

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
FY 2023 AmeriCorps
Volunteer Generation Fund ARP Competition

- 1) **Question-** *Our organization has hired and trained thousands of volunteers to be tutors and mentors for the past 18 years, but we do pay our tutors a part-time wage, can the funding from VGF be used to pay tutors?*

Answer- No. 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) **Question-** *Will the volunteers be provided by AmeriCorps?*

Answer- No, the Volunteer Generation Fund is not a national service program, the funding can be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. Please see Section A1 and A2 of the [NOFO](#) for more information.

- 3) **Question-** *Can the VGF grant be used to bring an existing AmeriCorps program (e.g., City Year) to a city where it is not currently in place?*

Answer- No. The Volunteer Generation Fund is not a national service program, the funding can be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers.

- 4) **Question-** *Is the VGF grant focused on identification of new volunteer recruitment and management processes in regard to volunteer generation efficiency or is the focus on programmatic student outcomes of the program?*

Answer- 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 the grantee to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve problems. Please see section A2 of the [NOFO](#) for information about the funding priorities. 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.

- 5) **Question-** *Is AmeriCorps providing the volunteers or if the school district was awarded the money, would we find the volunteers by process of RFP to organizations that provide qualified tutors?*

Answer-AmeriCorps is providing resources for the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) Grant Program – the purpose of VGF program is provide resources to volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support and retain individuals in high quality volunteer assignments. It is the responsibility of those organizations to recruit and manage those volunteers (Please note VGF resources are distinctly different than operating grants for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps Seniors programs, which may include stipends for members and volunteers as an allowable.

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6) **Question-** *What format is the \$20 million, in dollars or in-kind?*

Answer- AmeriCorps is providing federal grant dollars. AmeriCorps expects to make awards of a minimum of \$100,000. See section B of the [NOFO](#).

7) **Question-** *What are your specific performance measures?*

Answer- All applicants are required to use the following National Performance Measures (Found on Page 5 of the [NOFO](#)):

- G3-3.4 (output): Number of organizations that received capacity building services AND
- G3-3.10A (outcome): Number of organizations that increased their effectiveness, efficiency, and/or program scale/reach.

Applicants may also define other measures for their programs in the applications.

8) **Question-** *How did the NOFO change when it was amended on August 4, 2022?*

Answer- The Notice of Funding for the Volunteer Generation Fund has been amended to:

- Remove templated language for clarity.
- Added link for information about performance measures.
- Clarified selection criteria.
- Removed compliance factor for additional documents.
- Updated the date for the Training and Technical Assistance call to August 10th. This call will be recorded.
- The date that successful applicants will be notified was adjusted.

All modifications to the Volunteer Generation Grant Fund grant competition are highlighted in yellow within the amended Notice of Federal Funding Availability (Notice). Please review the Notice carefully and take note of the changes.

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The following Questions/Answers were updated: 8/25/2022

- 1) **Question-** *Can these funds be used to expand an already-existing program?*

Answer- There is no requirement in the NOFO which states it must be a new program. The NOFO states- VGF grants will be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers.

- 2) **Question-** *To be clear, stipends for tutors who complete their service are not an allowable expense?*

Answer- 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

- 3) **Question-** *Are AmeriCorps stipends an allowable expense?*

Answer- 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.

- 4) **Question-** *Can it be used to improve your infrastructure to recruit your AC positions?*

Answer- 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.

- 5) **Question-** *Can funds be used to improve infrastructure or pay for a staff position to increase recruitment for your existing AmeriCorps positions?*

Answer- 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.

- 6) **Question-** *Can you provide an example of what a larger award could be for this opportunity (e.g. \$200K or \$2M)?*

Answer- AmeriCorps has not set a maximum amount. The minimum amount stated in the NOFO is \$100,000.

- 7) **Question-** *Can funding be utilized for incentives to support recruitment efforts for an existing AmeriCorps program?*

Answer-No. 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

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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.

- 8) **Question-** *It is unclear whether or not direct service organizations (after school providers) are eligible for this fund. For an example if an organization is an after school service provider/mentoring organization could they apply for funds to expand the reach of their program and improve mentoring infrastructure.*

Answer- Eligible applicants included in the NOFO are: The following non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in 2 CFR 200.1) are eligible to apply: • Indian Tribes • institutions of higher education • local governments (including School districts and K-12 Schools) • nonprofit organizations • state service commissions • states and US Territories

- 9) **Question-** *Does an organization need to be a partner or become a partner with the NPSS?*

Answer- No, applicants do not need to be a partner with the National Partnership for Student Success.

- 10) **Question-** *Are stipends for service an allowable expense?*

Answer- No, 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.

