

Frequently Asked Questions

April 14, 2016

(Questions and answers that have been added or edited since the April 7 version of this document are placed at the end of each section and marked with an asterisk.)

The Notice of Federal Funds Availability (*Notice*) and the included application instructions for the Social Innovation Fund competition are the primary sources of information about the requirements of this grant competition. This document is intended to provide further clarification, where necessary, and does not supplement nor duplicate those documents.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will host Technical Assistance (TA) webinars and conference calls for potential Social Innovation Fund applicants. The schedule of these calls and the other applicant resources, including the answers to frequently asked questions, will be posted on the SIF webpage (nationalservice.gov/SIF). Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to visit the website to access these resources and for updates. General inquiries may be directed to SIFApplication@CNS.gov.

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Application Materials

1.1. Where do I get a SIF grant application?

Applicants apply for SIF funds via the CNCS online grants management system called eGrants. The application instructions explain how to complete the application in eGrants. The Notice of Federal Funding Availability contains the selection criteria and other information necessary to complete an application. To create an eGrants account and begin an application, please go to the eGrants website: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/>

1.2. Is there a way to upload attachments/appendices so graphics, maps, charts, etc. can be included?

No, there is not. Beyond what is requested in the application, attachments and supplementary materials are not accepted.

1.3. Are letters of recommendation or other supplementary materials considered?

Letters of recommendation and other materials not requested in the *Notice* or application instructions will not be reviewed, considered or returned.

*1.4. Is the proposal scoring rubric available?

Yes. The application review information and selection criteria can be found in the *Notice* on pages 14-18.

Applicant Eligibility

2.1. What would we need to submit to show that we qualify as a grantmaking institution?

You are not expected to submit documentation beyond what you provide in your application. In the executive summary of your application and in response to the organizational capability section of the selection criteria, you have the opportunity to describe your organization.

2.2. We make competitive grants as required, but just within our affiliated network. Are we eligible to be an intermediary?

Yes. While you would not have been eligible in prior years, beginning in 2014, the definition of eligibility has been expanded to include organizations such as yours. Please read the *Notice* for expectations of these organizations.

2.3. Can a for-profit intermediary apply?

No, for profit entities are not eligible for SIF funding.

2.4. Is it okay to apply as an intermediary that is only serving one jurisdiction (in our case Washington DC)? We would be looking to invest more deeply in 5 underserved neighborhoods and then grow and scale our intervention within the city?

Yes, this is permissible.

2.5. If our organization hasn't made a grant in the last fiscal year, but has made many grants in the past, are we still eligible?

The fact that you skipped a year of grantmaking wouldn't disqualify you. However, to be eligible, your organization must meet our requirement of investing in nonprofit community organizations or programs through grants as an essential rather than a collateral means of fulfilling its mission and vision, as described in the *Notice*.

2.6. Is Puerto Rico eligible to be a Social Innovation Fund intermediary?

For the purposes of eligibility, Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories are considered to be states. A state or local government may collaborate with an existing grantmaking institution or participate in an eligible partnership but may not apply directly to be an intermediary.

2.7. Can non-U.S. entities apply for funding?

SIF Funding is restricted to organizations based in the U.S. or U.S. territories proposing programs that serve communities in the U.S. or U.S. territories.

2.8. Is a federally recognized Indian Tribe eligible to be a SIF intermediary?

Federally recognized tribes are sovereign legal entities, similar to state governments. They have all the rights and attributes of a sovereign entity, such as a state. A unit of government is not an existing grantmaking institution for the purposes of the SIF *Notice*. That is to say, a Tribe, or other unit of government may collaborate with an existing grantmaking institution or participate in an eligible partnership but may not apply directly to be an intermediary.

2.9. Can religious organizations apply for funding?

Religious organizations that are existing grantmaking institutions and otherwise meet the eligibility criteria may apply to be a SIF intermediary.

2.10. What if the intermediary is new but the partner organizations (CBOs) have years of experience and data collection?

At the time of its application to CNCS for funding, the grantmaking institution will be judged solely on its own merits and whether it meets the eligibility and other requirements outlined in the *Notice*.

2.11. After becoming a SIF grantee, does an intermediary have to request the same level of funding each year of its grant?

There is no requirement that intermediaries request the same amount of funding from year to year.

2.12. Are new nonprofits eligible if partnering with a grantmaker and government entity?

To be an eligible applicant, a nonprofit must either be an experienced grantmaker, or partner with one to form an eligible partnership.

