

Volunteer Generation Fund Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated May 12, 2023

1. To clarify, volunteers do not need to be AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers?

The Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) is not a national service program. Established under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (see Section 198(p) of the NCSA, 42 U.S.C. §12653p), VGF funding can be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers.

2. Could this be used in conjunction with an AmeriCorps program to increase volunteers working with the program?

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3. Do you have an idea of how many grants will be awarded?

AmeriCorps has not set an anticipated number of grants in the [Notice of Funding](#). The anticipated minimum award is \$100,000 and anticipated maximum award is \$1,000,000.

4. On page 8 of the NOFO it states, "Non-AmeriCorps Federal Funds are not allowed as match." Does this mean we can use AmeriCorps funds/resources as match?

No. Federal regulations do not allow an existing AmeriCorps award to be used as match for another current or future AmeriCorps award.

5. Do we need to have an existing program, or can this be a pilot?

There is no requirement in the [Notice of Funding](#) that states it must be an existing program. VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. AmeriCorps seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve community problems.

6. If the grant is awarded, will it only be for one year or is it still a three-year prime?

AmeriCorps anticipates making three-year grant awards. AmeriCorps generally makes an initial award for the first year of the period of performance, based on a one-year budget. Continuation awards for subsequent years are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

7. If the budget includes subgrants, are program staff with subgrantee organizations required to complete criminal history checks?

Per Section F.2.d. in the [Notice of Funding](#), award recipients and subrecipients must conduct a National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) for all staff funded under, or whose salary is reflected as match on, the award.

8. If the program can only match funds up to the three-year mark, are they able to opt out at that three-year mark?

AmeriCorps anticipates making three-year grant awards. Per Section B.3. in the [Notice of Funding](#), AmeriCorps generally makes an initial award for the first year of the period of performance, based on a one-year budget.

9. If we are successful with a VGF grant, is it a five-year grant agreement? Do we need to reapply for each subsequent year of funding?

AmeriCorps anticipates making three-year grant awards. AmeriCorps generally makes an initial award for the first year of the period of performance, based on a one-year budget. Continuation awards for subsequent years are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

10. Is \$100,000 the minimum award threshold?

Per Section B.2. in the [Notice of Funding](#), AmeriCorps will make awards in the range of \$100,000 to \$1,000,000.

11. Regarding the multiple year and percentage match of grant, do we need to create a grant application for multiple years initially? Or do we need to apply each year?

AmeriCorps anticipates making three-year grant awards. AmeriCorps generally makes an initial award for the first year of the period of performance, based on a one-year budget. Continuation

awards for subsequent years are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

12. I saw a metric along the terms of “how many organizations will be involved.” Is this grant for multiple organizations collaborating together or for just one organization’s volunteer program?

Applicants that receive VGF funding may directly carry out the activities supported under the award or may carry out the activities by making subgrants to community-based entities, supporting volunteer generation at these entities.

13. If a national organization has lots of local chapters, could they apply to increase volunteering across all of its chapters, or should proposals focus on supporting volunteering with a broader range of unaffiliated organizations?

Proposals should reflect the program goals and needs of the applicant and community being served. VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. AmeriCorps seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve community problems.

14. Was this a Grants.gov listing? We found this on that site but were unable to register - it would not recognize our UN or PW.

The Volunteer Generation Fund funding opportunity is listed on Grants.gov. Applications must be submitted in eGrants, as outlined in the [Application Instructions](#).

15. Is there a specific contact with AmeriCorps that applicants can reach out to with questions regarding an application?

Please make sure you review all resources available including the Notice of Funding, Application Instructions, recording of the TTA webinar, sample budget and this FAQ document. Applicants may direct questions to VolunteerGeneration@cns.gov.

16. Will this grant opportunity be offered every year?

AmeriCorps’ ability to host a competition for the Volunteer Generation Fund depends on the agency’s annual congressional appropriations.

17. Do you recommend we submit our application early, prior to the May 16th deadline?

Applications are due no later than Tuesday, May 16, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Please see the guidance in Section D.4. in the [Notice of Funding](#) to ensure your application is compliant with the submission deadline.

18. Are nonprofits that currently have an AmeriCorps grant able to apply for Volunteer Generation Funds as long as they're used for a different purpose?

