

Volunteer Generation Fund

Request for Proposals – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



1. How does this program differ from the AmeriCorps model?

This program has a mandatory “capacity building” focus; in AmeriCorps, capacity building is optional. These volunteers will be leveraged to increase the capacity of local non-profits while servicing needs in the community. The volunteers recruited through the Volunteer Generation Fund will not be national service participants, who in most cases receive a living allowance and other covered benefits (e.g. health insurance) and receive an education award at the completion of service.

2. Are we able to recruit volunteers for our own organization in addition to our partner organizations?

Yes, volunteers recruited can be used to build capacity at the grantee’s agency as long as the performance measure for capacity building is being met. However, the intent of the program is to build capacity not only in your own organization but also in the partner organizations you identify. Section 2.1 of the RFP states: “All VGF-funded programs in New York are expected to build volunteer management capacity within organizations and, must commit to providing support and mentoring to at least three smaller, less resourced partner organizations in the areas of recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers.” It is permissible within the program design to utilize the recruited volunteers to build capacity in the grantee organization as well as in the partners but it should be noted that building capacity in partner organizations is a specific deliverable of our new VGF model for every grantee.

3. On page 5, it states the subgrantee will recruit/place 300 volunteers with anti-hunger organizations throughout the state each year, but then on page 18 under section B it states “funded organizations... recruit a minimum of 80 volunteers” could you clarify the difference and which number is accurate—300 or 80?

80. There is an overall statewide target of 300 recruited volunteers for anti-hunger initiatives and an overall statewide target of 300 recruited volunteers for anti-homelessness initiatives. The Commission has set a minimum target of 80 recruited volunteers for each funded program/ subgrantee. It should be noted that these volunteers cannot be “episodic” or “occasional” volunteers; the 80 volunteers should serve, on average, a minimum of two hours per week for at least six months.

4. As a current RVC, I was curious about the websites that are in place. On page 18 Section A it mentions the NYS Volunteer Management System—is that the current website? If so, will other non-profit organizations be able to continue to post non hunger/homelessness/poverty volunteer opportunities as they are doing now, or will the entire website be overhauled?

We cannot address questions in this forum that are outside the scope of this RFP and the 2015 program. Who can use the current system in place, if at all, and for what purposes, will be addressed at a later date with our grantees. Following the announcement of awards for the 2015 program, we will be in contact with those grantees about how to access and use the volunteer management system.

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5. Can an applicant propose to focus on more than one issue (hunger AND homelessness) or must an applicant choose one focus area?

No. The program design requires that an applicant choose a single issue area of focus. , Section 2.1 of the RFP states “Applicants must identify an issue area of focus.”

6. Is it possible to be both an applicant and a partner?

No. Partner organizations cannot be direct grantees under this program. Section 2.1 of the RFP defines the distinctions between applicants/grantees and partners, and states that while partner organizations “will not be directly funded through the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF), [they] will reap widespread benefits in terms of increased organizational, staff, and volunteer management capacities.”

7. Does this mean 300 volunteers in total, amongst all grantees, or will each grantee have to recruit/place 300 volunteers? Is it 300 unique volunteers?

Please see the response to question 3, above.

8. On page 18 the goal says:

- In order to reach this target, funded organizations and their partners must each recruit a minimum of 80 volunteers that will serve an average of 2 hours/week for a minimum of six months to help the state meet a target of 31,200 total hours served by anti-poverty volunteers. **Is the expected goal 80 or 300 per agency?**

Please see the response to Question 3, above.

9. Is the statewide database expected to be HandsOn Connect?

Please see the response to Question 4, above.

10. Can you provide some additional details about the definition of partners? We believe you are referring to organizations that we will collaborate with whose expertise will support program implementation and organizations that we will partner with to support with additional volunteers and/or volunteer management training? Is this correct?

Yes, this is correct. The partner organizations should have **subject matter expertise** in the focus area identified by the applicant that the applicant/subgrantee may not possess. In turn, the applicant/subgrantee should have skill and expertise in recruiting, training, placing and managing volunteers that the partner organization needs in order to effectively serve its mission.

11. Can you share any additional details/expectations regarding the additional Day of Service? Can the grantee select a day of their choosing?

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The Grantee should work with its identified partner organizations and other interested parties to select a date for its dedicated Day of Service. The date should not conflict with the statewide Days of Service. The dedicated Day of Service should center on needs or projects associated with the focus area identified by the applicant for its Volunteer Generation grant.