2.13. I understand that for the first time this year, universities are eligible to apply as intermediaries as long as they meet the definition in the *Notice* of a grantmaking institution. Would a university be eligible if it regularly makes internal grants and some small external grants?

A nonprofit university is eligible to apply as an intermediary if it can make the case that it invests in nonprofit community organizations or programs through grants as an essential means of fulfilling its mission as described in the *Notice*.

***2.14. Why is it that children over the age of five years old are not considered for the early childhood funding priority? Would programs focused on third graders, for example, be eligible for SIF?**

Programs focused on children over the age of five are eligible for SIF funding if they fall within one or more of our issue areas. In order to receive priority consideration, however, applicants must demonstrate the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes. The early childhood education priority this year focuses on children through age five.

***2.15. Is feedback regarding eligibility provided after the letter of intent is submitted?**

No feedback is provided after the letter of intent is submitted. Please review the eligibility requirements stated in the *Notice*. If you still are not sure if you meet our eligibility requirements, please submit an inquiry to SIFApplication@cns.gov.

Eligible Partnerships and Collaborations

3.1. What is the difference between an “eligible partnership” and a “collaboration”?

In an eligible partnership, the partner organizations share responsibilities under the award. A collaboration, for the purpose of this competition, is when an organization enters into an arrangement to access needed competencies but remains solely responsible for the award. See the *Notice* for more detail.

3.2. How might an “eligible partnership” be structured?

Following are two illustrative examples.

Example number one: Four community foundations across the country pool their resources and apply as an issue-based Social Innovation Fund working on the priority issue area of economic opportunity. Their partnership also includes an existing grantmaking institution (which we will call Grantmaker A) with deep experience in competitive grantmaking. The eligible partnership proposes to have Grantmaker A oversee the competitive selection process across their respective geographies and with their local input. Grants would go directly from Grantmaker A to subgrantees (as two levels of subgranting are not allowable under the Social Innovation Fund). The community foundations would support, monitor and evaluate subgrantees and facilitate constructive relationships with local units of government and others.

Example number two: Three existing grantmaking institutions apply as a geographically-based Social Innovation Fund. They propose to focus on all three of the priority issue areas. They each bring their own issue expertise. They propose to run separate competitive subgrant selection processes. However, they propose to pool resources for capacity-building, evaluation, and knowledge management across their subgrantees.

These are only two examples to illustrate how eligible partnerships might be structured. Many other kinds of eligible partnerships are also possible.

3.3. If two or more organizations plan to apply for Social Innovation Fund funding as an eligible partnership, how definitive of a structure needs to be in place at the time of application? Do the organizations need to have a legal agreement signed at the time of application submission, or is an intent to partner sufficient until funds are awarded?

Intent to partner is sufficient to apply. During the review process, CNCS may request additional information about the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Before final award, all partners will be required to formally agree to the full terms and conditions of the award, including those included in the Assurances portion of the application in eGrants. Eligible partners are encouraged, but not required, to share the costs of the application cash matching requirement in order to demonstrate the seriousness of the partnership.

3.4. Can a State Commission on National and Community Service be the lead applicant in an eligible partnership?

Yes. While a State Commission cannot be the sole applicant for a SIF grant and must apply as part of an ‘eligible partnership,’ as defined in the *Notice*, we don’t prescribe the role they must play in that partnership.

3.5. Can a unit of local government be the lead applicant in an eligible partnership?

Yes. While a unit of local government cannot be the sole applicant for a SIF grant and must apply as part of an ‘eligible partnership,’ as defined in the *Notice*, we don’t prescribe the role they must play in that partnership.

3.6. Can a partner organization working with the lead applicant on the current model also apply through the competitive subgrantee process for components of the model that they are not currently being funded to do through the existing partnership?

As long as it is not part of an ‘eligible partnership’ as defined in the *Notice*, there is no prohibition against a partner organization applying to an intermediary’s subgrant competition. However the intermediary must be able to demonstrate that its selection process was open and competitive, and free of conflicts of interest.

3.7. We work in coordination with other federal agencies in our activities. Is this something we should mention in our application?

You should mention any current partnerships that are relevant to the SIF program you are proposing. Please note that SIF funding should not duplicate or replace current funding from other sources. Please refer to Section A.5. for a discussion of funding one might have from another federal evidence-based program.

Evidence and Evaluation

4.1. Will the Social Innovation Fund fund new social innovations?

While the governing legislative statute authorizes CNCS to fund new social innovations, CNCS has determined that the limited SIF funding available needs to be focused on promising social innovations with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness.

