2015 RSVP Competition
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - Updated August 11, 2014

This document supplements the 2015 RSVP Competition Senior Corps Notice of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions. These FAQs will be updated periodically. New or updated questions will be clearly indicated within each section.

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1. AWARD INFORMATION

1.1. Is a separate application needed for each service area listed in Appendix A?

Yes.

1.2. My organization is the current sponsor for an RSVP grant. If I apply for and win the award for a new RSVP grant, can I combine the newly awarded RSVP grant with my current RSVP grant so there is only one RSVP grant operated by my sponsor?

Yes, but only if your current RSVP grant has already been awarded through competition. If the intent of your new RSVP application is to combine a newly awarded RSVP grant with your existing RSVP grant, your application and budget should reflect this. Initially the newest grant

will be awarded a three year project period. When the older grant is due for continuation, it will be closed and the newer grant will be augmented by the funding amount and unduplicated volunteers from the older grant. Combining the grants would be addressed with your state office during the first year of project operations.

1.3. Can an organization that wins this competition sub contract to another organization to run RSVP?

No.

2. ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

2.1. We previously relinquished an RSVP grant. May we apply for a new grant in this competition?

Yes.

2.2. Can two organizations jointly apply for one grant?

No. One organization must be identified as the sponsor organization. The second organization could become a volunteer station, but would not be considered the grantee.

2.3. We are a new non-profit and do not yet have an EIN, IRS non-profit status document, or a 990. Can we still apply?

No. The applicant organization must be an established non-profit at the time the application is submitted. If the organization is already a non-profit, but not a 501(c)3, non-profit designation issued by the Secretary of State (or similar organization in your state) would be sufficient documentation for documentation requirement #14 in the Grant Application Instructions.

2.4. If the geographic area I wish to serve is not listed in Appendix A, are we eligible to apply?

No. However, the geographic service areas will vary during each year of this competition. Please check back next year to see if the geographic service area you would like to serve is up for competition.

2.5. We intend to separate from our fiscal agent and file for an independent federal tax exempt status later this calendar year, but after the grant application is due. Should we apply under the DUNS Number and EIN of our fiscal agent, or just apply under our own EIN and DUNS which other than through our fiscal agent agreement is not yet a 501(c)(3)?

An EIN, non-profit status verification, and 990 are required for non-profit applicants in order to be eligible to apply for this competition. Therefore, the new organization being formed would

not be eligible because they are not yet a non-profit. Once a grant is awarded in the RSVP Competition, it must stay with the legal applicant and cannot be redirected through a transfer.

2.6. My organization would like to apply for an opportunity listed in Appendix A, but we are located outside of the geographic service area. Can we still apply?

Yes. However, if awarded, the project must serve the geographic service area exactly as it is described in Appendix A. Additional counties or cities cannot be added.

3. SELECTION CRITERIA AND REVIEW

3.1. How should applicants address the selection criteria described in the *Notice* for cost effectiveness/budget adequacy?

Selection criteria Q21-Q31 should be addressed through the limited text that can be entered in the eGrants budget section and should align with the other narrative responses.

3.2. How do I answer Q7 in the Notice about receiving credit for unduplicated volunteers above the minimum 10%?

Q7 is part of the selection criteria that reviewers will use when assessing applications. It is not a question that requires a narrative response. Reviewers will assess Q7 based on the work plans.

3.3. How is the DUNS number used during the review?

The DUNS number is one of the items considered during the financial review. A DUNS number establishes an organization's credit score and so should be established as soon as possible prior to submitting an application.

3.4. Selection Criteria Q18 asks about staff positions. Is a full time RSVP Director required for this competition or can there be a part time RSVP Director?

According to RSVP Federal Regulation 45 CFR Part 2553.23 (c): A sponsor may negotiate the employment of a part-time project director with the Corporation when it can be demonstrated that such an arrangement will not adversely affect the size, scope and quality of project operations.

