



2011 Volunteer Generation Grant

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers generated during the current New York State Volunteer Generation Request for Proposals process. The questions are organized by issue area.

NOTE:

1. Due Date:

All applications in response to the 2011 New York State Volunteer Generation Request for Proposals (RFP) are due no later than May 18, 2011, 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST) to the New York State Commission on National and Community Service.

Electronic Applications should be emailed to VolunteerGenerationRFP@NewYorkersVolunteer.ny.gov with "Volunteer Generation Fund RFP Application" in the Subject line. Electronic submission by email is the preferred proposal submission method. When possible, electronic proposal submissions should consist of a single Portable Document Format (PDF) file produced by Adobe Acrobat or a comparable application. Electronic copies of proposals in their original file format of Microsoft Word and Excel are acceptable, but not preferred. If submitting electronically, bidders must follow-up with a submission of original signed forms, with original signatures, received by May 18, 2011 by 5 PM.

Paper Applications should be addressed and mailed to: Mark Walter, Executive Director, New York State Office of National and Community Service, VOLUNTEER GENERATION GRANT, 52 Washington Street, North Building - Suite #338 Rensselaer, New York 12144-2834. Bidders have the option of submitting a paper copy rather than an electronic copy. If submitting a paper copy, one (1) complete paper copy of the proposal must be received by ONCS by May 18, 2011 by 5 PM.

2. Application Narrative

The RFP indicates that the narrative section of the application should convince reviewers that the project meets the selection criteria. The total count of all sections combined may not exceed 15,000 characters combined, (about 15 double-spaced pages, 12 pt font). The character count includes spaces and punctuation.

This Narrative Section consists of:

Section A: Program Design

Section B: Organizational Capacity

Section C: Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

- Q. **We are having difficulty downloading the Volunteer Generation RFP from the Office of Children and Family Services On line Bidders List. Is there another way to obtain the three parts of the RFP?**
- A. Each part of the RFP can be downloaded in both Word and PDF format at www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov
In addition, a paper copy of the RFP can be requested by calling the NYS Office of National and Community Service at 518-473-8882.

TERMINOLOGY

- Q. **What is the "Corporation?"**
- A. The Corporation for National and Community Service was established by Congress in 1993 to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community based service through such programs as AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Learn and Serve America, the National Civilian Community Corps, the National Senior Service Corps, the Volunteer Generation Fund and the Social Innovation Fund.
- Q. **What is the "State Commission?"**
- A. The State Commission on National and Community Service was established by New York State pursuant to the Act (42 U.S.C. 12638), to administer the state's national service plan and national service programs and to perform such other duties prescribed by 45 C.F.R. 2550.80. The Commission was established by Governor Mario Cuomo through Executive Order in 1994 and is supported administratively by the State Office of National and Community Service (ONCS). ONCS is physically housed in and provided financial, contractual, and legal support by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).
- Q. **What is "New Yorkers Volunteer"?**
- A. New Yorkers Volunteer is the New York State Office of National and Community Service (ONCS) or Commission State Office. This Office serves as the administrative arm of the State Commission and will serve as the oversight entity for the Volunteer Generation grant. For the purposes of this grant, the terms "New Yorkers Volunteer" and "Commission State Office" are synonymous.
- Q. **What is the definition of a volunteer?**
- A. The Volunteering in America Report defines "volunteer" as someone who is not compensated for their services, except for expenses.
- Q. **What is the definition of a "new" volunteer?**
- A. A "new" volunteer is someone an organization has recently recruited and is not currently captured on any listing in your organization.
- Q. **What is the Volunteer Generation Fund?**
- A.. The Volunteer Generation Fund will increase the number of people who serve in meaningful roles as volunteers dedicated to addressing important needs in communities across America. More specifically, the Fund will support efforts that expand the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage support and retain individuals to serve in high quality volunteer assignments, including those that are aligned with special days of service such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the 9-11 Day of Service and Remembrance.
- Q. **What is a Volunteer Center? Who is the volunteer connector organization in a given region?**
- A. Volunteer Centers act as the local "volunteer hub" where all concerned citizens can visit in person or virtually through the Center's website to get informed and connected to meaningful volunteer work that contributes to the solutions of serious community problems. Volunteer Centers may be organized in one of two ways: 1) as an independent non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors; or 2) as a program internal to another organization or community agency. Volunteer Centers may be part of a local government, college or university, or any organization set forth in Part 1, Section 1.5, page 9. For the purposes of this grant, Regional Volunteer Centers are synonymous with Volunteer Connector Agency/Organization.