4.2. Should outcomes and metrics be defined for five years, even though the funding request is only for one year?

Within the Program Design section, applicants should outline a multi-year plan for subgrantee selection, investment, evaluation, support and monitoring in their narrative. The formal budget request and the description or justification with the Budget Justification narrative section should be for one year of federal funding only.

4.3. Would a Social Innovation Fund intermediary be able to use Social Innovation Fund funds to assess the impact of its own activities?

Yes, but applicants should be mindful that Social Innovation Fund evaluation should be focused on assessing the impact and effectiveness of subgrantees (particularly since a majority of Federal funds are required to be competitively distributed to nonprofit community organizations). CNCS anticipates utilizing learning communities and other mechanisms to discuss and evaluate issues around intermediary effectiveness.

4.4. Could you describe what a “winning” example of evaluation would look like?

The applications of current grantees (which can be found on our website) include descriptions of how they propose to approach evaluation. Please note however, that detailed evaluation plans are developed some months after grant award with detailed guidance from and review by CNCS.

4.5. What is the expectation for evaluation publication or future use?

CNCS will be sharing the final results of SIF-funded evaluations.

4.6. Does the evaluation need to include control or comparison groups?

Depending on the level of evidence of program models and interventions at program entry, the evaluation may need to include control or comparison groups in order to document and capture impact.

4.7. Is there a published list of evaluation experts or companies that subgrantees can use to get help in their evaluation efforts?

The Social Innovation Fund doesn't endorse, and cannot suggest evaluation experts or companies.

4.8. If we have a good relationship with an evaluator who is familiar with our work, can we list them as our contractor in the proposal?

You should provide information that is responsive to the selection criteria and makes the case for your capacity and fit for a SIF grant. However, please note that the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance - <http://go.usa.gov/cGEFh> - now consolidated in **2 CFR Parts 200** and **2205**) contain requirements for procuring services. Your selection of an evaluator and other contractors must comply with these federal requirements.

4.9. Can subgrantee activities begin before the evaluation plan is approved by CNCS?

Yes, subgrantee activities can begin before the evaluation plan is approved. However, the evaluation of the subgrantee program model/intervention cannot be implemented before CNCS approves it.

4.10. Can part of the funds allocated to subgrantees be used to cover costs associated with evaluation?

Yes. Evaluation is an acceptable and expected use of grant funds.

4.11. Can our third party evaluator be selected prior to being awarded a SIF grant as long as all federal procurement requirements are followed? We would like the third party evaluator to assist us with portions of the application.

While applicants may select evaluators for their prospective SIF project prior to receiving a SIF grant, the applicant would be responsible for any costs incurred prior to the grant award. Please note that any contract that will ultimately be paid for with SIF funding must align with the goals and objectives of the SIF project and its performance period, as well as all guiding documents such as the Terms and Conditions. When using an evaluator for purposes not directly tied to the evaluation please keep in mind the requirement for your evaluation to be conducted by a third party, *independent* evaluator. You will also want to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

4.12. Please define "federal procurement guidelines" as they apply to hiring an evaluator for this process or direct me to the appropriate guideline?

The *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance - <http://go.usa.gov/cGEFh> - now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205) contain requirements for procuring services. These procurement standards can be found in 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.317-200.326. Your selection of an evaluator and other contractors must comply with these federal requirements.

4.13. What is the percentage of SIF funds that should be allocated for evaluation costs?

The SIF has developed an [Evaluation Budgeting Quick Guide](#) based on the experience of our grantees. It provides approximate percentages for different types of evaluation and other budgeting tips. The guide can be found along with other resources on our [Notice webpage](#).

4.14. Are external evaluators involved in the beginning of the evaluation planning process?

Ideally your external evaluator would be involved as early in your evaluation planning process as possible. Many grantees start the evaluator selection process shortly after receiving their SIF grant. (Remember that the selection of an evaluator must follow federal government procurement guidelines). The [Evaluation Planning Process Quick Guide](#) can help you determine what expertise you want to have on hand from evaluation planning to implementation. The guide can be found along with other resources on our [Notice webpage](#).

***4.15. Could an intervention that already has a strong level of evidence be appropriate for the SIF?**

Interventions funded by the SIF are expected to begin with at least a preliminary level of evidence, and undergo rigorous evaluation while in the SIF to increase the level of evidence, add to the existing evidence base, and develop greater understanding of what makes the program successful. It is possible for an intervention to begin with a strong level of evidence and, while not advancing to another tier, still add to the existing evidence base. This could be done, for example, by implementing the intervention across multiple sites or populations and using a Quasi-Experimental Design and/or a randomized controlled trial to study the intervention across new sites or populations.

