

NWX-CORPS FOR NTL SERVICE

Moderator: Patti Stengel
June 25, 2013
1:00 pm CT

Moderator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer session of today's conference call. At that time you may press star 1 if you would like to ask a question.

Today's conference call is being recorded and if you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn the call over to Patti Stengel. Thank you ma'am, and you may begin.

Patti Stengel: Thank you (Mandy). Hello and welcome to the second technical assistance call for the 2014 RSVP composition. My name is Patti Stengel. I'm a program officer here at CNCS with Senior Corps.

During this call we're going to provide a better understanding of RSVP and how these grant funds are to be used. We'll review Senior Corps and RSVP and give the information about the RSVP budget, provide examples of RSVP activities by focus area. And finally, have some time at the end to respond to questions.

RSVP is one of the three Senior Corps programs run by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The other two Senior Corps programs are the Foster Grandparent Program or FGP, and the Senior Companion Program or SCP. Senior Corps is the nation's largest organization for volunteers age 55 and over.

Volunteers of the Foster Grandparent Program tutor or mentor children with special needs. And volunteers of the Senior Companion Program assist frail older adults to help them maintain their independence in their homes. Both the Foster Grandparents and the Senior Companion volunteers serve the community 15 to 40 hours each week. And those who are eligible receive a small stipend.

RSVP is slightly different from those two programs in that volunteers can serve in a variety of opportunities with flexible hours, and RSVP volunteers do not receive a stipend.

Senior Corps projects can be found in every state as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Senior Corps volunteers support more than 70,000 non-profits and public agencies across the country. All Senior Corps programs are supported by CNCS headquarters staff, as well as 47 field offices or state offices spread out across the country.

Now we'll go into further detail on RSVP again to really try to help you gain a better understanding of the RSVP program and what it would mean for your organization should you be awarded this grant.

RSVP was established in 1971. Each year 296,000 RSVP volunteers serve through 685 RSVP projects which are spread out across the country. And now as you saw in the previous slide, RSVP has been around since 1971. RSVP

grants were originally awarded in 1971 through a competitive process. However, prior to 2013 grants went through administrative renewals every three years, but did not have any competitors.

The Kennedy Serve America Act was passed in 2009 and the Serve America Act reauthorized CNCS and implemented competition for RSVP beginning in fiscal year 2013. The Serve America Act also implemented national performance measures which guide projects to select a primary focus area and to demonstrate impact by reporting on outcomes. This new competition combined with national performance measures will help ensure accountability in RSVP by ensuring that funding is received by the best applicant in each community.

Now, RSVP does use some terminology that is different from what other CNCS programs use. On the RSVP notice of funding Web site you'll find a document called Appendix D which includes a list of terms and their definitions. Please be sure to review that list and become familiar with it. We'll go over a few of the terms here, but Appendix D does include more than what you see on this slide.

So first, a sponsor or a grantee is a public agency or private non-profit organization either secular or faith based, which is responsible for the operation of an RSVP project. For purposes of this grant competition, a current sponsor applying for the RSVP grants that are currently awarded to them is referred to as the incumbent.

A volunteer station is 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 and health, education, social service or related settings such as multi-purpose centers,

health care agencies or similar establishments. Each volunteer station has to be licensed or otherwise certified, if required, by the appropriate state or local government. And private homes cannot be volunteer stations.

Those who serve through RSVP are referred to as RSVP volunteers rather than members as with other national service programs. An advisory council is a group of persons that the project sponsor formally organizes to ensure community participation in projects. Projects might also use other organizational structures to achieve that goal.

Appendix D includes a number of performance measure terms you should get to know. These include primary focus area, unduplicated volunteers, capacity building, output and outcomes. Graduated volunteer stations are those volunteer stations that were part of the incumbent grant but might not be included as active volunteer stations for the proposed RSVP grant because those stations don't align to the new application's program design.

Volunteers associated with a graduated volunteer station as part of the incumbent grant can be provided other service opportunities through other RSVP volunteer stations, or they might end up separating from RSVP and continuing to volunteer outside of the RSVP program.

Appendix C on the Notice of Funding Web site includes some more information about graduating stations and volunteers and what that would mean for your project. Now, if your organization were to be awarded a grant through this competition, your organization would be responsible for implementing the RSVP project in the awarded service area.

