

## Transcript for Volunteer Generation Fund TTA Call Recording from July 17, 2013

**Operator:** Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants' lines will remain on a listen only-mode. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I would like to turn today's call over to Rosa Moreno-Mahoney. Ma'am you may begin.

**Moreno-Mahoney:** Thank you, Sandy. Good afternoon and welcome everyone to this afternoon's call. What I want to do really quickly is kind of go over the call structure. We have a few topics that we want to cover, and I am joined this afternoon – or I will be joined shortly this afternoon – by Mal Coles. And, as Sandy said, my name is Rosa Moreno-Mahoney and we are excited to kind of review this with you.

We will cover some key topics, and then we will open the phone at the end for questions and answers. And I received a few questions in advance, so I will be sure to cover those while we are here on today's call. The purpose of this call is for eligible applicants interested in the VGF grant competition. So, I know there may be many of you who have joined us on this call and we welcome you, but I wanted to make sure we all understood that this particular competition is limited to existing volunteer grantees. So basically, eligible organizations who can apply for this funding opportunity consist of current Volunteer Generation Fund grantees. And therefore, this call is for that audience, and we will cover elements related to this grant competition. If there is anyone on the phone that is not an existing Volunteer Generation fund grantee, I just want to point out that this competition you would not be eligible to apply, but please you are welcome to stay on the phone call if you like, but I wanted to start from that perspective.

As I said, we will review topics of interest, and then we will open the call for questions and answers. What I want to start with is the purpose of the grant funds. The Volunteer Generation Grant Funds serve to retain and increase the number of people who volunteer in meaningful roles. And the Volunteer Generation Grant Funds will be used to develop and or support community based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. CNCS seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skilled-based volunteers, and develop strategies to effectively use volunteers to solve problems. Specifically, the VGF will support efforts that expand the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support, and retain individuals to serve in high-quality volunteer assignments. That is the purpose and intent of the grant.

As you heard me say, eligible organizations that comply consist of current Volunteer Generation Fund grantees. What I want to cover quickly are some important dates that you should be aware of. The notice of intent to apply is due next Wednesday, July 24. Notifications should be sent by email to [volunteergeneration@cns.gov](mailto:volunteergeneration@cns.gov), and your subject line should be "Notice of Intent to Apply". Again, the notice of intent to apply, that's due next week, and we highly encourage all applicants to submit to assist the Corporation in preparation for conducting its grant review. The applications are due by 5:00 PM on Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup>.

What I want to do really quickly is walk you through a few, what I'll call noteworthy features of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, however please, please do not assume I am covering all aspects of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, therefore its imperative that you read the Notice of Funding Opportunity in its entirety. Because things change, do not assume that things are consistent from prior years. So please, it is in your interest to be sure that you read the Notice of Funding Availability in detail for the critical information. However, what I am going to do is take a few of minutes to highlight a couple of things on our call today.

The first thing that I wanted to highlight is that the project period for this particular grant opportunity is one year only. As many of you know, typically we make grant awards for a three-year project period however this funding opportunity is for one year only. I want to note though, as we say in the Notice of Funding Availability, that while CNCS anticipates awarding one year grants, variants in actual award period may occur, as a result of the availability of appropriations, program requirements, or specific circumstances of an individual application, so that is something to be aware of.

The interesting thing about this project period is it informed why we limited eligibility to current grantees. We have received numerous questions about why we limited it to the current Volunteer Generation Fund grantees, and there are a couple of things that kind of informed that decision so I want to share that with you. For FY13, we are building on this progress basically by accepting from this pool of grantees for one year grants. So we felt that it was in the best interest that if we were going to only invest in a one year project period, that starting and ending something in a year was not very prudent on our part because we typically have multi-year funding opportunities, so given the shortened project period under this competition, the current grantees were best positioned to enhance current funding initiatives, and particularly we wanted to make use of this one year funding opportunity to say that we will share the findings with the larger national service community.