Added July 11, 2014

3.5. Can more details be shared about advantages that might be gained in answering specific selection criteria in a certain way?

No.

Added August 11, 2014

3.6. My organization is the incumbent for the RSVP project in my area. Should I address the selection criteria using narrative information about my organization's past experience in RSVP or using my old application narratives?

It depends. While you may use your past experience in RSVP to address certain selection criteria, submitting your old application narratives with no changes to address the current selection criteria and current grant application instructions will not likely sufficiently address the current requirements.

4. EGRANTS

4.1. When starting my application in eGrants, do I select 'new' or 'renewal'?

ALL APPLICANTS should select 'new.' This includes incumbent RSVPs.

If you selected 'new' the application type on the left side of the screen will say 'new.' Your application will not include any information from previous grant applications.

If you selected 'renewal' the application type on the left side of the screen will say 'new grant/previous grantee.' Information from previously awarded grants will already be populated in the application.

If you selected 'renewal,' please delete the application and begin again with a 'new' application.

4.2. How do I enter my authorized representative name in my application?

The authorized representative for your organization must login to eGrants with their own user account, click on the assurances and conditions, and submit the grant application. This will allow their name to show up as the authorized representative for the grant application.

4.3. I cannot complete the **validate** function for the performance measures. When I go to validate, it says that you have to have a performance measure for all objectives. What am I doing wrong?

It is likely that you have checked an objective on the first Performance Measure screen and have not entered a work plan for that objective. Contact the National Service Hotline if further assistance is needed.

4.4. What should be entered in the "Other" narrative section?

The "Other" narrative section does not apply at this time during the competition. Enter 'N/A.'

4.5. We are a new applicant organization and would be hiring someone new for the project director position if the grant was awarded. Who should we enter as the project director in eGrants if that person is not yet hired?

You may enter another person who is currently at your organization, such as the person who would be the project director's supervisor. The project director name can be updated later in eGrants if the grant is awarded.

4.6. Our organization headquarters is located separately from where the RSVP project office would be located. Which address should be listed as the project location address in eGrants?

When creating the organization, enter the organization headquarters address (see page 6 of the eGrants Visual Instructions). When entering the project location (eGrants Visual Instructions page 11), enter the project location address.

5. BUDGET

5.1. There are two sections to enter the Source of Matching Funds, one in Budget Section I and another in Budget Section II. Do I have to complete both?

It depends on which sections contain your non-federal funds. If you include non-federal funds (grantee share) in the budget for both Budget Section I and Budget Section II, then you would complete the Source of Matching Funds in both Budget Section I and Budget Section II. If you only have non-federal funds in one of the budget sections, then you would only complete the Source of Matching Funds for the particular section where you budget your grantee share.

5.2. In the indirect cost budget section, if we enter our indirect costs in the grantee share column rather than the CNCS share column, do we still have to submit our indirect cost rate agreement?

Yes. Your indirect cost rate agreement must be submitted regardless of whether the indirect costs are in the CNCS share or the grantee share.

5.3. How do I know what volunteer insurance to include in the budget?

For information about required volunteer insurance and other reimbursable expenses, please review the cost reimbursement section of the Federal Regulations, § 2553.43. A link to the Federal Regulations is found on page 6 of the *Notice*. Volunteer insurance could be obtained through an organization such as CIMA: http://www.cimaworld.com/nonprofits/protecting-volunteers/ or another volunteer insurance provider.

5.4. Is there a formula for determining the non-federal share we should budget?

Yes. The RSVP non-federal share requirement — 10% in Year 1, 20% in Year 2, and 30% in Year 3 and subsequent years — is calculated as a percentage of the total project budget. For example, if your total budget is $100,000, the required non-federal share for Year One would be $10,000 and the federal share would be $90,000. The amount listed in the Grant Opportunity Summaries is the federal share.

5.5. Will cash or in-kind contributions be accepted as part of the required non-federal share?

Yes. The RSVP Program Regulations in 45 CFR 2553.72(2), state that: "a grantee is responsible for identifying non-Corporation funds which may include in-kind contributions."