You would likely use the grant funds to hire an RSVP director to run RSVP at your organization which would now be known as the RSVP sponsor

organization. In your application you'll have to explain the needs in your community and how you would recruit and place RSVP volunteers in the community to make an impact on meeting those needs. The organizations in the service area where you would place RSVP volunteers to serve then become known as RSVP volunteer stations.

RSVP volunteers are not committed to a certain volunteer schedule. Some volunteers might serve once every few weeks. Others might consistently put in 20 hours a week. RSVP provides volunteers a lot of time and flexibility in their volunteer schedule. That can be very appealing to certain volunteers.

The service activity options for RSVP are also very flexible. Volunteers can serve in a variety of activities and can choose the activity offered that's best for them. So activities might include renovating low income housing, teaching English to immigrants, assisting victims of natural disasters, recruiting and managing other volunteers or tutoring children. And later in this call we'll go into more detail about possible service activities for RSVP.

As I mentioned previously, RSVP volunteers do not receive a stipend. They do not receive an education award for their service as other national service participants might. Instead, RSVP volunteers receive other benefits. They are covered by accident, personal liability and certain excess automobile liability insurance while they are serving.

They receive recognition for their service from the RSVP project. And depending on your RSVP project budget they might also receive a meal while serving and some transportation reimbursement for travel to and from their volunteer sites.

As I said previously, volunteer stations are where RSVP volunteers serve. Volunteer stations will need to spread throughout the geographic service area through RSVP. They can be non-profit organizations, proprietary health care facilities or public agencies. Your RSVP would formally work with volunteer stations under assigned memorandum of understanding.

And your RSVP project would then assign RSVP volunteers to that particular station. Think about the minimum number of volunteers for the opportunity for which you are applying which would be found in Appendix A. And consider how many volunteer stations would be needed to place all of those RSVP volunteers.

Your sponsor organization can also serve as an RSVP volunteer station. However, if the RSVP volunteers are serving in administrative or support positions at the sponsor organization, no more than 5% of the total number of RSVP volunteers can serve in that assignment.

The community served is also involved with the RSVP project through an RSVP advisor council. Your RSVP is to recruit individuals from the community to serve on that advisory council. And their role and structure is really up to your RSVP. Many advisory councils do things like assisting in assessing community needs, resource development or even volunteer recognition.

Page 18 in the notice of funding includes a link to the RSVP regulations which has a list of prohibited service activities for RSVP. You'll also find a link to the regulations on the notice of funding website.

A few of the service activity restrictions are listed on this slide. RSVP volunteers cannot replace paid staff.

They cannot have volunteer activities that are political in nature including influencing elections or voter registration activities. RSVP volunteers cannot give religious instruction, conduct worship service or engage in any form of proselytization as part of their duties.

Also the sponsor cannot use grant funds directly or indirectly to finance labor or anti-labor organization or related activity.

Here you see some examples of possible budget items for RSVP.

Funds can be used to hire a full time RSVP director, to set up recognition events for RSVP volunteers and to recruit new RSVP volunteers. Funds can also be used to communicate with RSVP volunteers and stations through newsletters or for the RSVP director to travel to meet with volunteer station staff throughout that geographic service area.

RSVP funds can also be used for RSVP directors to travel to and from CNCS training events or other relevant training opportunities. And of course all grants are subject to applicable OMB cost principles.

And we'll talk a little bit about what that means. The OMB circulars can be found on the Office of Management and Budget website.

You'll also find links on Page 18 of the notice. The circulars contain the cost principles that detail allowable expenses for the RSVP budget.

There are three different sets of cost principles for RSVP. Each one applies to the type of applicant organization.

So for educational institutions follow cost principle circular number A21. For nonprofit organizations follow A122.

And for state and local governments follow A87.

RSVP grants have a certain requirement for nonfederal funds.

In the first year of a grant a sponsor must have 10% of their total project budget come from nonfederal funds. This can be either cash or in kind.

This nonfederal requirement then increases to 20% in year two and 30% in year three and each year thereafter. All incumbent projects are required to already have at least 30% in nonfederal funds because they've already been running that project for at least three years.

However if a current RSVP grantee is applying for a neighboring RSVP grant they are not considered the incumbent. And so are only required to have a 10% nonfederal share.

Nonfederal share is represented as the grantee share in the budget. Anything in excess of the required nonfederal share can be listed in the excess column of the budget.

Any staff time spent on fundraising has to be accounted for in the excess column of the budget as this is not an allowable RSVP expense. Criminal history checks are an allowable budget item for RSVP.

