



2024 Serve Wisconsin VGF Mini Grant Request for Application: Volunteer Engagement

1. Purpose of VGF

In 2009, Congress passed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA), the most sweeping expansion of national service in a generation. The SAA created the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and sustain volunteers. Through VGF grants, AmeriCorps (formerly known as the Corporation for National and Community Service or CNCS) seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations, and develop strategies to effectively use volunteers to solve problems.

Serve Wisconsin leverages financial investment, training and support for initiatives that improve the well-being of Wisconsinites. Serve Wisconsin seeks to expand opportunities, initiate collaborations, and create opportunities to build the resources of and strengthen service and volunteers. The Commission has been granted federal funds through AmeriCorps to expand the capacity of Wisconsin entities that effectively use volunteers as catalysts to address community issues and seeks to fund projects and interventions to organizations increasing their organizational capacity through the recruitment, retention, training, and recognition of volunteers. Serve Wisconsin specifically aims to subgrant these federal funds to agencies focusing on working with volunteers in rural areas, agencies working with older adult volunteers, and youth led volunteer programs.

2. Purpose of Funding

Serve Wisconsin will make available, through a competitive process, up to \$36,000 in mini-grants ranging between \$2,000 and \$4,500 to community-based entities seeking to strengthen volunteer engagement in rural areas of Wisconsin, where nearly 30% of the state's population resides. Rural communities are defined as having populations of fewer than 2,500 residents. Serve Wisconsin intends to distribute mini grants to rural volunteer centers, clearing houses, nonprofits, or government agencies that engage with volunteers to host events in rural communities. Serve Wisconsin runs a competitive process to select recipients based on their innovative approaches, size and scope of the proposed project and the organization's demonstrated readiness to implement the proposed project. The Commission encourages applications from rural communities that work with older adult volunteers, and youth led volunteer programs.

3. Type of Award/Match Requirements

VGF subawards will be made on a cost reimbursement basis. There is a \$1 for \$1 match requirement. The applicant's match can be non-VGF cash and/or in-kind contributions. Applicants must indicate whether the match is proposed or already secured. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet the match requirement at the time of application submission.

4. Eligibility

The following Wisconsin-based, non-federal entities are eligible: non-profit organizations, Indian Tribes, local governments, schools, institutions of higher education, and state agencies.

5. Application Due Date

Serve Wisconsin will begin reviewing first round applications March 15th, and awarded entities will be notified by March 30th. Applications will be accepted after March 15th and will be reviewed on the 15th of each month through June, or until all funds are awarded.

6. Project Period

The project period begins the day contracts are signed through the agreed upon grant end date. The absolute last day to expend grant funds is September 30, 2024. All progress reports and final invoicing are due 30 days after the grant end date.

7. Estimated Award Amount:

Serve Wisconsin will make subgrant awards between \$2,000 and \$4,500, depending on the scope of each project. Some proposals may be partially funded based on project details and the amount of funding available for qualified projects.

8. Eligible Funding Purposes

Activities/programs that support volunteer recruitment, engagement, training, Days of Service, or disaster preparedness trainings for rural communities. Rural communities are defined as having populations of fewer than 2,500 residents.

9. Performance Measures

Agencies will be required to report out on the successes of their funded projects, including:

- a. Summary of activities accomplished with VGF funds
- b. Total volunteers engaged
- c. Total hours served by volunteers
- d. Total number of clients served/impacted by volunteer work
- e. Method of tracking volunteers/hours served/clients impacted by volunteer work

10. Program Authority

AmeriCorps' legal authority to award these grants is the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 12653p).

11. Funding Restrictions

- A. Awards under this Notice are subject to cost share or matching requirements. The amount of federal funding provided will be limited to the required percent of the total allowable costs for the funded activity, as determined under 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E-Cost Principles and described in Section C.2. For the 2024 Program Year, applicants are required to match funds \$1

for \$1 Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet matching requirements at the time of application. Applicants must identify match in their proposed budget, including whether identified matching funds are proposed or secured. Matching funds can be non-AmeriCorps cash and/or in-kind contributions.

- B. Personnel expenses/staff time will not be funded through the grant or allowed as match.