5.6. Is there a mandatory requirement to reimburse volunteers for transportation and meals or is this at the discretion of each program?

This is at the discretion of each RSVP but the applicant's plan for doing so will be taken into account when rating Q28 according to the selection criteria.

5.7. Should 5% of the RSVP project director's salary and benefits be included in the Excess column of the budget to account for time spent fund raising?

If the RSVP project director engages in fundraising activities, time spent on these activities cannot be paid for through CNCS funds or through non-federal funds that are part of the required non-federal share. If time is spent on fundraising, the Excess column should reflect the amount of time that is spent on fundraising.

5.8. Please clarify how the "Excess Amount" category is to be used in calculating the budget.

The Excess column of the budget can be used to reflect the amount of non-federal cash and in-kind contributions generated by a sponsor in excess of the required percentage. If time is spent on fundraising, the Excess column should reflect the amount of time spent on fundraising.

5.9. We do not yet have an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement but we hope to have one in the next few months. How should we handle this?

At the time the application is submitted, if an indirect cost rate agreement is not yet approved, the costs would have to be budgeted as direct costs. If the application is awarded and the indirect cost rate agreement is approved, an amendment could be done at a later time to adjust the budget for the new indirect cost rate agreement.

5.10. If current RSVP project staff spend time preparing the grant application for RSVP Competition (including listening to T/TA sessions, writing the application, etc.), is this time to be counted as fundraising in our current project budget?

Yes. If time is spent working on a new or renewal grant application, it is considered fundraising. When time is spent on continuation applications for RSVP, this is not considered fundraising as it is a requirement of an awarded grant. For clarification, please contact your CNCS State Office.

5.11. Can federal funds from other sources be used towards the non-federal match?

No. The exception to this is if the funds are specifically designated from the federal agency to be used as match on a federal grant. Or, if the funds pass through another entity, as is the case with Community Service Block Grant Funds. All RSVP grants must operate in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audits Requirements for Federal Awards, which can be found on page 20 of the RSVP *Notice*.

Added June 13, 2014
5.12. Is there an amount per volunteer that should be budgeted, such as $300 per volunteer?

No. The amount in the budget and the volunteer numbers in your application should reflect the budget amount and minimum volunteer number found in Appendix A for the opportunity for which you are applying.

Added June 27, 2014
5.13. What is the length of time for the fiscal year or budget year for RSVP?

Typically, RSVP has a 12 month fiscal year.

Added August 11, 2014
5.14. The new Omni Circular allows for "any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate...to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely." If we have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, may my organization include the 10% de minimis rate in the budget we submit for this competition?

Not at this time. CNCS is continuing to develop guidance on implementation of the Omni Circular. If your grant is selected for award, this may be an option you could discuss with your CNCS State Office and Grant Officer after award.

6. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

6.1. If our audit is not done for this year, can we submit last year's audit?

Yes. The instructions say to submit your most recent audit. If this year's audit is not finished, then the previous year's audit is the most recent audit.

6.2. When sending the attachments to 2015RSVPAttachments@cns.gov, should I send each one separately or combine all the documents into one document?

When sending the required documents for your application, please ensure that each document is submitted as a separate attachment. If necessary, you can submit more than one email but all required documents for your application should be submitted as separate documents attached to the email. Please do not scan all documents into one PDF and send as one attachment. Name each attachment to correspond with the "Description of Attachment" found on pages 16 and 17 of the Grant Application Instructions.

6.3. Where can I find a form for the Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement?

Forms are not provided for the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as part of this competition. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement already in place, then you should have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement from your cognizant federal agency. In that case, you would send a copy of that document as part of your application.

6.4. What is a statement of audit status and who is responsible for submitting an audit to the Audit Clearinghouse?

The statement of audit status is simply a short written statement from your organization that includes all of the information requested in item 12 of the document table on page 17 of the Grant Application Instructions. If your organization is subject to an A-133 audit, your organization is responsible for submitting it the Audit Clearinghouse.