Funding/Funding Restrictions

5.1. How and when will funding for intermediaries be available?

For applicants approved for funding, CNCS will provide information on how to establish an account in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS). CNCS will obligate the entire amount of the grant upon award. This typically occurs within a month of being notified that your application has been approved for funding. Grantees will be subject to the requirements of the Federal Cash Management Act which direct grantees to draw funds as needed for grantee and subgrantee immediate needs.

5.2. If the majority of Federal funding has to be provided to subgrantees, what can the remaining funding be used for?

Grantees may use the remaining funds for other direct and indirect costs associated with hosting a competitive subgrant selection process, evaluation, providing support to subgrantees, and other activities designed to contribute to measurable outcomes of their portfolio. However, applicants should keep in mind that their overall budget (both federal and matching funds) will be evaluated for reasonableness as described in the *Notice*.

5.3. Can 100 percent of Federal funds be provided to subgrantees?

Yes, applicants may propose to provide 100 percent of Federal funds to subgrantees. If this is proposed, applicants should outline in their budget narrative how they propose to fund activities such as the competitive subgrant selection process and provide for on-going evaluation and support to their portfolio of subgrantees.

5.4. Does a majority of intermediary matching funds have to be provided to subgrantees?

No, there is no requirement that intermediary matching funds “mirror” the use of Federal funds. However, matching funds that are not used for subgrants, must go toward program support costs, including evaluation, knowledge management and program implementation.

5.5. Is it possible that CNCS would reduce the award amount that the applicant is requesting? Does the applicant need to address how reduced funds would impact the proposed program?

Yes, applicants sometimes are awarded less than they request. This would be discussed during the clarifications phase of the review process and does not need to be addressed in the grant application.

5.6. Are funds awarded on a cost-reimbursement basis?

Yes, they are. See question 5.1 for an explanation of how funding is disbursed.

5.7. It's clear in the *Notice* that federal SIF funds can't be used for capital expenditures. Can matching funds be used for these costs?

The Code of Federal Regulations, §200.439 : *Equipment and other capital expenditures*, identifies the capital expenditures that *might* be allowable if approved by the federal agency awarding the grant. However, please note that match funds take on the identity of federal funds so any rules and regulations that apply to federal funds also apply to match funds.

Subgrants/Subgranting

6.1. Can subgrants go to for-profit social enterprises or small businesses?

No, subgrants may only go to nonprofit community organizations, as defined in the *Notice* as being eligible to receive subgrants.

6.2. Can subgrantees be funded by two different intermediaries?

The SIF is interested in its funds being used to scale and evaluate a diverse set of interventions but there is no prohibition on subgrantees being funded by two different intermediaries provided that the funded activities are different and distinct. It will be the responsibility of the intermediary to determine whether prospective subgrantees are already being funded by or are under consideration for funding by another intermediary.

6.3. Will intermediaries have the flexibility to remove subgrantees from their portfolio?

Yes, intermediaries will be expected to manage their portfolio to achieve measurable outcomes and to be compliant with grant requirements. This might require removing subgrantees that aren't meeting expectations. Please note that as a cooperative grant agreement partner, CNCS will expect to have substantial knowledge of, if not involvement in, major decisions, including whether to remove subgrantees from a portfolio. You will be expected to inform your program officer of the challenges you are facing prior to making a final decision.

6.4. Can subgrantees receive different levels of funding in different years (e.g. \$1 million in year one, and \$2 million in year two)?

Yes, subgrantees may receive different levels of funding in different years, but never less than \$100,000 per year. Funding decisions should be made in agreement with the intermediary and CNCS.

6.5. Can grantees make a subgrant to themselves?

No, grantees are expected to make a portfolio of investments in external nonprofit community organizations or programs.

6.6. Can one member of a partnership subgrant to another partner?

No. The partners in an eligible partnership are collectively considered to be the intermediary. An intermediary may not subgrant to itself.

6.7. Do you recommend that intermediaries run a separate grant competition just for Social Innovation Fund subgrantees?

Because the match, competitive subgrant selection, accounting and reporting requirements placed on Social Innovation Fund funds are unique and substantial, intermediaries may find it advantageous to run a separate competition solely for the purpose of making Social Innovation Fund subgrants.