Q. What are the services provided by a Volunteer Center?

A. Get citizens involved through volunteering by:

- a. Helping citizens connect to an ongoing menu of volunteer opportunities that are either managed internally and/or are offered by a broad diversity of community-based nonprofit agencies and/or schools.

Act as the local experts on and advocates for volunteer leadership by:

- a. Providing training to Volunteer Leaders so they are equipped to lead others in service.
- b. Providing training to their nonprofit partners on volunteer management and board of director's effectiveness.
- c. Giving guidance and support to their corporate partners on effective practices in employee volunteer engagement.
- d. Convening and connecting local nonprofit and for-profit networks for more effective volunteering, such as: Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA) and Corporate Volunteer Councils (CVC)

Promote community volunteering by:

- a. Recognizing volunteers for outstanding service.
- b. Engaging the community in National Days of Service.
- c. Collecting useful information about volunteering in order to tell the communities' story. The volunteer center's business is to know: Where volunteers are needed; who is volunteering; how many people are volunteering; what volunteers are doing to improve the community; and, how much time volunteers are devoting to service.

FUNDING

Q. How much funding is available for my agency?

A. The total available funding through this RFP is \$750,000. This total amount will be sub-granted to no more than ten volunteer connector agencies, one in each region of New York State as identified in the RFP. Each region has a maximum level of funding available that applicants in that region may not exceed in their request. Please see Part 1: Section 2.3 for more information on what region your agency is part of and the maximum level of funding you can apply for.

Q. Is the maximum grant funding detailed in the RFP for each region per year or for three years?

A. Funding amount in the RFP is on an annual basis. For example, a region that is eligible for \$50,000 would be eligible for a total of \$150,000 over the three year grant period.

Q. Can I apply for funding in more than one region if my organization is statewide?

A. No, applicants are only eligible to apply for funding up to the amount defined for their region. Applicant agencies that provide services statewide must identify which entity (i.e.: office, chapter, etc.) will serve as the legal applicant and indicate the geographic region in which that entity is located. Applicants of this type will be required to complete the proposed activity and comply with all program and contractual terms within the applicant region.

Q. Is there a Matching requirement for this grant?

A. Yes, each successful applicant will be required to provide documentation of local matching funds valued at 20% of total amount awarded in year one of this funding. Local matching requirements can be met with cash and/or in-kind resources that directly support activities to achieve the goals of the Volunteer Generation Fund. Applicants should note that the Commission State Office is required to match 20% of the total Volunteer Generation Fund award in year one, 30% in year two, 40% in year three and 50% in any subsequent years. The Commission State Office has received State funding for volunteer generation for the current State fiscal year, which is being used to expand the subgrants and decrease the match being required at the local level.

The Commission State Office projects that successful applicants of this RFP will remain at a required match level of 20% of their award for all years. However, applicants should be aware of the federal provisions and the potential for increased matching requirements, should State matching resources decrease or become unavailable.

Q. Should state matching resources be decreased or become unavailable, how much, or what percentage, would be increased in funding matching requirements for the volunteer connector agencies?

A. Local matching resources would be aggregated to meet the State's matching requirement, as is explained in the answer to the previous question above.

Q. Can an organization that has a pending 2011 AmeriCorps application apply for a 2011 Volunteer Generation Fund Grant?

A. Yes, these are two separate grant competitions. The fact that you have submitted an application for 2011 AmeriCorps funding has no impact on your eligibility to apply for 2011 Volunteer Generation Funds.