Yes, eligible entities may apply for and host more than one program through AmeriCorps.

19. Is travel or attendance at annual meetings a requirement of those awarded with these funds?

There is no requirement that VGF grantees travel or attend annual events.

20. What is the definition of skilled volunteers, which is referenced as a goal of VGF to encourage?

Skills-based volunteering is using the direct professional expertise of volunteers to deliver professional services at no charge to a nonprofit/applicant/grantee organization, and in doing so, helping to build organizational capacity. The professional skills given would normally come at a monetary cost if they were obtained on the open market. Skills-based volunteering includes, but is not limited to: tutoring, mentoring, job skill training, human resources expertise, IT assistance, marketing support, finance/accounting support, and event coordination.

21. What are some examples of ways Volunteer Generation Funds have been used effectively in the past? Are there any research studies or articles about these programs?

Examples of recent funding include programs that:

- Provide capacity-building trainings or mini-grants to community-based organizations interested in leveraging evidence-based volunteer management practices
- Launch innovative outreach campaigns to recruit broader populations of volunteers more representative of the communities they serve
- Create or expand web-based volunteer management database systems

22. If we applied in Sept. 2022, are we eligible to apply this round?

Yes, applicants who do not currently have a VGF grant are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.

23. If an application gets “priority consideration” how will it be treated differently than an application that does not have priority consideration?

Per section E.1 in the Notice- Applications should include a well-designed plan with clear and compelling justifications for receiving the requested funds. Reviewers will assess the quality of applications by using the selection criteria described in the Notice and will rate them accordingly. They will also consider the weights assigned to each criterion.

24. Our organization connects US volunteers to both US community organizations as well as international community organizations, does this grant need to only support US community organizations? What about organizations registered as nonprofits in the US that work internationally?

AmeriCorps grants may only be used to support activities within the United States, certain of its Territories, and Native American Tribal Territory pursuant to the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.).

25. How many volunteers are needed for this grant?

VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. There is no required number of recruited, managed, or supported volunteers designated in the [Notice of Funding](#).

26. If the budget is for one year, should the narrative and performance indicators also be just for one year or should those be written/calculated for the full three years?

The narrative and performance indicators should be written as one year.

27. Our County is trying to increase the number of members for our Volunteer Fire Departments. We are having difficulties keeping members and having firemen show up for emergencies and fires. Will this program cover paying for Firemen to be able to keep functionally operating fire departments fully staffed?

The Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) is not a national service program and does not cover the cost of volunteer stipends. Established under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (see Section 198(p) of the NCSA, 42 U.S.C. §12653p), VGF funding can be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers.

28. Is there a preference for nonprofits that currently have AmeriCorps grants vs. those with new projects/projects that have not been funded before?

There is no preference for new vs. existing grantees listed in the Notice of Funding.

29. We build capacity and infrastructure for volunteer integration across the sector and address the priorities of the grant in many indirect ways but not directly - how will this impact our application?

Please see section A2 of the [Notice of Funding](#) for information about the funding priorities for this competition. To receive priority consideration, applicants must show that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high-quality program design. Proposing programs that receive priority consideration does not guarantee funding.

30. Is this a reimbursement grant?

Yes, VGF grants will be awarded on a cost reimbursement basis.

31. Is there a requirement to increase numbers of volunteers and numbers of volunteer hours served?

VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. AmeriCorps seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve community problems.

32. Is there an age range requirement for enrolled volunteers?

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33. In past years, how many awards were given out and what were the median/average amounts?

This is the first competition for the Volunteer Generation Fund with Congressionally Appropriated funding that is open to entities in addition to State Service Commissions, there has not been anything to compare.

34. What are the general branding guidelines if you are successful in your grant ask? How does AmeriCorps want to be included and visible as a supporter?

You can find AmeriCorps guidelines in the [General Terms and Conditions](#).

35. Can VGF be used for continuing a pilot project from a different nonprofit that was cross-referenced with AmeriCorps Seniors? Funding from nonprofit will not continue. It was only a one-year grant.

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36. At what stage of the application should we submit OFMS?

The Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS) must be submitted by the application deadline. Please refer to Section D.7.b in the [Notice of Funding](#) for additional details.