Expenses may be fingerprints or state criminal history checks. Fingerprints are required for any staff hired on or after April 21, 2011 that has recurring access to vulnerable populations.

State criminal history checks are required for anyone hired on or after October 1, 2009. Many incumbent projects already have staff that have been with them prior to those dates so would not have criminal history checks in the budget.

Criminal history checks are not required for RSVP volunteers but they are an allowable budget expense. Code of federal regulations 45 part 2553 is the source of requirements for RSVP.

If you are considering applying for an RSVP grant in this competition please read the CFR for RSVP. The easiest way to review the CFR is accessing it through the ECFR.

You'll find the link on Page 18 of the notice. And the website is set up in a really easy to follow question and answer format.

And for example if you want to know how long an RSVP volunteer is required to serve just click on 2553.51 which is what are the terms of service of an RSVP volunteer. And you'll then be directed to the answer.

An RSVP volunteer shall serve weekly on a regular basis or intensively on short term assignments consistent with the assignment description. So by now you're probably wondering about the possible service activities for an RSVP volunteer.

As you will have seen from reviewing the RSVP NOFO, RSVP work plans must fit into the performance measure requirements. Now there are four basic performance measure requirements.

At least 25% of unduplicated volunteers must be in a primary focus area. No more than 30% of unduplicated volunteers can be placed in other community priorities.

At least 10% of unduplicated volunteers must be in work plans that result in outcomes. And the rest of the unduplicated volunteers are placed in other focus areas or capacity building.

You may be wondering what each focus area means and what types of service activities can be in each of those focus areas. So next I'll go through each of the focus areas, describe them and include some examples of service activity you might see in that focus area.

But for full description of the national performance measures please review Appendix B. The first disaster services.

Disaster services may include training RSVP volunteers in disaster services, preparing individuals to respond to disasters services, preparing individuals to respond to disasters, helping individuals recover from disasters and increasing the capacity of individuals to mitigate disasters. Some examples of RSVP disaster service activities include providing training outreach, staffing call centers and shelters, transporting victims, distributing meals and cleaning up debris.

The economic opportunity focus area includes improving access to services and benefits that increase financial literacy, transitioning individuals into safe, affordable housing and improving employability. The specific activities for RSVP volunteers in an economic activity focus area include building and repairing homes, assisting with housing searches, supporting adult education

including GED preparation and adult ESL and also providing income tax assistance.

The education focus area includes improving school readiness for young children, increasing educational and behavioral outcomes for students in elementary and middle and high school. Specific education activities include assisting in classrooms, tutoring and mentoring.

The environmental stewardship focus area is about improving parks and trails and recycling materials. Activities for environmental stewardship might include removing vegetation or debris, restoring land or improving trails and waterways.

The healthy futures focus area works to allow seniors to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Access to primary and preventative healthcare is also improved.

Healthy futures activities might include supporting food pantries, providing transportation or companionship services, preventing elder abuse, maintaining community gardens and providing health education. The veterans and military families focus area serves veterans and military family members and their families.

It also engages veteran and military family members in service. Activities may include assisting DOL vets or Department of Veterans' Affairs programs, delivering food, providing companionship, assisting National Guard volunteer services.

Capacity building is not one of the six focus area options. But RSVP volunteers may be placed in capacity building work plans.

It's just not an option for a *primary* focus area. Capacity building activities must meet all three of the criteria you see here.

They must be intended to support or enhance the program delivery model, respond to organizations goal of increasing, expanding or enhancing services in order to address the most pressing needs identified in the community. And enable the organization to provide a sustained level of more or better direct service after the national service participants term of service has ended.

Volunteers may also serve in work plans that address other community needs. This would be one work plan that encompasses a variety of activities that do not fall within capacity building or the six focus areas.

However prohibited activities cannot be included in other community priorities. The only measure option is that the applicant met all of their community priority service activity targets.

The actual targets do not have to be listed in this work plan. For the target number a one should be entered as the target number for this work plan when entering this work plan in the performance measure module in eGrants.

Now since you know more about RSVP you've probably already realized some of the benefits that RSVP could bring to your organization if you were awarded a grant through this competition. RSVP volunteers can be used to build capacity for your organization through their service.

Your organization would become part of the larger senior Corps and national service network. Your RSVP project would strengthen other organizations in your community and throughout the service area.

And finally your award would demonstrate that your application was strong enough to be awarded through a competitive grant process. This concludes RSVP 101.