6.5. Should information entered in the Aggregate Dollar Amount of Funding Form be for all funding for the entire organization, or only for the RSVP project?

The information should be for all funding for the organization.

Added July 11, 2014
6.6. Where can I find a list of station types for the station roster?

The station roster is not a required document for this competition. If your application is selected for funding, the station roster will be submitted at a later time. Your application should be submitted in eGrants without the station roster section completed.

Added July 25, 2014
6.7. The Financial Management Survey doesn't allow the yes/no boxes to be marked with an 'x.' How do I mark these boxes?

You can place an 'X' beside the checkbox that you are answering. You may also print out the survey, mark the boxes by hand and then scan the survey and email it to 2015RSVPAttachments@cns.gov

7. VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER STATIONS

7.1. Is the number of volunteers listed in Appendix A the number of volunteers per year or the total over three years?

The number of volunteers in Appendix A is the total minimum number of volunteers that should be reflected in the application narratives, work plans, and budget. You would have three years to recruit this number of active RSVP volunteers. For example, if Appendix A lists 100 volunteers, it is expected that by the time you report on your project at the end of the third year, there would be at least 100 volunteers currently serving with your RSVP. Your application may propose to have more than 100 volunteers, but could not propose less than 100 volunteers.

7.2. We are applying for an available grant opportunity and proposing a new program with new volunteer stations. Could the volunteers already engaged in the current RSVP program enroll in our new RSVP program or must we recruit volunteers that are new to RSVP?

New grantees should manage the current program distribution attributed to the grant being applied for, in order to minimize disruptions to the current volunteer stations where possible. If you are partnering with new volunteer stations your proposal should consider assessment of current volunteers' alignment with the proposed volunteer stations, and a plan for recruitment of new volunteers as appropriate. Should you propose not to partner with some current volunteer stations associated with the grant opportunity for which you are applying, your proposal should demonstrate a coordinated alignment of existing volunteers with the remaining volunteer stations.

7.3. What types of organizations can be volunteer stations?

A volunteer station can be a public agency, secular or faith-based non-profit organization, or proprietary health care organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of RSVP volunteers. Each volunteer station must be licensed or otherwise certified, when required, by the appropriate state or local government. Informal groups do not qualify as volunteer stations.

7.4. My RSVP receives funding from other sources that may not approve of us graduating volunteer stations or changing our activities to fit the new Performance Measures. Can my RSVP continue our current RSVP activities above the allowable 30% maximum for community priorities using support from other funding streams?

No. These activities outside of the Performance Measure requirements could not be considered part of your RSVP.

7.5. What constitutes a volunteer "serving intensively on short term assignments?" For example, are there a minimum number of short term assignments required to justify counting a

volunteer experience? Is there a benchmark for the number of hours per day or total assignment hours that is considered reasonable?

There is no minimum number of hours or assignments. This will vary based on each particular volunteer assignment developed by the RSVP.

7.7. Do I have to maintain the same programming and service activities as the current RSVP project?

The application asks applicants to describe their plans and infrastructure to responsibly graduate volunteer stations to meet changing community needs and do so in a way that minimizes disruption to current volunteers where possible. All applications should describe how they plan to minimize the disruption of volunteers if they propose graduating volunteer stations that are included in an incumbent grant. Please see Appendix C of the *Notice* for additional guidance.

7.8. What if the community needs shift during the three year period and the focus area volunteer numbers become a different percentage?

CNCS is still working on issues pertaining to the implications of failing to meet Performance Measure requirements by the end of the three-year grant period or failing to meet Performance Measures as described in your grant application as it was originally awarded. These decisions are CNCS Agency-wide rather than solely the decision of Senior Corps. These issues will be addressed at a later time.

7.9. My organization is applying for a vacant service area. Can we receive a list of volunteer stations for the previous project?