37. Is there a nonprofit that would be too small to qualify from a budget perspective?

AmeriCorps does not consider organizational size when determining eligibility. Please see the Eligibility Information in Section C. of the [Notice of Funding](#) for specific eligibility requirements.

38. What is the process for disbursing award payments to reimburse costs? Will this be a lump sum at the end of a specific time period, or will this be several requests in intervals? Is there a cap as to how much can be requested at one time?

Successful applicants who receive Volunteer Generation Fund grants are expected to follow the Federal payment guidelines outlined in 2 CFR § 200.305, which states that payment methods must minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of funds from the United States Treasury or the pass-through entity and the disbursement by the non-Federal entity.

39. If successful in year one, could the budget be increased in years two and three, or would it be for the same amount for all three years?

Continuation applicants may apply for expansions (increase in funding request compared to the previous year). Continuation awards for subsequent years are not guaranteed; they depend upon availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance.

40. How can I determine what is an allowable or eligible expense for VGF funding?

The Volunteer Generation Fund focuses on investments in volunteer management practices that strengthens nonprofit organizations and other entity's ability to increase recruitment and retention of volunteers to meet critical community needs through service. AmeriCorps seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve community problems. Applicants should propose costs that are reasonable, necessary, allowable, allocable, and aligned with the program narrative. To be considered allowable, costs must be necessary and reasonable for the performance of the award. Applicants should refer to the Uniform Guidance ([2 CFR § 200](#)) and budget guidance in the [Notice of Funding](#) and [Application Instructions](#) to determine specific allowable or unallowable program costs.

41. Does this award allow salary support?

The Volunteer Generation Fund Application Instructions allow proposed budgets to include the portion of principal staff time attributed directly to the operation of the project. When included, applicants should list each staff position and a brief statement of responsibilities for each in the 'Position/Title' field. For each position, applicants will also include the annual salary, and the percentage of staff time that will apply to the grant.

42. If volunteers serve as site coordinators, can those stipends be expensed? If volunteers make up the program, can their stipend be expensed since that role is integral to programming?

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43. Can you speak to any rules around mini-grants to sub-grantees? Is there a maximum amount and do those sub-grantees need to be registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations?

As stated in the [Notice of Funding](#), applicants that receive funding under this Notice may directly carry out the activities supported under the award or may carry out the activities by making subgrants to community-based entities, supporting volunteer generation at these entities. Specific guidelines for subgrants are detailed in Section A.1. of the Notice.

44. Can we use VGF funding to pay for non-cost share support costs to VISTA members serving on our VISTA project, such as training specific for their positions, consultants/contractors to

deliver training, or travel to attend trainings? Can we use VGF funding to pay organization staff time that would provide VGF-specific training and coaching to VISTA members?

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45. Does the budget require a minimum of one full-time staff to support the project?

There is no minimum or maximum level of personnel required for the VGF budget. Proposed costs should be reasonable and necessary to deliver the activities proposed in the application narrative.

46. If you have a fiscal sponsor with administrative fees, how would they be listed?

As stated in Attachment B of the Volunteer Generation Fund Application Instructions, indirect costs are an allowable budget item in AmeriCorps grants in accordance with 2 CFR §200.414 Indirect (F&A) costs. Applicants have the option of using an indirect cost rate which has been negotiated with, and approved by, their cognizant federal agency; or a non-federal entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct federal funding that does not have a current federally negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. Grantees may also charge certain administrative costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR §200.413 Direct costs.

47. You stated supplies over \$1,000, where do you put supplies under \$1,000 or did I just hear that wrong?

Supplies costs are consumable supplies and materials. When including supplies in your budget, please make sure to individually list single items costing \$1,000 or more.

48. Do match funds have to come from external donors?

As noted in Section VI.A. of the Application Instructions, the acceptable sources of matching funds are state, local, and/or private sector funds in accordance with applicable AmeriCorps requirements.

49. What is an example of allowable in-kind match?

2 CFR § 200.306 Cost sharing or matching states that for all Federal awards, any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions, must be accepted as part of the non-Federal entity's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the following criteria: (1) Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records; (2) Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award; (3) Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives; (4) Are allowable under subpart E of this part; (5) Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs; (6) Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and (7) Conform to other provisions of this part, as applicable.

