2020 COVID-19 RESILIENCY GRANTS
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals Due: Monday, September 14, 2020

ISSUED BY THE MASSACHUSETTS SERVICE ALLIANCE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

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COVID-19 Resiliency Grants
In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) announces the release of a Request for Proposals for COVID-19 relief efforts. MSA seeks to award grants of up to $4,000 to support volunteer community service projects and volunteer capacity-building initiatives needed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, is creating challenges for many of the nonprofits and public agencies across Massachusetts to meet the needs of their communities. The pandemic and the resulting economic shutdown have had significant effects on the services, operations, and people working and serving in the nonprofit sector. In particular, organizations that manage volunteers are having to think about how to position, adapt, and optimize their volunteer program to be the most effective in times of uncertainty. In response to these challenges, MSA has created the COVID-19 Resiliency Grants to help organizations achieve their volunteer engagement goals.

Grant funding is contingent on the availability of funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service. In the interest of funding high quality projects/initiatives, the total amount of funds to be granted has not been set in advance. Grant payments will be disbursed throughout the grant period as needed through reimbursement requests. Requests for reimbursement must be accompanied by all documentation required by MSA, in compliance with the rules for the administration of funds.

The Massachusetts Service Alliance
The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA), established in 1991, is a private, nonprofit organization. As the state commission on volunteerism and service, we foster collaboration and public-private partnerships at the local, state and federal level to grow volunteerism and service initiatives in Massachusetts. Our strong partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies allow us to mobilize funding to advance service and volunteerism through the AmeriCorps, Commonwealth Corps, and Volunteer Generation Fund initiatives. We have a 28-year proven track record of bringing volunteerism and service resources to hundreds of organizations from Pittsfield to New Bedford and Springfield to Lowell. We believe in the power of volunteerism and service to improve the quality of life of all residents of the Commonwealth, and we seek to understand and address the changing needs of Massachusetts and allocate resources to the strongest effect.

The Corporation for National and Community Service
The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Through its multitude of programs, CNCS has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action. Through Volunteer Generation Fund grants, CNCS seeks to fund effective approaches that expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to effectively use volunteers to solve problems. Administered by MSA, the COVID-19 Resiliency Grants are funded by the Volunteer Generation Fund.
**Project Scope**

MSA is offering COVID-19 Resiliency Grants to organizations that either:

1) **Engage volunteers in a community service project.** Service projects should:
   a) Be based in Massachusetts and engage Massachusetts residents as volunteers;
   b) Include meaningful service that addresses an identified community need that has come about as a result of COVID-19;
   c) Either be a one-time project or a series of projects that occurs during the grant period which is from October 15, 2020 to April 30, 2021.
   d) Recruit a diverse cross-section of the community as volunteers, and be open to volunteers from the general public;
   e) Provide volunteers with opportunities for sustained service and ongoing community involvement.

OR

2) **Conduct a capacity-building initiative to enhance volunteer programming during this time of COVID-19.** Initiatives should include activities that will help the agency adapt to the changes needed so that volunteers can continue to serve despite the challenges in the current environment related to COVID-19 as well as efforts that will increase efficiencies of the current internal volunteer program structure during this time.

Examples of acceptable initiatives include:
- New recruitment efforts for new volunteers or new roles that have been established;
- A new online platform in order to provide virtual volunteer support;
- Volunteer software or database implementation to better track volunteers now that they are not onsite
- Paid staff support for those working directly with volunteer programs.

In addition, capacity-building initiatives should:
   a) Be based in Massachusetts and target Massachusetts residents as volunteers;
   b) Provide a clearly identified solution to a need within the organization’s volunteer programming that has arisen due to COVID-19;
   c) Take place during the grant period which is from October 15, 2020 to April 30, 2021.
   d) Ensure the effective volunteer engagement strategy and/or best practice(s) is sustainable and aimed at retaining volunteers for future community service events and programs.
Funding priority will be given to:

1) **Volunteer connector agencies** across the state (volunteer connectors include agencies that connect individuals with volunteer opportunities and support organizations in effectively using those volunteers to create meaningful change in local communities).
2) Organizations that represent a diverse geographical mix throughout the state.

**Timeline**

**Proposals must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, September 14, 2020.** Your application must be submitted through [MSA’s online grant system](#). Applicants will be notified of the status of their grant proposal by October 2020.

**The grant period will begin October 15, 2020 and end April 30, 2021.** Grant funds are distributed and processed on a reimbursement basis. Only expenditures that occur within the grant period are eligible for reimbursement. Expenditures occurring outside the grant period will not be eligible for reimbursement unless the grantee has received prior approval from MSA. Grantees may submit a request for reimbursement up to 3 times during the grant period.

Grantees are required to submit a final report, including project/initiative outcomes by May 31, 2021.

**Eligibility**

Funding for this proposal is made available to the following organizations:

- Nonprofit organizations (incorporated with 501(c)(3) status) - including, but not limited to, community-based organizations, volunteer centers, community colleges and universities and that have been in existence for at least one year prior to the date on which the organization submits an application;
- Public entities such as State, municipal, and county governments, including school districts, departments and agencies therein; and
- Native American tribes.

**Restrictions**

Organizations may not replace staff time or other expenses already being covered by existing MSA grant funding with funds to be provided through the grant described in this RFP. Additionally, MSA will not fund activities that engage in the following:

- Provide religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytizing;
- Assist, promote, or deter union organizing;
- Finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office; or impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Displace staff positions with volunteers, and
• Charge volunteers to participate in service projects/initiatives or COVID-19 Resiliency Grant programming.