6.8. Can we run two separate Social Innovation Fund subgrant competitions?

Yes, but in your application narrative, you should clearly justify the rationale for having more than one competition.

6.9. Does a subgrant have to be a combination of Federal and matching funds? For example, would a \$200,000 subgrant have to be comprised of \$100,000 in Federal funds and \$100,000 in matching funds?

No. A Social Innovation Fund intermediary will make its subgrants from the pool of funding (both federal and matching funds) which they include in their budget. There is no requirement that Social Innovation Fund intermediaries or their subgrantees separately identify a federal or match component to the amount of the subgrant. All funds provided to subgrantees will be subject to the same requirements, regardless of whether they can be "traced" to federal or matching fund sources.

6.10. Can we limit our subgrant competition to programs that we currently fund?

No, intermediaries cannot limit their competitions to current programs. Please see the *Notice* for details on the subgranting requirements.

6.11. How do you expect intermediaries to assess whether a subgrantee works in a low-income community as defined in the *Notice*?

There is a deep community of practice in the public and nonprofit sectors about how to determine income eligibility. CNCS expects intermediaries to be knowledgeable about, and operate in accordance with, best practices.

6.12. Can awards made to subgrantees include in-kind goods and services in place of cash?

No, subgrant awards must be cash awards.

6.13. What does a subgrantee competition look like, when it's outside our usual network? We fund certain organizations that do very good work - are they then ineligible for this competition?

We expect the subgrantee selection process to be open and competitive, and available to eligible nonprofits beyond your existing network. However, organizations within your existing network are also eligible to receive subgrants but these in-network organizations may not exceed approximately one-third of the grant dollars distributed. Please see the *Notice* for details on the subgranting requirements

6.14. Should we plan to increase subgrantees' funding as their evidence increases over the three to five year grant period?

This is not required.

6.15. Can universities be subgrantees?

Yes, universities can be subgrantees.

6.16. Is there a minimum number of subgrantees that must be in the intermediary's portfolio?

No.

6.17. I'm a nonprofit community organization that wants to apply to be a subgrantee after Social Innovation Fund intermediaries receive awards. Will CNCS publicize subgrant opportunities?

CNCS will announce the names of Social Innovation Fund intermediaries, and post links to their Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on its website as they become available. Interested community organizations are encouraged to contact successful intermediaries to learn the details of their subgrant selection competition.

6.18. Our program would be implemented through or in partnership with schools. Are school districts eligible to be subgrantees?

School districts are not eligible to be subgrantees because they are considered a unit of local government.

6.19. Are there limitations regarding the number of awards that can be granted in one geographic area?

There are no limitations on the number of awards that can be granted in one geographic area.

6.20. Is there a required amount that needs to be distributed to subgrantees?

A majority of your federal award must be invested in subgrantee programs. A good rule of thumb is 80 percent, initially.

6.21. Can government entities, such as government and nonprofit Local Management Boards, be subgrantees?

Government entities cannot be subgrantees, so the Local Management Boards that are government entities are not eligible. Those that meet our definition of nonprofit, however, would be eligible. (See page 5 of the *Notice*).

***6.22. Can subgrants be awarded to community collaboratives as long as they have a 501(c)3 entity acting as their fiscal agent?**

Yes. Subgrants must be awarded to nonprofit community organizations or nonprofit institutions of higher education that meet the specific statutory definition of nonprofit organization in the *Notice*. SIF subgrantees cannot make subawards to partner organizations but may contract with others to carry out programmatic activity following federal procurement standards.

Budget

7.1. Should evaluation be budgeted at the intermediary level or the subgrant level?

Funds for evaluation may be accounted for at the intermediary or subgrantee level (or both). The needs of different intermediaries and subgrantees will vary substantially. The determination, either way, should be substantiated in detail in the application. Please visit our *Notice* page for a link to tips on budgeting for rigorous evaluation.

7.2. Where should capacity-building be budgeted?

Intermediaries are required to provide support, including capacity-building support, to their subgrantees. Funds for capacity-building may be accounted for at the intermediary or subgrantee level (or both). The needs of different intermediaries and subgrantees will vary substantially. The determination, either way, should be substantiated in detail in the application.

7.3. How much should be budgeted for running a competitive subgrant selection process?

The amount will vary considerably by intermediary, depending on the scope of the competition, the amount of funds available, and other factors. Applicants should ensure that their proposed budget aligns with their program design.

Match

8.1. What does it mean to provide a “cash” match?

By law, Social Innovation Fund match must be in non-federal cash. Unlike most Federal grant programs, the market value of goods and services donated by third parties as “in kind” matching costs does not count toward the matching requirement.