If you would like more information about senior Corps and RSVP please visit our website. And now we will open the line for questions.

Coordinator: Thank you. At this time if you would like to ask a question please press star 1, unmute your phone and record your name.

If your question has been answered or you'd like to withdraw your question please press star 2. Once again if you do like to ask a question please press star 1, unmute your phone and record your name clearly so I can introduce your question.

One moment please for the first question to queue up. Okay our first question comes from (Patricia Stewart). Your line is open ma'am.

(Patricia Stewart): Oh I'm sorry. I thought I had asked it already. Hello?

Woman: Yes do you have a question?

(Patricia Stewart): Yes I wanted to know if the presentation -- the PowerPoint that we were looking at -- is it available for me to print or download?

Woman: It's not available for print or download. But we will put a recording on the competition website which will include the slides from the PowerPoint.

So you'll be able to view it as a video. The competition website is nationalservice.gov/rsvpcompetition.

And it should be posted in the next couple days.

(Patricia Stewart): Okay. So we can go through this presentation again?

Woman: Yeah.

(Patricia Stewart): Okay. Thank you.

Woman: You're welcome.

Coordinator: Thank you. And our next question comes from (Helena). Your line is open ma'am.

(Helena): Could you talk a little bit about the continuation grants, if you're - if you've already had a grant for three years and you're applying to continue it? Do you fill out the whole new application or just what shows up on the website?

Woman: So it would still be a new application. It wouldn't be called a continuation.

(Helena): Okay so it's - but you have to fill out the whole grant - so it's a whole new application.

Woman: Yes.

(Helena): Okay.

Woman: So that's something that you'll really want to keep in mind when you're in eGrants and starting your application. You'll want to select the NOFA for this competition and it will ask you if you want to do a new grant or a renewal grant.

And you will select new.

(Helena): Why would it not be renewal?

Woman: Because this is a competition and it is all new applicants.

(Helena): Okay.

Woman: It is considered a new awardee that will be given an award through this competition.

(Helena): So there are no renewals with this competition?

Woman: There are no renewals for RSVP for this competition.

(Helena): Okay. Thank you very much.

Woman: So even if eGrants prompts you...

(Helena): Yes.

Woman: And asks are you sure? Are you sure? Do you want to do a renewal? You do not want to do a renewal. You want to do new.

(Helena): Okay great. Thanks.

Coordinator: Thank you. And our next question comes from (Bruce Davis). Your line is open sir.

(Bruce Davis): Hi. Perhaps I missed something. But when I was sort of scanning through the documents earlier I guess I missed the presentation on the healthy futures work plans.

And I didn't see a particular playback option. Is that available? Or for any of the focus areas but in particular Healthy Futures?

Woman: So our plan is to have technical assistance calls for each of the focus areas. We've only had one so far.

The Healthy Futures one has not been scheduled yet.

(Bruce Davis): Oh I'm sorry maybe I missed the date then. I apologize. Okay.

Woman: Yeah. So check back to that section of the website and we'll be sure to keep it updated and keep it posted. One thing you'll also want to look into is attending our senior Corps virtual conference which is August 6 and 7.

And there'll be sessions that will help with performance measure. And there will be a registration link on our website in the next few days for the virtual conference.

(Bruce Davis): Thank you very much.

Coordinator: Thank you. And our next question comes from (Victoria Jones). Ma'am your line is opened.

(Victoria Jones): Thank you. My question is about the primary focus areas. IN fulfilling the 25% can you have volunteers in more than one of the six priority focus areas? Or do you have to concentrate on one?

Woman: So the requirement is to have at least 25% in one particular focus area. And that would be called your primary focus area.

So you would probably want to have volunteers in a number of other focus areas to fulfill your requirement I mean to place all of your volunteers. You want to definitely select one and place at least 25% of your volunteers there.

But then it'll really up to you which focus areas you use to place the rest of your volunteers. You could have them all in one if you wanted to.

But the option is yours.

(Victoria Jones): But it's not part of the 25%. The 25% has to be in one focus area.

Woman: Right. At least 25% in one...

(Victoria Jones): Okay.

Woman: Which is your primary.

(Victoria Jones): Yep. Thank you.

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question comes from (Karen Boltheis). Ma'am your line is open.

(Karen Boltheis): Hi. My question is in regard to the amounts of funding that are available for the different locations. And it appears that the funding is not in proportion at all to the number of volunteers that you're expected to place.