50. For in-kind match, is there a maximum percentage of the total match?

As stated in Section C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching of the [Notice of Funding](#), the applicant's match (Grantee Share) can be cash and/or in-kind contributions.

51. Can administrative/leadership costs be counted for the in-kind cost?

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52. Can we use volunteer labor as a match?

Volunteer services may only be used as matching resources if they are for organizational functions, such as accounting, auditing, or training.

53. Are the required match percentages taken from the total budget cost or each year's cost? For example, if total project costs are \$300,000 and the first year is \$100,000, is the required match for the first year 20% of \$300,000 or \$100,000?

Applicants are required to match funds equal to a percentage of their total requested one-year program budget.

54. If we don't currently have a federally approved indirect rate, do we apply for one before or after we submit our proposal?

Please note this guidance from Section D.6.b. Indirect Costs of the [Notice of Funding](#): To request a federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, when AmeriCorps is the applicable cognizant agency for an organization's indirect costs, the applicant must submit a request to IndirectCostRate@cns.gov. The applicant may also obtain instructions and additional information by contacting the email address above. Applicants that do not have a Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate and who receive less than \$35 million in direct federal funding may use a *de minimis rate* of 10% of modified total direct costs.

55. What is the difference between the 10% allowable indirect and the 5% AmeriCorps allowable indirect?

Applicants that do not have a Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate and who receive less than \$35 million in direct federal funding may use a *de minimis rate* of 10% of modified total direct costs. The AmeriCorps share of indirect costs using the *de minimis rate* is limited to 5% of the total AmeriCorps funds.

56. You said that we need to use the same formula for indirect cost across all federal grants. However, I recall a third option that other AmeriCorps grants can use that wasn't mentioned here. What should we do if we have another AmeriCorps grant using this alternative?

As stated in the [Notice of Funding](#), based on qualifying factors, Volunteer Generation Fund applicants may either use a Federally approved indirect cost rate or a 10 percent *de minimis rate* of modified total direct costs, or may claim certain costs directly, as outlined in 2 CFR 200.413. Further, 2 CFR § 200.414(f) states that, if the *de minimis rate* is chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

57. Is Section 2 of the Budget Narrative optional?

Applicants may choose one of two methods to calculate allowable administrative costs – a federally approved indirect cost rate method, or a *de minimis* method. As stated in Attachment B of the Volunteer Generation Fund Application Instructions, grantees may also charge certain administrative costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR §200.413 Direct costs.

58. Do we need an official audit to apply for these funds?

Audit requirements are based on the total amount of federal funds an applicant expends during a year. If your organization meets the threshold of \$750,000 in total federal funds, not just AmeriCorps funds, you are required to have a single audit. There is no single audit requirement for organizations that do not meet the threshold.

59. Are ARPA funds considered part of the \$750,000 threshold for the audit requirement?

Per 2 CFR § 200.501(a) A non-Federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more during the non-Federal entity's fiscal year in Federal awards must have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year in accordance with the provisions of this part.

60. For the audit threshold, is it active funding or does it include all past funding?

Per 2 CFR § 200.501(a) A non-Federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more during the non-Federal entity's fiscal year in Federal awards must have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year in accordance with the provisions of this part.

61. The Application Instructions refer on page 14 to a Data Collection tab in the Performance Measures section of the application, but I can't find the tab in my application. Is this a system error?

Mention of a Data Collection tab in the Application Instructions is an error; you will not have a Data Collection tab in the Performance Measures section of your application. Instead, you should enter data collection information in the main Performance Measures tab. Expand each output and outcome entered on this tab and follow the Data Collection tab instructions to select the data collection method you will use to measure the output or outcome, a description of the specific instrument(s) you will use to measure it, and the target number.

62. Can match funds come from internal organization revenue? Would our own revenue count as private sector funds?

Matching resources may be provided by the applicant organization and should be identified as state, local, or private sources, as appropriate. As a reminder, non-AmeriCorps federal funds are not allowed as match on the Volunteer Generation Fund budgets.

63. Can VGF applicants request a match waiver, similar to the match waiver available to ASN programs and AmeriCorps Seniors programs?

There is no match waiver for FY 23 Volunteer Generation Fund.