8.2. Can you give an example of how the match works?

The Social Innovation Fund program requires match at two levels: the grantee and the subgrantee. Here is an example to illustrate how this works.

CNCS made a \$4.2 million dollar grant to an intermediary. The intermediary secured the required \$4.2 million dollars in private, non-federal match to meet the one to one match requirement. The SIF requires that most of the federally budgeted funds be committed to subgrants. The intermediary therefore budgeted \$3.4 million from their federal grant and budgeted an additional \$3.1 million from their matching funds for a total of \$6.5 million dollars to provide in subgrants. It awarded \$175,000 to one of the subgrantees selected through its competitive selection process. The subgrantee then matched the grant with \$175,000 of its own, in cash, funds to implement the program. So both the intermediary and the subgrantee are responsible for matching the grant or subgrant they receive dollar for dollar in cash.

8.3. How does the applicant demonstrate that its unrestricted dollars can be used as match?

Applicants may demonstrate commitments by a dated and signed letter from each donor/foundation, indicating the amount of funds committed for the specific use of supporting the Social Innovation Fund grant. The letter must contain a firm commitment to provide the applicant with the stated funding upon award of a Social Innovation Fund grant by CNCS.

8.4. By when will subgrantees need to demonstrate that they have met the match requirement?

According to the statute, intermediaries must ensure that their subgrants meet a dollar for dollar match expenditure every 12 months, beginning at the start of their first award period and are terminated if they do not meet the dollar for dollar match expenditures at each 12 month check. For example, for a subgrantee whose subgrant agreement with its intermediary begins on April 1, 2017, if by March 31, 2018 the subgrantee has expended \$150,000, then by that same date the subgrantee must have a documented match of at least \$150,000. If this is not the case, then the intermediary should not provide the subgrantee with a subsequent grant award.

8.5. Can intermediaries help subgrantees meet their match requirement?

Yes, intermediaries may help subgrantees meet their match requirements. Matching funds to be provided to subgrantees should be discussed in the application narrative, but are not to be included in the Social Innovation Fund intermediary's grant budget.

8.6. What sources of matching funds are allowable?

Matching funds may come from State, local, or private sources, which may include State or local agencies, businesses, private philanthropic organizations, or individuals. Federal funds may not be used towards either the Social Innovation Fund intermediary or the subgrantee match requirements.

8.7. Do the match restrictions placed on state and local government applicants also apply to their grantmaking institution partners?

No. If an applicant is an eligible partnership that includes a State Commission or a local government office, the State Commission or local government involved must provide not less than 30 percent and not more than 50 percent of the matching funds. However, their existing grantmaking institution partner(s) are not subject to the same match restrictions.

8.8. Do matching funds have to be unrestricted new or existing dollars?

Yes, matching funds must be unrestricted new or existing dollars. They cannot be previously-obligated funding that is redirected for purposes of meeting the Social Innovation Fund match requirement.

8.9. Is it possible to redirect city government funding to these programs?

Yes. As sovereign entities, local governments may (consistent with their legal authorities) reallocate their unobligated funding to provide Social Innovation Fund matching funds.

8.10. Can city funding that currently supports programming similar to a proposed Social Innovation Fund be counted towards the match?

No, local government funds which are obligated and already supporting existing programs will be treated in the same manner as restricted donor funds for nonprofits. CNCS does not intend to allow the availability of Social Innovation Fund to diminish ongoing programs in order to meet the Social Innovation Fund matching fund requirements.

8.11. Can funds that have been previously restricted for a purpose similar to our Social Innovation Fund proposal be counted toward the match requirement?

No, Social Innovation Fund matching funds must be unrestricted new or existing funds.

8.12. If a donor to a potential intermediary has already committed funds to that intermediary, but would like to now allocate some of their commitment to help meet the Social Innovation Fund matching requirement, is that allowable?

Only if the donor funds are unrestricted existing dollars. Matching funds must be unrestricted new or existing dollars. They cannot be restricted funding that is redirected for purposes of meeting the Social Innovation Fund match requirement.

8.13. Can program income count toward the match?

Yes, program income, as defined in the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance - <http://go.usa.gov/cGEFh> - now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205), may count toward the match requirements.

8.14. Can funds that we currently invest in subgrantees be counted toward the match requirement?

No, funding provided by an intermediary to a subgrantee prior to either the intermediary's selection as a Social Innovation Fund grantee or the subgrantee's competitive selection by the intermediary cannot be counted toward the intermediary's matching requirement.