Q. Is it possible to apply for a portion of the region?

A. The legislation providing funding for this initiative clearly establishes ten regions. The regions cannot be divided; however, applicants may partner with other volunteer connector organizations to provide coverage of an entire region. This may be developed over the three year grant period but a well-defined, detailed plan must be submitted with the year one proposal.

Q. Are there any limitations to the source of the matching funds?

A. Federal funds may not be used to match federal grants. The match level required by each applicant can be met by either cash or in-kind resources.

Q. Can you provide examples of acceptable forms of in-kind matching resources?

A. Examples of in-kind matching resources include but are not limited to: space, training, supplies, staff time and other items that are currently within another budget, but allowed to be dedicated to this project.

Q. When does the state expect to know about year two funding? If there is no year two funding, will there be no cost extensions available?

A. The Commission State Office will know whether year two of the federal funding is available in August 2011. No-cost extensions are not provided within grant terms (three years), but may be requested at the end of a term.

Q. What does "Corporation" mean in the following sentence: Indicate the non-Corporation resource commitments (in-kind and cash) that you have obtained to date and the sources of these funds. Indicate what additional commitments you plan to secure, and how you will secure them."

A. The Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that funds the Volunteer Generation Grant.

Q. What other examples of unallowable expenses would you have the applicants exclude from the anticipated program budget? Reference: "Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an activity."

A. Expenses that are not defined within a line of the Volunteer Generation Fund budget criteria. See allowable costs on page 18 of Section 1.

- Q. Recognition usually entails a gift, prize, or award. Are there allowable costs regarding recognition prizes or awards (for example: rewarding with volunteer t-shirts or regional volunteer center propaganda)?**
- A. Recognition items for volunteers are an allowable cost. Food and/or gifts in an entertainment/event setting are not allowable costs.
- Q. Would it be possible to increase funding the following years for strong initial development (the first three years) to help form sustainable volunteer practices and a stable Regional Volunteer Center in the future?**
- A. It is possible, but in the current fiscal environment, we do not expect increased funding in the near future. The Volunteer Generation Fund is not meant to be the sole support of Regional Volunteer Centers over time in New York State. It is the intent of the Commission State Office that through this program, grantees will identify partnerships and support to sustain this endeavor, should federal and state funding be decreased or eliminated.

PROGRAM DESIGN

- Q. How many Regions of Service are there under this RFP?**
- A. The RFP defines ten Regions of Service. Please see Part 1: Section 1.2 for more information on county breakdown of each Region of Service.
- Q. What is a Regional Volunteer Center (RVC)?**
- A. The Commission State Office will provide funding to one eligible volunteer connector organization in each of the (10) regions located throughout New York State. These ten entities will be referred to as Regional Volunteer Centers (RVC) for the purpose of this grant. RVCs will support local volunteer agencies to more efficiently recruit, train, manage, and retain volunteers. For the purposes of this grant, Regional Volunteer Centers are synonymous with Volunteer Connector Agency/Organization.
- Q. Do I need to provide services to the entire region in Year 1 of my program proposal?**
- A. No, however you must provide a detailed plan of how your agency will provide services to the entire region by the end of Year 3.
- Q. Is the Regional Volunteer Center expected to directly generate the targeted number of volunteers in the region each year?**
- A. No, each Regional Volunteer Center will work with local non-profits and other volunteer organizations as a trainer, facilitator and data collector, helping to support and document the increase in quality volunteer opportunities and volunteers reported by all the partner agencies within the region. Regional Volunteer Centers may provide service opportunities for volunteers but must work with local non-profit agencies to aggregate current volunteer opportunities and refer interested volunteers to the agencies and opportunities that match their interests.
- Q. Is the Volunteer Generation Fund accessible to non-profits – or just to volunteer centers in each region?**
- A. Please refer to Part 1, Section 1.5 of the RFP entitled “Eligible Applicants” for information on what organizations are eligible to apply for Volunteer Generation Funding.
- Q. Can give us additional details about the creation and implementation of a region-wide volunteer survey? What role will the Commission State Office play in this initiative and what role do you anticipate the regional centers will play?**
- A. The Commission State Office will be implementing the volunteer survey statewide by contracting with a research entity. The outcomes of the study will establish a baseline of current volunteer activity including the current demography of individual volunteers and volunteer groups, and also determine pressing needs among volunteer agencies within the identified regions. Regional Volunteer Centers will help to promote the

surveys, provide contact information relative to volunteer organizations in their Region of Service and utilize the results to inform activities throughout the grant.