12. System for Award Management (SAM) Requirement

All applicants MUST register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete. If an applicant is awarded a grant, it must maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Applications must include a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is generated as part of the SAM registration process. Applicants that do not comply with these requirements are ineligible to receive an award. As this process can be lengthy, Serve Wisconsin strongly encourages interested organizations to begin the registration process as soon as possible.

13. Federal Award Information

- A. All awards made under this Notice will be subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2205.
- B. All awards made under this Notice will be subject to the FY 2024 AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions, and the FY 2023-2024 Program Specific Terms and Conditions for the particular program (when applicable). These Terms and Conditions contain detailed, mandatory compliance and reporting requirements.
- C. To ensure that materials generated with AmeriCorps funding are available to the public and readily accessible to recipients and non-recipients, AmeriCorps reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the award, including data, and to authorize others to do so (2 CFR §200.315).
- D. All successful subgrantees must complete and retain a certificate of completion of the AmeriCorps Key Concepts of Financial Grants Management course. See the VGF Terms and Conditions for more information. The course can be found here: <https://americorpsonlinecourses.litmos.com/account/login/?C=7513619>
- E. Applicants may NOT use grant/match funding to do the following prohibited activities: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2520/section-2520.65>
- F. Recipients shall provide information or training to their Volunteer Generation Fund volunteers about how their programs, projects or initiatives are part of AmeriCorps. Recipients are strongly encouraged to place signs that include the AmeriCorps logo at all their service sites. When volunteers and programs are publicized – including but not limited to public speaking opportunities, press releases, news stories, blog posts, websites, social media posts, online videos, public service announcements, paid advertising, brochures and other communications channels – programs must be identified as AmeriCorps funded and where possible, appropriate logos must be displayed.

14. Additional Resources

- A. AmeriCorps Focus Areas: <https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/volunteer-generation-fund>
- B. Volunteer Generation Fund: <https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/volunteergeneration-fund>
- C. Terms and Conditions: <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2023-VolunteerGenerationFund-TC-050423.pdf>
- D. CFR for Match Details: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/section-200.306>
- E. Prohibited Activities (applicants may not use grant/match funding to do the following): <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XXV/part-2520/section-2520.65>

15. Application Instructions

The narrative section of the application is your opportunity to convince reviewers that your project meets the criteria as outlined in the RFA above. Below are some general recommendations to help you present your project in a way the reviewers will find compelling and persuasive.

- A. Lead from your program strengths and be explicit.
- B. Be clear and succinct. Do not use jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. Describe clearly what you intend to do and how your project responds to the selection criteria.
- C. Explain how. Avoid simply stating that the criteria will be met. Explicitly describe how the proposed project will meet the criteria.
- D. Don't make assumptions. Even if you have received funding from Serve Wisconsin in the past, do not assume your reviewers know anything about you, your proposed program, your partners, or your beneficiaries. Avoid overuse of acronyms.
- E. Use an impartial proofreader. Before you submit your application, let someone who is completely unfamiliar with your project read and critique the project narrative.

The narrative section has four sections and will be rated out of 100 points:

1. 50 Points: Please give a detailed description of your agency's Program Design (How will your organization run the program? How will your agency include volunteers from rural areas? What goals/objectives do you have? What would make this program a success?).
2. 20 Points: Please give a detailed description of your agency's Organizational Capacity (Tell us about how your organizational make up will set your program up for success.)
3. 20 Points: Please describe how your budget is effective and adequate (How does your budget provide you with the adequate resources to run the program? How will you ensure your agency has adequate resources to meet the match requirements?)
4. 10 Points: What is your timeline for implementing this program?

The application to apply for VGF mini grants can be found here:

<https://forms.office.com/g/1P5wcLWQZk>

The budget form can be found here: <https://www.servewisconsin.wi.gov/volunteer-generation-fund>

Please email Rachel Donaldson (rachel.donaldson@wisconsin.gov) the completed budget form and any supplemental materials after completing the online application.

16. Grant Administrator

The administrator for this grant is:

Rachel Donaldson

rachel.donaldson@wisconsin.gov

(608) 261-5058