8.15. Can I use funds that I receive from my State as part of a federally supported grant program to meet the Social Innovation Fund matching requirement?

Generally, no. Federally-supported grants (including State matching funds included in those grants) cannot be used to meet Social Innovation Fund matching fund requirements. The sole exception to this will be federal block grant funds which are given to states and are comingled with other state funds and have thus lost their federal identity. You must check with the agency issuing the funds to ascertain whether federal identity has been lost before these can be used to meet the Social Innovation Fund matching requirements.

8.16. Can Program-related Investments (or a low or no interest loan) be used for the match?

Eligible entities must provide matching funds in cash, which may be provided by private sources, such as businesses. However, at the time of application, eligible entities must provide the requisite match verification documentation.

8.17. As a local government agency, if we enter into an eligible partnership with a grantmaker we are required to provide no less than 30 percent and no more than 50 percent of the matching funds. Can a different local government agency that is not in the eligible partnership contribute to the match if that makes the total local government share exceed the 50 percent cap?

No. The 50 percent cap on the amount of match the state or local government can contribute applies to the entire state or local government involved, not individual agencies within these governments.

8.18. Does each member of an eligible partnership have to provide a 1:1 match?

The eligible partnership will collectively be the intermediary, which must provide the 1:1 match. The match requirement is not duplicated for multiple members of a partnership; rather, this responsibility is shared among the partners.

8.19. In constructing a budget, is the cost of evaluation also subject to the 1:1 match?

Yes. All funds from CNCS, including those for evaluation, must be matched 1:1.

8.20. Can match dollars be used to support the existing model as well as the scaling of the model (both for lead applicant and subgrantees)?

Funds are to be used to support the scaling and evaluating of promising approaches to addressing community challenges. It's important to note that there is no distinction between how matching funds and federal funds may be used.

8.21. Are tribal funds eligible to be used as match funds?

Tribal funds would be permissible as long as they are non-Federal, unrestricted cash. If the tribal funds are Federal funds received through Public Law 93-638 (the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act), those funds are considered non-Federal and may be used towards matching costs. Any Federal funds that maintain their Federal status cannot be used for the match.

8.22. Are there any examples of how previous funded grantees provided the cash match?

SIF grantees meet the cash match requirement in a number of ways, typically from one or more of the following sources: the applicant's own unrestricted organizational funds; unobligated state, county or city funds; and unrestricted or new foundation, corporate or individual grants and/or gifts. In addition, some grantees also use program income as defined in the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance - <http://go.usa.gov/cGEFh> - now consolidated in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205).

8.23. Will the cash match remain the same in year 2 or more?

A dollar-for-dollar cash, non-federal match is required of both intermediaries and subgrantees for each year of funds received. Intermediaries applying to the SIF must demonstrate either cash-on-hand or cash commitments (or a combination thereof) toward meeting 50 percent of the required first year matching funds, based on the amount of grant funds requested at the time of submission.

Role of the State Commission on National and Community Service

9.1. Will a State Commission (as a unit of government) need to apply as a part of an eligible partnership with an existing grantmaking institution in order to be an eligible applicant?

Yes, that is correct. A State Commission is not eligible to apply directly as an intermediary; however, a State Commission can participate as an eligible partnership.

9.2. As a state commission, we currently act as an intermediary to disburse AmeriCorps funds to non-profits who are addressing challenges in the areas of education, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures. If we applied for SIF funds, can we continue to act as an intermediary and then choose the most innovated non-profits in our communities and boost their efforts with additional SIF funds?

Yes and no. As a state commission, you need to apply as part of a partnership with an existing grantmaking institution. After award, intermediaries must award subgrants on a competitive basis which cannot be limited to the organizations that are currently being funded. However, those community organizations that are running evidence-based programs in the designated issue areas would be eligible to apply for funding from you during the subgrant competition.

9.3. If a state commission is NOT part of a partnership, what is the role of the commission?

Even if it does not apply for funds as part of an eligible partnership, a commission has a valuable role to play in various ways, including identifying high-performing nonprofits and promising interventions, and making connections to local funders.

9.4. Can a State Commission be part of a "collaboration" as opposed to an eligible partnership?

Yes. A State Commission can apply as part of an eligible partnership with an eligible existing grantmaking institution, or simply collaborate with an eligible entity.

9.5. Will applicants operating in a given state be expected to 'consult' with the commission in that state, similar to the expectation for national directs?