- 11) **Question-** *How many grants do you anticipate awarding and how competitive do you think the award will be? Is there an average amount of applications you usually get for this fund?*

Answer- AmeriCorps has not set an anticipated number of grants in the NOFO. The anticipated minimum award is \$100,000.

- 12) **Question-** *Do volunteers need to be Americorps volunteers or is utilizing the grant for our current volunteer base okay?*

Answer- No, the Volunteer Generation Fund is not a national service program the funding can be used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. Please see Section A1 and A2 of the NOFO for more information.

- 13) **Question-** *Is this grant appropriate for individual non-profits who would like to build their volunteer program, or does this apply to organizations that serve many others with their volunteers?*

Answer- There is no requirement to subgrant the awarded funding.

- 14) **Question-** *My organization is a nonprofit that has contracts with the School District of Philadelphia to run two public schools. Are we eligible to apply?*

Answer-The following non-Federal entities (all of which are defined in 2 CFR 200.1) are eligible to apply: • Indian Tribes • institutions of higher education • local governments (including School districts and K-12 Schools) • nonprofit organizations • state service commissions • states and US Territories.

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15) **Question-** *Would sub-grantee award be included in Other Program Operating Costs?*

Answer- If proposed in the VGF budget, subawards should be in Section I.I., Other Program Operating Costs and include detail to demonstrate that the costs are reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the project, such as the number of subgrants and the average amount of subgrants, as well as any match required of subrecipients.

16) **Question-** *Can grantees use an existing AmeriCorps award as matching dollars?*

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

17) **Question-** *Match: Should a program have never received VGF dollars, but is an AmeriCorps grant recipient. Would that program need the 50%+ if that's where we are with AmeriCorps or would it be 20% for a first year VGF grant?*

Answer- Match requirements are tied to the program. Volunteer Generation Fund grants are not AmeriCorps grants, therefore they will be considered new programs and have a Year 1 match requirement.

18) **Question-***If we have received VGF funding as a subgrantee by a service commission, are we considered a 1st year grant?*

Answer-The regulations state, "If you have not been a direct recipient of an AmeriCorps operational grant from the Corporation or a State commission for five years or more, as determined by the end date of your most recent grant period, you may begin matching at the year one level." If you propose to implement the same project that was previously funded and as identified in eGrants, and it has been fewer than five years since you last received direct funding from AmeriCorps or a state commission you must begin matching at the same level you were matching at the end of your most recent grant period.

19) **Question-** *If we wanted to use funding to provide an incentive to encourage students to participate in a volunteer-based mentoring program, could we use grant funds for that?*

Answer- 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 problems.

20) **Question-** *We are a Public Benefit Company working with school districts to develop and scale researched backed volunteer peer and near-peer tutoring programs. We help districts by providing comprehensive program support including recruiting, tutor training, and management. This reduces the barriers that have prevented programs from succeeding in the past. QUESTION: Under section I F, can districts contract with a company to provide these comprehensive services?*

Answer- It is possible for a school district to contract with a public benefit company but the school district would have to be the applicant/grantee. Currently, for profit corporations, including benefit corporations, are not eligible entities to receive AmeriCorps grants.

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21) **Question-** *Is the potential minimum amount award of \$100,000 an annual minimum or total project minimum over a multi-year period?*

Answer- 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.

22) **Question-** *Is this grant a national grant or managed by the state pass through agency?*

Answer- This Volunteer Generation Fund opportunity is managed directly from AmeriCorps. Awarded applicants may offer a subgrant opportunity.

23) **Question-** *Just confirming our budget is for year one only. Also, can we choose whether this is a 3, 4, or 5 year grant? I see the match requirements for 4+ years. But I thought these grants were typically 3 years.*

Answer- 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.

24) **Question-** *Can Indirect Costs serve as the match?*

Answer- As noted in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, unrecovered indirect costs may be included as part of an applicant's cost sharing or matching requirements, as provided in 2 CFR 200.306(c).

25) **Question-** *What is the best way to register for the SAM account?*

Answer- Pages 9-10 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides instructions for accessing the System for Award Management and details about the registration requirements.

26) **Question-** *Do we need to provide the NSCHC to all volunteers going through our program training? Does this include staff?*

Answer- Please refer to section F.2.d- award recipients and subrecipients must conduct an NSCHC for AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers, and all staff funded under, or whose salary is reflected as match on, the award.

27) **Question-** *One of the first questions is what "state" the applications for. What if your proposal supports many states?*

Answer- The first question about the state is referring to the state of the organization applying. If you will support additional states, they can be listed in the narrative.

28) **Question-** *Can you submit an application without including indirect costs if you don't ask for funding for them?*

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Answer- Under certain conditions, AmeriCorps grantees have the option of using an indirect cost rate which has been negotiated with, and approved by, their cognizant federal agency; charging a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely; or charge certain administrative costs directly as outlined in 2 CFR §200.413 Direct costs.