And I was just wondering if you could comment on why that is or - yeah.

Woman: Sure, sure. So this is a grant competition that came about because of the Serve America Act as we noted earlier in this presentation. And there were some restrictions about how we would compete these grants.

And part of that was that we would compete them in a way that we were - the resulting RSVP portfolio looks like the previous RSVP portfolio in terms of numbers and funding amounts. So what you're seeing is based on the number of volunteers and funding amount that was - that is currently in that particular opportunity or was there previously.

(Karen Boltheis): So for instance like in Georgia one, you know, there's - it comes out to almost \$1300 per volunteer while in Georgia two the amount is like \$80 per volunteer. So it would seem that there would be less competition for the places where the money is not as generous.

Woman: I can't comment on how much competition would be in one area versus another. But the number of volunteers is based on the previous RSVP that was there.

(Karen Boltheis): Okay.

Woman: That is currently there.

(Karen Boltheis): Thank you very much. Okay. Bye-bye.

Woman: Bye.

Coordinator: Thank you. Once again if you do like to ask a question please press star 1, unmute your phone and record your name. Our next question comes from (Cathy Gail). Your line is open ma'am.

(Cathy Gail): Thank you. I'm wondering three years from now will RSVPs be recompeting again with the community? Thank you.

Woman: It depends on a number of factors. It depends on basically successful achievement of the performance measures that are proposed.

So it's not something we're really prepared to discuss during this particular time. It's something that we would be implementing throughout the duration of those grants that are awarded.

(Cathy Gail): Okay. Thank you.

Coordinator: Thank you. And our last question comes from (June Foster). Ma'am your line is open.

(June Foster): Yes this question is about a definition of economically disadvantaged students under the education primary focus area. How would you define economically disadvantaged students?

Woman: Just one moment. So if you look on Appendix B which are the national performance measure instructions. On Page 8 it describes the education focus area. And there you'll see economically disadvantaged means that they're eligible for free lunch at or below 130% of the poverty level or reduced lunch

and may or may not - those children may or may not be accessing that free or reduced lunch.

And the - where we're getting that definition of that key term is from the USDA website.

(Cathy Gail): We would be serving schools that have, you know, children from a variety of backgrounds. Would it be necessary to go child by child to determine that they're eligible?

Or can we use a measure of a percentage of students in a particular school?

Woman: Actually we've addressed that in one of our FAQ questions that's currently posted on the competition website.

(Cathy Gail): Okay.

Woman: So it's under performance measure. It's number 9.1.

And the question that was asked is if an RSVP volunteer is serving many children in the classroom do all of the children have to meet the definition of economically disadvantaged? And the answer we gave for that is no because according to Appendix B grantees must demonstrate that the children in the program come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and/or have special or exceptional needs or explain an outreach strategy to increase the proportions of economically disadvantaged children and/or children with special or exceptional needs in the program.

So you would want to think in terms of that last part -- that outreach strategy.

(Cathy Gail): Thank you.

Woman: And speak to that in your application, your work plans.

Coordinator: Thank you. And our last question comes from (Jim Menendez). Sir your line is opened.

(Jim Menendez): Yes. Thank you very much. Is there a list provided of the available funds and where would we find that?

Woman: Yes if you go to the competition website which is nationalservice.gov/rsvpcpetition one of the documents you'll find on that website is Appendix A. It's actually a table once you click on it you'll find several columns.

The first column is the opportunity number which refers to the state that that opportunity is in and the number of opportunities available in that state. And the start date -- each of them are either July 1 or April 1, 2014.

And then the geographic service area, the minimum number of volunteers for that opportunity and the funding amount that goes with that opportunity. It's Appendix A.

(Jim Menendez): Thank you very much.

Coordinator: Thank you. And I have no more questions at this time.

Woman: Okay. Well as a reminder our nationalservice.gov/rsvpcpetition website has a number of documents that will help you as you work on your

applications. Applications are due September 10, 2013 at 5:00 pm eastern time.

Any questions about this competition can be submitted by email to 2014rsvp@cns.gov. And I'll just pause to see if there are any further questions before we wrap up.

Mandy are there any further questions?

Coordinator: No ma'am, no more questions.

Woman: Okay. Well thank you all for joining us today. We appreciate it. And look forward to technical assistance call number three which is scheduled for July 25. Thank you.

Coordinator: Thank you for participating in today's conference call. Have a great day and you may disconnect at this time.

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