Q. Can you give us additional details about the creation and implementation of the web-based listing of skills-based volunteer opportunities? What role will the Commission State Office play in this initiative and what role do you anticipate the regional centers will play?

A. The technology for the web-based listing of volunteer opportunities will be provided by the Commission State Office on a statewide level. The Regional Volunteer Centers will be working with local non-profits to increase the number and quality of their volunteer opportunities and will see that they are posted and up-to-date on the system.

Q. Does each Volunteer Center need to develop a training curriculum for their local non-profits, or will one be provided to us?

A. The Commission State Office plans to work with the Regional Volunteer Centers to either develop a curriculum for statewide use, or enhance an existing curriculum for use. As is stated in the RFP: Applicants should address steps they will take to utilize a volunteer management curriculum designed by the State which includes tools, resources, and templates that can be localized by volunteer agencies within the defined region to recruit, train, manage and retain volunteers based on the needs/resources of the volunteer organization.

Q. Can the volunteer targets be negotiated?

A. No. The targets were developed on a per capita basis for each region of New York State, with a total target of one million over three years. These cannot be negotiated.

Q. Will we be expected to publicly refer to ourselves as a Regional Volunteer Center?

A. The Commission State Office will be referring to Volunteer Generation Fund grantees as Regional Volunteer Centers. For the purpose of this grant, we would expect that you would identify yourself as such. This in no way precludes applicants who currently receive funding or other support from a third-party from continuing to use that name and/or the name of their organization if awarded a Volunteer Generation grant.

Q. Is it permissible to create a mini grant (for support of volunteer recruitment, etc...) within the Volunteer Generation Grant, as long as it is incorporated within the budget?

A. Volunteer Centers may collaborate with or subgrant to other organizations as long as it is presented as part of the application and is detailed within the budget.

Q. Please clarify/define what is meant by "located" in a service area – in the eligibility information on the RFP profile, a presence in the service area is not required, yet further in the RFP that applicants need to be located in the region they service. Can one be an applicant if they are a service provider within a region, but without physical office in the region?

A. There was an error on the RFP Profile. Presence in the Service area is required. As is stated in the RFP, "Applicant agencies that provide services statewide must identify which entity (i.e.: office, chapter, etc.) will serve as the legal applicant and indicate the geographic region in which that entity is located."

Q. How many National Days of Service will applicants be expected to plan to implement?

A. The minimal days of service are listed as MLK Day and 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance. The State Commission Office may encourage involvement on select other Days of Service throughout the year.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

Q. Are there limitations on the number of partner agencies?

A. No, however any collaborative relationships should be beneficial to all parties involved.

Q. Do you think that a collaborative will be a stronger proposal?

A. Each proposal will be evaluated on its individual merits and must clearly demonstrate the capacity to meet each of the Strategic Objectives defined in the RFP regardless of whether the program model is collaborative in nature or not.

VENDOR RESPONSIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. If programs utilize the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) system to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire, do they also need to complete the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire Form provided as an attachment to the Request for Proposal (RFP), or can they just attach a copy of their OSC form?

A. Vendors are strongly encouraged to file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online through the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) New York State VendRep System, although they may choose to complete and submit a paper questionnaire "Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire Form" if they prefer. Those who use the OSC VendRep System can submit a copy of their OSC form confirming that they have filed the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online.

To enroll in and use the OSC New York State VendRep System all vendors may view the VendRep System Instructions available at www.osc.state.ny.us/vendrep or go directly to the VendRep System online at <https://portal.osc.state.ny.us>. For direct VendRep System user assistance, the OSC Help Desk may be reached at 866-370-4672 or 518-408-4672 or by email at helpdesk@osc.state.ny.us.