For those of you who are wondering why we made a decision for a one-year project period only, it was particularly driven by the fact that in the President's FY14 budget request, there is a request to increase the pool of funds and rename the Volunteer Generation Fund the George H.W. Bush Volunteer Generation Fund grant, and as a result of that we would want to be bringing on new programs under that particular initiative if appropriations are granted, and so we did not want to be in the position of having continuation grantees for FY14 and wanted to start with a new cohort of grantees. In order to make that happen, that meant that we had to give one year project period only for FY13, so that is the rationale that led to the decision around limiting this to the current Volunteer Generation Fund grantees. What is important to note is that for current Volunteer Generation Fund grantees, that this process is a competitive process, so it is not a continuation grant, and so it is a competitive process. So funding is not guaranteed. Your application would be considered a re-competing application. It would be treated as such and we would apply the selection criteria in making a competitive funding decision.

The other noteworthy thing to note is that performance measures under this particular notice of funding availability, it requires the use of national measures and so you applicants will be required to select from priority measures and you may select additional optional complementary measures but there are some required measures that you must select. I wanted to draw your attention to the fact that

you will not actually enter information in the performance measures section of eGrants. In fact, I think that section will be turned off and it will not actually appear when you go into the eGrants system. But for now, you must articulate your performance measures and targets in the narrative section of your application. Again, while we are not going to ask you to complete the performance measures worksheet in eGrants, you must articulate performance measures and targets in the narrative section of your application.

The performance measures section of eGrants will be made available during the clarification process, and at this time you will be asked to enter your focus areas, service categories, and performance measures following the prompts on the screens in eGrants. Most of you should be very familiar with the fact that we have been making modifications to the eGrants screen shots related to performance measures and that is also true for the Volunteer Generation Fund application instructions in eGrants. And at this time, because the system and the modules for the performance measures related to this particular application have just been developed, we wanted to be sure that we develop proper instructions to release them to you and felt that it was in our best interest to have you enter the information into the narrative now and that we would work with you all later to enter it into eGrants because of the fact that the system and the modules will be built out, so please pay special attention to that.

The other thing to make note of is the fact that the page limits for these applications may not exceed 12 double-spaced pages. That includes the narrative, the executive summary, and the face sheet. And specifically as the pages print out from eGrants. So please make note of that. It is not going to include the budget or performance measures, but it is going to include those other parts. So again the face sheet, the executive summary, and the narrative cannot exceed 12 pages as it prints out from eGrants, so what you should be clear to do is when you have entered everything into eGrants is to print it out and actually count the pages, because that is how we will do it. And reviewers will not consider submitted material that is over the page limit even though eGrants will allow you to do that. And that is only because the way eGrants is set up, the technology does not allow us to limit to 12 pages, and so therefore you are responsible for making sure that your final document as it prints out is within the page limit restrictions. So that is important to know.

The next thing that I want to highlight is the match requirement. You'll note that in the Notice of Funding Availability where we articulate the match schedule for the Volunteer Generation Fund. As you know, the CNCS share of allowable costs to carry out the Volunteer Generation grant changes over time. At this point in time, for the fourth year and any year thereafter, the match share is 50%. At this point in time, all eligible applicants are in the fourth year of this matching schedule, so your match is 50%. I'd received a question in advance of this call that was asking about whether or not this would be considered a new grant and therefore your match would start at a new year, and the answer is that your match rate for all eligible applicants at this time is considered year 4 match rate, and therefore the match is at 50%.

A couple things I want to highlight in addition to that are some items in the budget instructions. There are two things that I thought would be of interest to make sure that you noticed in your detailed

reading, and that is related to Section I of the budget. In that section, we articulate—Section I is the other program operating costs—there are two things that I wanted to take note on, and that is in the event that you will be issuing subgrants as part of your programs, then we ask that you enter all subgrant costs in a line that is titled “Subgrants.” This will communicate to us that you are issuing subgrants and it will delineate for us the specified amount that you are applying to subgrants. So that is something you will have to have as a line item in Section I of your budget. Additionally, in Section I, all CNCS recipients must comply with the criminal history check regulations, and therefore you must include in your budget—or discuss why you did not, because this is a requirement. Under the regulations, a criminal history background check is required for all employees or other individuals who will receive a salary, stipend, or similar payment from the grant funds. So we will be looking to see that criminal history background checks in your budget. If we don’t see it, and we think you have a covered position for which these requirements apply, then you can expect us to follow up with you and ask about the status of that. So it is in our best interest if you address that on the front end.