This type of information will not be released as part of this competition. Keep in mind FAQ 7.7, which addresses previous service activities and programming. You are welcome to contact the previous sponsor and request this information or submit a FOIA request.

Added July 11, 2014

7.10. Is more than one volunteer station required?

There is no required number of volunteer stations. However, most RSVPs have many more than one station.

Added August 11, 2014

7.11. My organization is interested in starting new service activities in independent living. The service activities would take place in the homes of clients. We have not done this type of activity in the past. Can our organization be the volunteer station?

Yes, if your organization decides to start a new activity, you may use RSVP as volunteers in the activity. However, your organization may first want to consider if the activity fits with your organization's mission and how you would provide RSVP volunteer oversight in accordance with the RSVP federal regulations regarding the responsibility of volunteer stations, which are outlined in CFR 45 §2553.62. http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=b85e59ebf62526e584950250495a9120&node=45:4.1.9.11.35.6&rgn=div6
This should also include obtaining letters of agreement for in home placements.

8. APPENDIX A

8.1. The geographic service areas as described in Appendix A vary. Some include counties, some include cities, and some include both cities and counties. Are we required to have a volunteer station in each city or county listed?

Yes. You should plan to have volunteer stations in the geographic service area as it is listed with the service opportunity, including all cities or counties listed.

8.2. If I apply and am awarded two adjacent opportunities, can they be combined into one grant?

Yes. This could be implemented during the first year of the three-year project period.

8.3. What does the 'X' mean in Appendix A? For example, CA-3X?

Any opportunity with an 'X' is a relinquished or closed service area. This means that there is not currently an RSVP operating in that location and there are no current volunteers.

8.4. How do I know the opportunity number for the geographic service area?

All opportunity numbers are listed in Appendix A, which is found on the *Notice* website.

8.5. My service area is not listed in Appendix A. How are service areas for Appendix A selected and can mine be added?

Appendix A is formed based on the previous RSVP grant cycle and any RSVP relinquishments that have not been awarded through competition. Additional service areas cannot be added to Appendix A because the available opportunities for RSVP Competition are defined by the Serve America Act.

Added June 13, 2014

8.6. How are the funding amounts, volunteer numbers, and geographic service areas for Appendix A determined?

Funding amounts, volunteer numbers, and geographic service areas for Appendix A are based on the previous RSVP project in that particular geographic service area. Funding amounts, volunteers numbers, and geographic service areas are also based on a statutory requirement set forth in Section 201(e)(2) of Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

8.7. My geographic service area is not currently available. How do I know which service areas will be added in the RSVP Competition next year?

At this time, it has not been determined if additional or new service areas will be available in future RSVP Competitions. You may be interested in signing up to receive alerts about future CNCS competitions by visiting www.nationalservice.gov.

8.8. If my application is selected for funding, can I later add other service areas to my project that are not currently served by another RSVP?

No. At this time there is not a process for approving additional service areas or expanding into new geographic areas that are not served by RSVP. Only those service areas listed in Appendix A are currently available.

Added August 11, 2014

8.9. My organization operates an incumbent RSVP project. The number of volunteers for our opportunity reflects the current program, but we would like to run a smaller program. Can the number of volunteers for the opportunity be lowered?

No. The number of volunteers for each opportunity is based on historic information for the opportunity, which is a requirement of the Serve America Act. Changes to volunteer numbers must have already been addressed prior to the beginning of this competition.

9.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Please review the Archive RSVP Performance Measure FAQs found on the RSVP Competition website. The Archive RSVP Performance Measure FAQs include Performance Measure questions answered during the 2013 and 2014 RSVP Competitions.

RSVP Performance Measure questions received during the 2015 RSVP Competition will be added below as they are received. **Questions will not be answered that ask for guidance on which Performance Measure to select for a specific activity.** Please review Appendix B to assist you in determining which Performance Measures to select for a specific service activity.