64. What is the cost per individual of an NSCHC Criminal Background Check?

Applicants should determine their proposed costs for National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) using the [NSCHC Resources](#) linked in Section F.2.d. of the Notice of Funding.

65. My organization has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, but the instructions say we can't claim more than 5%. Is it possible to claim other indirect costs as direct costs? Or could we claim the indirect costs that exceed 5% as an in-kind match?

The Application Instructions state that the CNCS share of administrative costs is limited to 5% of the total CNCS funds. The grantee share of administrative costs is only limited by the total amount of indirect costs allowed, depending on the rate used. Applicants can budget up to the 5% of total CNCS funds in the CNCS share of indirect costs and any remaining allowable indirect costs in the grantee share.

66. Do program sites need to be identified at the time of application?

No, a full list of sites does not need to be identified in the application.

67. Under the Performance Measure tab, there is a section titled "End Outcome" with fields labeled as "Focus Area", "FA End Output", and "FA End Outcome." They each have a drop-down list but nothing is available to select from the drop-down menu. As a result, the eGrants portal is saying that my Performance Measure section is incomplete. How do I fix this?

The Focus Area End Outcomes section in the Performance Measure tab can be skipped. Ensure that you have clicked on the required capacity building output and outcome (G3-3.4 and G3-3.10A) to open the drop-down tables and complete all information within the drop-down. Once all information has been entered in the dropdowns, select "Add PM to Table" at the bottom of the screen, skipping the Focus Area End Outcomes, and the system will allow you to proceed and validate the performance measures without an issue.

68. How should I complete the Resource Allocation tab in the Performance Measure application module?

Please enter a 1 in each field on the Resource Allocation tab. This tab was created for the member-based AmeriCorps programs and is not applicable to this opportunity; however, you must enter a 1 in each field (# of Volunteers, MSYs, Project Hours, and Amount) in order for the system to allow you to submit the application. This is separate from the field on the Performance Measure tab asking you to "Enter # of Resources". In this field, you should enter a 1 in the MSY field and a 0 in all other fields (# of Volunteers, Project Hours, and Amount).

- 69. If the applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate and would not like to opt into the de minimis method as it would limit their indirect costs on other AmeriCorps grants can they claim the 5% CNCS share and no grantee share and not be considered opting into the de minimis method? Or is the only way to opt out of the de minimis method is to not claim any indirect costs (CNCS or grantee share)?**

As stated in the Application Instructions, applicants may choose one of two methods to calculate allowable administrative costs – a federally approved indirect cost rate method or a de minimis method. Grantees may also charge certain administrative costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR §200.413. Costs included in the Indirect Costs budget category must include a clear cost calculation that notes the cost type, approved indirect cost rate, and the base upon which this rate is calculated. It is the applicant’s decision whether to use the entire indirect cost rate to calculate administrative costs. When applicants choose to claim a lower rate, they must include this rate in the Rate Claimed field.

- 70. The Notice says, “Do not enter narrative text in the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy narrative field,” but eGrants won’t allow me to submit without entering text in this field. How should I complete the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section of the application?**

Text entered into Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy section of the narrative will not be read or reviewed. You may enter “N/A” in this field.

- 71. We are a current VGF grantee in our final year of funding. Page four of the Application Instructions indicate that if we are in our final year of funding or have received VGF funding in the last five years, we should apply using the "continuation/renewal" option. However, page nine of the instructions under "Continuation Requests" indicates, "If your program is currently in the final year of its grant cycle, you must apply using the application instructions for new and recompeting programs." However, we are unable to select the “continuation/renewal” option in the eGrants system.**

If you have received VGF funding in the last five years but are unable to select the FY 2023 Volunteer Generation Fund application from the “Continuation/Renewal” menu in eGrants, please select “New” in the “Creating an Application” box to start a new application. In the Project Information section of the application on the Applicant Info screen, please select the same project name as your previous VGF project(s). This will ensure that your application information is linked to your earlier VGF project(s).

- 72. For applicants using the de minimis rate for indirect costs, what should they list as the issuing agency?**

Applicants claiming the de minimis rate should list the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as the issuing agency. The OMB issues the Uniform Guidance that authorizes a de minimis rate.