The other thing I want to talk about is the required reporting data. There are a few things that as grantees you are required to report on, particularly as we talk about new volunteers and retained volunteers. But let’s talk about—so all grantees are required to report the total number of leveraged volunteers, the number of volunteer hours, the number of new volunteers leveraged, and the number of new volunteer hours. Additionally, overall what you will see as you familiarize yourself with the purpose and goals of the VGF grant, it’s also about keeping track of the number of volunteers that were retained. So not just new, but the number of retained.

So I covered the specifics about what the information you will need to be reporting on, and what I wanted to just give you some information on is that in addition to knowing that this is what you will need to report on, we will be convening a training at the September AmeriCorps Symposium to discuss VGF reporting requirements and what this entails is that we have received questions over time around what is a new volunteer, what we mean by retained, and things of that nature, and want to engage in a discussion with you so we can be sure that you feel very comfortable and confident about what this really reflects. But the Notice of Funding Opportunity outlines the specific kinds of data you will be asked to submit, and then we’ll just provide a little bit of a training to give more context about any—and address any questions you have about reporting data for this particular grant.

The Notice of Funding Availability articulates the selection criteria, and you heard me say that this is a competitive process. The assessment of applications will involve a wide range of factors and considerations, and in the end the review and selection process is intended to produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that demonstrate a commitment to the goals of the Volunteer Generation Fund and represent the priorities and the selection factors described in this notice. In the 2013 competition, CNCS expects to fund applicants that successfully meet the requirements described in the Notice, and within that context, CNCS seeks to target its 2013 grantmaking towards programs that are likely to generate significant measurable improvements in the number of volunteers generated and retained, and especially those related to engaging skills-based volunteers. So that is what we are going to be looking for. In the Notice of Funding Availability, we not only outlined the specific information that you should include in your application, but then provided you information around the specific things

that we will be assessing your application against. So what you'll notice is that as you are looking at the application review information, we say that when addressing this section, please provide the following information. We then go as far as to say, when considering the above information that you have provided, reviewers will assess the quality of the application based on the following set of factors, and we provide that list of factors for you so that you are familiar with what we will be assessing your application against.

Hopefully, as you are reading the Notice of Funding Opportunity, you get questions that you need answered, but in the meantime if you have any questions, you can submit them to [volunteergeneration@cns.gov](mailto:volunteergeneration@cns.gov). Before I open the line for questions, I want to go over the timeline again. The letter of intent to apply will be due Wednesday, July 24. Applications will be due August 9. We anticipate the clarification process to take place over the course of 5 days in late August and early September. That will allow us to make announcements by mid-September, and have you have grant awards that start by October 1. So that is the timeline. Again, letters of intent: July 24. Submit your application by August 9. Clarification process over the course of 5 days in late August and early September. Awards announced by mid-September—grant announcements by mid-September with grant awards made by October 1.

I want to make sure that I covered, I had some advanced questions that were submitted. I want to make sure I hit those again. So one of the questions is that we had a VGF grant for three years, is this particular competition—is this a new grant or will it be a continuation? This would be considered a new grant in the sense that it is a recompeting grant, so it will be new. Related to that question, the individual asked if a closeout will be required and if we'll be issuing a new grant for this one year project. Yes, the closeout will be required for the current grant, and we will be issuing a new grant for this one year project period.

Lastly, we had two more questions. One was about the expected match rate for a state that has had a VGF grant for three years. This grant that you would be applying for under FY13 would be considered year four. The match rate for that is 50%.