Added July 11, 2014

9.0.1. Are activities required in more than one focus area or in capacity building activities?

Service activities are not required in multiple focus areas or in capacity building. The performance measure requirements are described in Appendix B.

Added August 4, 2014
9.0.2. Not all performance measures include a sample instrument in this link: https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/instruments/65. Are there sample instruments for ED27 and H9?

Not all performance measures have sample instruments. There is not a sample instrument for ED27. The sample instrument for H9 can be found at: https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/h9

Added August 4, 2014
9.0.3. If I send a draft of my work plans to 2015RSVP@cns.gov can you review it and tell me if it is correct?

No. This would be considered one-on-one technical assistance. **Questions will not be answered that request guidance concerning which Performance Measure to select for a specific activity.**

9.1 PERFORMANCE MEASURE: EDUCATION

Added June 13, 2014
9.1.1. Can pen pal programs count towards the education performance measures?

No. Pen pal programs would need to be counted as a community priority. The nature of a pen pal program does not meet the activity descriptions in the RSVP education measures (ED2 or ED4a).

9.2 PERFORMANCE MEASURE: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Added July 25, 2014
9.2.1. The economic opportunity performance measures O5/O11 include the service activity 'Building or Assisting Homes – Habitat for Humanity.' What does 'Assisting Homes' mean?

This service activity is meant to include Habitat for Humanity activities that meet all parts of the definitions for O5 and/or O11 including building homes and assisting individuals with transitioning into these homes.

10. OTHER

10.1. Are the two webinars entitled "eGrants" the same or do they cover different areas of the process?

They are the same.

10.2. Where can I find a list of the current sponsor for an RSVP in my area?

Lists of incumbent sponsors and their service areas for the 2015 RSVP Competition can be found on the CNCS FOIA page: http://www.nationalservice.gov/site-policy-and-notices/foia-and-privacy-act/electronic-reading-room-and-library

10.3. Where can I find other information about the 2014 RSVP Competition?

You will find the external review form used in the 2014 RSVP Competition at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition

10.4. If my organization is awarded a grant for a vacant service area or if we receive an RSVP award and we are not the incumbent organization, what information will we receive about the previous RSVP that was serving the geographic area?

Depending on the information that was submitted from the previous grantee, you may receive lists of previous volunteer stations, volunteers, and advisory council members.

10.5. How do I know if my Letter of Intent to Apply was received?

You should have received an automatic reply if your Letter of Intent to Apply was successfully submitted. A Letter of Intent to Apply is highly encouraged but is not required.

10.6. In the Executive Summary, should the service activities and sample outcomes listed be only from the Primary Focus Area?

The majority of service activities and outcomes listed should be from the Primary Focus Area, but other significant service activities and outcomes could be included from other Focus Areas.

Added June 13, 2014

10.7. Where can I learn more about what information the CNCS State Office can share regarding CNCS grant competitions?

For information about CNCS communications during grant competitions, review the policy, "Communication During the Grant Application Review Process" found at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/policies-and-procedures

Added June 27, 2014

10.8. Will a vacant opportunity that is not awarded in the 2015 RSVP Competition be available in the FY 2016 RSVP Competition?

At this time, a compilation of opportunities for future competitions has not been determined.

Added July 25, 2014

10.9. Is there a contact person that I can send questions to about this competition?

All questions for this competition must be sent to 2015RSVP@cns.gov. Although there is not a contact person for one on one technical assistance, questions submitted to this inbox will receive responses through this FAQ document.

Added August 4, 2014

10.10. We are planning to become part of a larger nonprofit organization in April 2015. We will finish out our current RSVP grant, and the larger nonprofit will send the Notice of Intent and prepare the 2015 RSVP application. In the Notice of Intent, should it make note of our program coming under its sponsorship?

It is not necessary for the organization to reference the name of your RSVP project in its Notice of Intent. The application submitted by the other organization will be viewed as a non-incumbent organization for purposes of this competition.