29) **Question-** *Can this grant be used on a program that we are using current AmeriCorps dollars for, but to expand the types of volunteers we recruit?*

Answer- 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 problems.

30) **Question-** *Is there a minimum service commitment for volunteers (similar to AC service members)?*

Answer- No, this is not a national service program.

31) **Question-** *Is there a maximum funding amount people should ask for?*

Answer- No maximum amount has been identified in the NOFO.

32) **Question-** *Is it \$100K per org, or in total disbursement?*

Answer- The minimum grant award from AmeriCorps is \$100,000. Organizations may manage the subgrant process at their own discretion.

33) **Question-** *When applying, if you currently have an AmeriCorps grant, however, the Volunteer Generation grant will not overlap in any way, do you select "new", in egrants?*

Answer- Yes, this would be a new grant.

34) **Question-** *Why is a 4+ year match shown in the NOFO when the program is only for 3 years?*

Answer- Should AmeriCorps fund programs in continuation years, beyond the initial 3-year grant period, those programs are required to follow the match requirements outlined for Years 4, 5, and beyond.

35) **Question-** *We have a successful volunteer based tutoring program that is NOT an Americorps project and our volunteers are not paid. Can funds for the VGF be used to expand our existing projects.*

Answer- It is not a requirement for programs to be identified as new. 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 problems.

36) **Question-** *Is the award based annually or is it a 5-year award?*

Answer- 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.

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37) **Question-** *Can an organization use the same item as match across multiple federal grant?*

Answer- As stated in 2 CFR § 200.306 Cost sharing or matching, "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.

38) **Question-** *If we use our NICRA for IDC, is it correct that only 5% can be charged to AmeriCorps and the remaining 95% has to be covered by matching funds?*

Answer- The process for calculating Administrative/Indirect Costs is outlined on pages 43-44 of the Application Instruction. Regardless of the calculation option chosen, the CNCS share of administrative costs is limited to 5% of the total CNCS funds actually expended under this grant or, in the case of a budget submission, is limited to 5% of the total CNCS funds budgeted.

39) **Question-** *Define "state commissions"*

Answer- State service commissions are the state partners of the federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service. State service commissions administer AmeriCorps State, Volunteer Generation Fund, and related programs to address critical community needs and engage citizens in service.

40) **Question-** *Do we need to have organizations identified in the application or can we do a competitive process after award?*

Answer- Organizations can hold competitive process after awards. The full list of sites does not need to be identified in the application.

41) **Question-** *The NOFO states you anticipate award for 3 years but another area list a 4th year. How many years is the grant funded for an organization? Do we only choose one priority or can we combine two priorities?*

Answer- 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. Applicants can have multiple priorities.

42) **Question-** *For smaller but well established programs hoping to expand capacity, is there a percentage estimate of total program budget the grant request could represent?*

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Answer- The budget is based on the needs of the applicant.

43) **Question-** *Is a project evaluation required? If so, where can we find requirements?*

Answer- AmeriCorps expects applicants to use National Performance Measures as part of a comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from their work and make tactical and strategic adjustments to achieve their goals.

44) **Question-** *Can Volunteer Generation Fund be used as match for capacity building grants from other federal agencies?*

Answer- No, VGF funds cannot be used as match for capacity building grants from other federal agencies.

45) **Question-** *The announcement listed school success as a priority for the fall 2022 cycle, do you anticipate that being the same for the spring 2023 cycle?*

Answer- Priorities have not been announced for the regularly appropriated funds for the Volunteer Generation Grant fund program.

46) **Question-** *Must applications be education focused?*

Answer- No. as stated in the NOFO 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 problems.

47) **Question-** *I understand that funds cannot be used to pay stipends for volunteers, but can a program use funds to support the recruitment of volunteers that receive a stipend?*

Answer- 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 problems.

48) **Question-** *Project Information - "create a new project" - Enter/Edit a Project - Project State What if Project is for many states?*

Answer- The project state is the state of the applicant. Additional states can be identified in the narrative.

49) **Question-** *If we have received a VGF Grant as a subgrantee through our service commission, are we writing as a 1st year program?*

Answer- Yes.

50) **Question-** *How do we find the costs for the federal background check?*

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Answer- For more information please go to- <https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/history-check>

51) **Question-** *I am working on my Volunteer Generation Fund grant application. The application instructions say to "Enter "0" (zero) for the number of MSYs fields because these fields are not applicable to the VGF grant program." In e-grants if I enter a "0" for MSY's, when I try to verify the performance measures it says, "Error: Please enter all the Resource Allocation Values."*

Answer- This is a new systems requirement, please enter 1 instead of zero for fields that do not apply.