12. Can you add some additional details about the expected size and direction of MLK, 9/11 and I Love My Park Day?

The Commission will provide the direction for these three Service Days at a later point in the program cycle, closer to the actual dates of these events. We recognize that MLK Day 2015 will fall almost immediately after program start-up, and will tailor our expectations accordingly. In general, statewide Service Days have somewhat uniform programming across the State and engage a larger number of volunteers who will serve only on that day or for a minimal number of hours. "I Love My Park Day" is generally the first Saturday in May, and organized by Parks and Trails New York, in conjunction with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. As this is a state priority, you will also be working with AmeriCorps and other national service programs and with the Commission on this project.

13. Can volunteers recruited and mobilized on MLK, 9/11 and I Love My Park Day be counted towards the overall goal?

Any volunteer, however recruited, that serves an average of 2 hours/week for a minimum of six months to help the state meet a target of 31,200 total hours served by anti-poverty volunteers can be counted towards the required 80 volunteers (see response to question 3, above). What applicants must report, in addition to the 80 volunteers, is agency capacity-building, particularly the building of capacity in and through your partner organizations. This can be accomplished through the use of training activities, technical support sessions, recruitment events, etc. (see Section 2.14 of the RFP).

14. I have a question about the Volunteer Generation Fund grant's section that states:

- **At least 600 community volunteers must be recruited/placed/managed by anti-poverty organizations throughout New York State.**
- **In order to reach this target, funded organizations and their partners must each recruit a minimum of 80 volunteers that will serve an average of 2 hours/week for a minimum of six months to help the state meet a target of 31,200 total hours served by anti-poverty volunteers.**

Does our nonprofit have to have 80 volunteers or can we meet the average of 2 hours/week with fewer volunteers?

Please see the response to Question 3, above.

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- 15. Do the outcomes of the grant need to be achieved through only the identified partners of the applicant, or can the data be collected by all organizations focused on the focus area?**

The VGF program is designed specifically to build and measure capacity-building in **partner organizations**. Please see the response to Question #2, above. **The data collected in satisfaction of this performance measure must be from the specifically identified partner organizations, or, in some instances, from the applicant.** Data collected from organizations not directly in partnership with the grantee cannot be counted; however, if it becomes necessary to reevaluate a partnership, you must contact the Commission.

- 16. Will New York State be releasing a second RFP for AmeriCorps Programs or is the NYS Volunteer Generation Program RFP the only way to apply for NY State AmeriCorps Funding for 2015?**

This RFP is for the NYS Volunteer Generation Program **only** and is completely separate from the AmeriCorps program; **you cannot be awarded AmeriCorps funds through the NYS Volunteer Generation Program RFP.** Please watch our website, www.newyorkersvolunteer.ny.gov, and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services' Online Bidders' List, <https://apps.ocfs.ny.gov/obl/>, for announcement of AmeriCorps funding opportunities through New York State.

- 17. Are volunteers who serve via the NYS Volunteer Generation Program eligible for AmeriCorps Education Awards when they complete their term of service?**

No. The NYS Volunteer Generation Program is completely separate from the AmeriCorps program. Only volunteers/members serving with an AmeriCorps program will receive Education awards.

- 18. Can existing soup kitchens and homeless shelters be counted?**

Yes, if they are separate and independent nonprofit organizations from the applicant, if they are specifically named as partners, will benefit from the capacity-building services provided, and if the supporting documentation required from partners is provided.

- 19. One of our clients is interested in the Volunteer Generation RFP. I work for a municipality, but a specific municipal Department is interested in the program. However, that Department does not have any proprietary funding, so the matching requirement would be met by the municipality. Should we classify the municipality or the specific Department as the applicant? Also, I have worked with the Grants Gateway many times before and know that it can be very specific about who serves as fiscal or contract signatories. Would we be required to prequalify the municipality as a whole if the matching requirement would be met through municipal funding, or should we prequalify the Department as the agency specifically involved in carrying out program activities?**

The applicant may decide whether to list the municipality or the specific Department as the official applicant organization. The grant and contracting requirements would not

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change. The Commission cannot answer specific questions about the Grants Gateway prequalification system beyond what is provided in the RFP. There is a posting of FAQs about prequalification at www.grantsreform.ny.gov/sites/default/files/docs/FINAL-Frequently-Asked-Questions-about-Prequalification.pdf Additional questions should be directed to GrantsReform@budget.ny.gov.

- 20. The annual count of the homeless is a federal mandate in order to help state and federal government gauge how much money to disburse to each county. There are volunteers who go out to help survey the number of homeless individuals in each county. Could these volunteers be counted towards the total number of volunteers recruited (minimum of 80 required) knowing that this once a year surveying event. There would not be a post follow up with the volunteers because this is an annual survey. (This is in reference to section 2.3 B on page 18)**

These volunteers can only be counted toward the minimum number of 80 if they are volunteering an average of two hours per week for six months. If their volunteer service is limited only to the federally mandated survey, they are not helping to build the capacity of either your agency or that of your partners.