Applicants are not expected to consult with the state commission in their state but if you are currently a grantee of a state commission, they might appreciate knowing that you are applying for other CNCS funding.

Other

10.1. Are applicants who are currently AmeriCorps grantees given preference in the SIF competition?

AmeriCorps grantees are encouraged to apply but do not receive a funding preference.

10.2. What metrics can be used to determine whether a geographic location is philanthropically underserved? Is there some dollar amount cut off that SIF will be using, maybe in comparison to the number of people living in the region, for example?

The SIF has not identified any specific metrics to determine whether a geographic location is philanthropically underserved. If relevant, we expect the applicant to make the case to us, using data and statistics, that the communities it proposes to serve meet our definition

10.3. Are Social Innovation Fund award recipients guaranteed continuing grants in the future?

Continuation funding for the second through fifth years will be contingent on the availability of appropriations, compliance with grant conditions, and satisfactory performance, including progress towards evaluation requirements and having secured sufficient matching funds.

10.4. Does SIF plan to offer grants in future years?

As a permanent program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, pending availability of appropriations, the SIF holds annual grant competitions.

10.5. Is the Social Innovation Fund designed to support intermediaries and nonprofit community organizations in both rural and urban areas?

Yes, the Social Innovation Fund is designed to support eligible intermediaries and nonprofit community organizations working with low-income communities in a diversity of geographies and settings. Eligible intermediaries in all 50 states and all territories may be considered for award.

10.6. Can you clarify start-ups and nascent organizations that SIF will not fund?

SIF's focus is on interventions that have advanced beyond the start-up and nascent stages. The interventions most appropriate for SIF funding have at least preliminary evidence of results; are ready for more substantial evaluation; and are poised for expansion to more people or new communities in need of promising innovations.

10.7. We are considering proposing a program design in which subgrantees would select for implementation one of several identified interventions, all of which would be within a common overarching framework. In this scenario, would we be considered by CNCS as an Applicant "with" or "without" a pre-identified intervention?

You would be considered an applicant *with* a pre-identified intervention and would be expected to describe the level of evidence supporting the proposed interventions.

10.8. Will the Pay for Success Pilot be funded out of this grant competition?

No, there is a separate Pay for Success competition.

10.9. Can an application include all priority areas?

Yes, in years when the SIF has identified funding priorities, an applicant could choose to design a program addressing all of them.

10.10. Must all applicant programs fall into one of the priority areas?

As the funding priorities are optional, applicants do not need to address any of them. This is different for the issue areas; the SIF only funds within its issue areas of economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development.

10.11. The *Notice* suggests that the SIF would not fund projects that simply add dollars to existing initiatives. What does this mean?

Our intent is to fund initiatives or programs where our funding adds value to what is already occurring. We are interested in opportunities for SIF dollars to play a unique and integral role in advancing or accelerating the impact of the program.

10.12. Can you provide any examples of rural funded programs?

The Social Innovation Fund currently supports intermediaries and nonprofit organizations working in rural communities. Please visit our [SIF website](#) to see what rural programs are already being funded and tested.

***10.13. I received an announcement that Veterans are a focus area. Is that not the case?**

The SIF funds in three issue areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development. Applications that address the needs of veterans and their families within one or more of our issue areas are encouraged, but will not receive special consideration in the SIF competition.

***10.14. I understand that it would be helpful for potential applicants to review your website to see what early childhood programs are currently being funded by the SIF. Is this to encourage more or should we submit for something different?**

The SIF is interested in funding new strategies to expand access to high quality early learning education for children through age five that prepares them for lifelong success. We are also interested in continuing to build the evidence base of what works. Your application should provide information that makes the case for how your SIF grant will add value to what is already occurring.

***10.15. Can an early childhood intervention be tied to your healthy futures issue area or does it have to be tied to youth development?**

Yes, an early childhood intervention can be tied to either one or more of our three issues areas of economic opportunity, healthy futures or youth development.

***10.16. If a program focuses on K-12 grades academic achievement in low-income communities, could it be considered under the juvenile justice funding priority?**

Yes, but only if the application sufficiently demonstrates that the program – or a significant part of the program – is to improve academic outcomes for youth involved in, or at risk for involvement with, the juvenile justice system.

***10.17. How does staffing affect the final decision making process for SIF funding?**

Reviewers will assess applications against the selection criteria included in the *Notice*. For example, in determining the quality of your application, reviewers will assess your organizational background and staff capacity, including the experience, qualifications and current capacity of staff and contractors to effectively implement the proposed program.