The next question we received was around can VGF funds be used to upgrade technology options for greater capacity building? Specifically, can we use funds to convert technology systems that volunteer centers and when needed can VGF funds be used for computers to allow for the conversion? The budget instructions do not specifically preclude any of these things; however, what you will need to do is that all costs in your budget must be reasonable and necessary for a one-year project period. So as you prepare your budget and discuss budget adequacy in your narrative, you should specifically articulate why the costs you are proposing—whatever costs that they are—are reasonable and necessary to the program design you have put forth. And so that would be something that you—for any kinds of expenses that you are proposing that you make that evident in your budget narrative, because what we will do—and you'll see that in the instructions—we look to see—if you look at the budget adequacy section of the application—we look to see that the costs that you are proposing seem commensurate with the program design that you are proposing and that the costs are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the project. And you will need to explain why the budget is

clear and in alignment with the narrative and things of that nature so that we can access to see if costs seem reasonable and necessary.

Those are all the points that I wanted to cover on this call today, and so Sandy, if at this time you would open the line for questions.

**Sandy:** Thank you. At this time, if you would like to ask a question, please press \*1 on your touchtone telephone. You will be prompted to record your name. Once again, please \*1 on your touchtone telephone. Please stand by for any questions.

Our first question will come from Jacqueline, your line is open.

**Jacqueline:** Hi. My question is: We currently receive funding from AmeriCorps VISTA. Would this make us eligible for this grant?

**Rosa:** No, you need to be a grantee of the Volunteer Generation Fund, and so VISTA does not qualify.

**Jacqueline:** Okay. Thank you.

**Rosa:** You're welcome.

**Sandy:** Our next question will come from Julie, your line is open.

**Julie:** Thank you. Hi there. This is Julie from Iowa. You were talking about the eGrants system and I was just wondering if there is a set date when the application will be open for us to start entering our information.

**Rosa:** It has been open since last week.

**Julie:** Okay. I thought we had just checked it here and we didn't see that it was open, but we will check again.

**Rosa:** Yeah, if you would check because we opened it on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, so if it is not opened we would need to see what has happened. Because from our perspective, it was communicated that it was opened on the 10<sup>th</sup>. I think it might have actually been on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Julie:** We're still not finding that, so we'll send you an email.

**Rosa:** That would be great, and in the meantime I might check on my end as well. Thank you.

**Jacqueline:** The next question will come from Dave Petes, your line is open.

**Dave:** Yes, thank you. I understand we are not eligible, because we haven't participated in a prior grant and we haven't received any money. I think I have that correct; I have to report to my board why we are not eligible. I would like to know if there is some group, should we contact AmeriCorps or how do we get into your system for some future opportunities for funding for our service that we are providing.

**Rosa:** So you are more than welcome to look at any other funding opportunities that the Corporation has. You talked about AmeriCorps, we have AmeriCorps VISTA, and we have Senior Corps. Those often have opportunities to apply for funding. So I would definitely look to see the funding opportunities that CNCS has. But for this particular grant competition, the Volunteer Generation Fund competition, for FY13, at this time, this competition is limited to the eligible organizations that we discussed. So the next potential opportunity for Volunteer Generation Fund grants would be subject to availability for fiscal year 14, which means anytime between October 1 of this year to September of next year. If we receive appropriations for the Volunteer Generation Fund, then we would likely be opening it up. So the intent was that for FY14, as I noted, the President's budget request for the Volunteer Generation Fund was looking at naming the Volunteer Generation Fund after George H.W. Bush—naming it the George H.W. Bush Volunteer Generation Fund—and we wanted to have all new applicants under that particular notice of funding opportunity, again subject to appropriation. And so that's when I would say that you would be looking at potentially being able to apply. Until we have an approved budget, we can give any more specific details, because at this point we don't know. But I would encourage you to look at other funding opportunities available from the Corporation for National and Community Service, and if you are a program that—I don't know where you are located—you also might want to confer with a state service commission in your area.

**Dave:** Yeah, we are in Idaho. I know some of the state officials so I'll contact them. Okay, well I understand and I can report it. Thank you for answering.

**Rosa:** You're welcome. Thank you for joining the call.

**Jacqueline:** Our next question will come from Pam Zutenhorse. Pam, your line is open.

**Pam:** Thank you. Hi, Rosa, this is Pam from Maine. My question has to do—I understand in Section I you want that single line item for subgrants, and you referenced that all the costs towards subgrants you want to put in there. Does that mean in our salary line we need to separate out personnel time for grants management versus projects...

**Rosa:** No, the subgrants is basically money that you would be giving out in awards to your subgrantees, not any costs associated with supporting those grantees.

**Pam:** Okay. So you don't particularly—so what I'm hearing then is there isn't an interest in what it costs to manage them, you just want to know how much money goes out in the field.

**Rosa:** You got it. Yes, we are not looking for the total costs to do that; we just want to know how much you are actually giving out in subgrants.

**Pam:** Okay. Great. Thank you for that.

**Jacqueline:** Once again if you would like to ask a question, please press \*1 on your touchtone telephone. Once again that is \*1. Please stand by for any further questions.

Our next question will come from Dela Perera. Dela, your line is open.

**Dela:** Hi. I'm calling from Seattle, and I had asked by question by email as well. We are not a current grantee so I understand we are not eligible this year, but we may apply in the future as a volunteer connector organization. Our mission is oriented toward global health, so it has a global and international focus but many of our volunteers are working with organizations in the state of Washington. Does that global focus in any way exclude us from being considered in the future or is it still worthwhile?

**Rosa:** So any activities that would be supported under this grant would need to focus on domestic issues. That doesn't mean that you as an organization wouldn't be eligible; it just means that the activities you propose would basically have a domestic focus.

**Dela:** Okay. Thank you.

**Jacqueline:** Our next question comes from Mary Register. Your line is open.

**Mary:** Hi Rosa and Mal, it is Mary from Florida. Thanks for opening this up. I understand that you are planning to award at this point \$3.7 million, and since it is on a competitive basis, do you have an idea in mind of what you are hoping to—in terms of a number—are you narrowing it down from 19 to 12 or 10 or is it going to be based on what we are requesting?

**Rosa:** The question is if the number of applicants is a finite pool. So it is going to be driven, Mary, by the number of requests that are being made by the applicant, and how competitive the applications are. We will not have a target number of how many we are wanting to fund and whatnot. We just set a minimum amount of what can be requested, but we did not set a maximum.

**Mary:** Okay. Thank you.

**Jacqueline:** Our next question will come from LaDawn Stoddard. Your line is open.

**LaDawn:** Hi Rosa. It is LaDawn in Utah. A couple questions. The first one I have is are you able to tell us how much is currently out in VGF funding to the current recipients for this past year, and secondly, is October 1 a firm definitive start date or are we able to select a start date after October 1?

**Rosa:** You can do after, you just can't do before. The full amount I can't remember right now, but if you are interested you can look back at what was appropriated in FY12.

**LaDawn:** Okay.

**Rosa:** And off the top of my head, I think it is maybe a little more than \$3.7. I think it is maybe \$3.9.

**LaDawn:** Thank you.

**Jacqueline:** Once again, if you would like to ask a question, please press \*1 on your touchtone telephone. Once again, that is star then one. Please hold for more questions.

And at this time I am showing no questions.

**Rosa:** Well thank you all very much for making time to join us on the call this afternoon. As I said if you have any other questions you can submit by email to [volunteergeneration@cns.gov](mailto:volunteergeneration@cns.gov). And, again, be mindful of the upcoming timeline and deadlines: July 24, letters of intent; August 9, submission; clarification date targeted for late-August, early-September over 4 to 5 days, with notifications expected in September.

Thank you very much. Have a wonderful day. And if you have any other questions, don't hesitate to send an email. Thank you.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you. That does conclude today's conference call. Thank you for participating, and you may disconnect your lines at this time.