Administrative Requirements

General Requirements
Organizations receiving these funds are required to:

• Participate in a grantee compliance webinar prior to the start of the grant period. Date and time TBD.
• Include the MSA and CNCS logos on all marketing materials related to the funded program.
• Submit a final project report, including project/initiative outcomes, no later than May 31, 2021.
• Submit a final financial report, with all required documentation of expenditures no later than May 31, 2021.

Criminal History Checks
As stated by the Corporation for National and Community Service, organizations that are awarded the 2021 COVID-19 Resiliency Grant must conduct CORI and NSOPW checks on all staff members listed in the grant budget. Staff listed on the grant budget who live outside of MA are required to undergo their state’s criminal record check in addition to the CORI. Also, in accordance with these standards, all staff members listed in the grant budget that will have recurring access to vulnerable populations (youth under the age of 18, individuals with disabilities, or adults over the age of 65) will need to undergo an FBI criminal history check in addition to the CORI and NSOPW checks.

Expenses connected with the CORI, NSOPW, and FBI criminal history checks are considered an allowable use of grant funds, to the extent that they are required for the activities to comply with applicable laws.

Reporting
Organizations should be prepared to track the following during the full grant period (Oct. 15, 2020 – April 30, 2021), to be submitted in the final project report:

• Number of project/initiative volunteers managed during the grant period
• Number of total hours served by all project/initiative volunteers
• Number of new volunteers recruited
• Number of total hours served by new volunteers ONLY
• Number of community partners and service sites
• Measurable outcomes defined in applicant’s proposal narrative (i.e., Number of meals served, health kits assembled, etc.)
Usage of Funds

Funds are intended for service project/capacity building initiative development and implementation, including:

- Coordination and staff time contributed to the COVID-19 Resiliency Grant planning and activities;
- Costs for supplies, materials, etc. directly related to the implementation of activities;
  - MSA will not award more than $500 for the purchase of food and refreshments.
- Volunteer recruitment, screening, orientation and training, recognition, and reward;
  - MSA will not award more than $700 for the purchase of volunteer appreciation items.
- Costs associated with transportation and other reasonable out-of-pocket expenses directly related to development and implementation of the project/capacity-building initiative;
- Record-keeping or other activities to assist organizations in connecting COVID-19 Resiliency Grant volunteers to future volunteer opportunities;
- Communication materials and activities designed to share project/capacity-building initiative results with the community; and
- Costs for implementing or maintaining a volunteer software/database or volunteer training platform.

Prohibited Usage of Funds

- Volunteer or service member payments or stipends;
- The purchase of equipment;
  - Equipment, defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year and/or acquisition cost of $1,000 or more per unit.
- The purchase of gift cards/gift certificates; and
- Indirect costs as its own line item (costs related to occupancy and communication are permissible)
Your application will be submitted online through our online grants system. Please make sure to complete and submit each of the following components. Please note that all attachments will be uploaded as part of your application.

**Online Application Checklist**
- Application Cover Page (provided in online system)
- Project/Initiative Proposal Narrative
- Uploaded: Budget
- Uploaded: Most recent audit or 990
- Uploaded: 501(c)3 letter or MA Certificate of Tax Exemption (ST-2 or ST-5)

**Click here to access MSAs Online Grants System to apply and submit your application**

**Submission Deadline**
5:00pm, Monday, September 14, 2020
Faxed, emailed, or hard copy transmissions will NOT be accepted.
Any application that is not complete and/or does not comply with all submission requirements may not be reviewed.

**Technical Assistance related to this RFP should be directed to**
Christopher Woods, Program Officer for Volunteer Initiatives
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cwoods@mass-service.org
Option 1: Volunteer Community Service Project Proposal Narrative

Instructions
Please follow the instructions below when completing your online application. Please ensure that all sections of this RFP are completed in their entirety. Each proposal should be comprised of the following:

Executive Summary (150 word limit)
- Briefly provide an overview of project and anticipated outcomes.

Background/History of Organization (300 word limit)
- Briefly describe the organization’s history, mission, overall goals and/or objectives.
- Describe how your organization and community have been affected by COVID-19.
- Describe the organization’s experience with planning volunteer service projects, including recruiting and managing volunteers.
- Describe the organization’s experience with managing grants, particularly federal grants.

Project Design (1000 word limit)
- Describe the identified community need(s) to be addressed as a result of COVID-19 and a strategy to impact them through a service project.
- Provide a description of the project, including the objective(s), description of activities, project date(s) and location and general timeline.
- Describe how the organization will recruit and engage a diverse pool of community volunteers, especially new volunteers not previously involved with the organization.
- Describe how the organization will publicize the event to potential sponsors, community partners, volunteers and the media to increase awareness of the effort.
- Describe how the organization will partner with other agencies or groups in the local community to assist with project development and/or volunteer recruitment.
- Explain how the organization plans to maintain contact with volunteers recruited from a COVID-19 Resiliency Grant project and continue to engage them after the project has been completed.

Project Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes (400 word limit)
- State at least one clear and measurable goal for each of the following:
  - Desired outcome (change or benefit) for the community being served
  - Desired outcome (change or benefit) for the engaged volunteers
- Describe how success will be measured and the specific methods/tools used for project evaluation, which includes collecting data on specific outputs and analyzing results.
- Describe how the project addresses the community need in a sustainable way.
Option 2: Capacity-Building Initiative Proposal Narrative Instructions

Please follow the instructions below when completing your online application. Please ensure that all sections of this RFP are completed in their entirety.

Executive Summary (150 word limit)
- Briefly provide an overview of the initiative and anticipated outcomes.

Background / History of Organization (300 word limit)
- Briefly describe the organization’s history, mission, overall goals and/or objectives
- Describe the organization’s experience with engaging volunteers, including recruiting and managing volunteers.
- Describe the organization’s experience with managing grants, particularly federal grants.

Project Design (1000 word limit)
- Describe how your community, organization, and volunteer program have been affected by COVID-19.
- Describe the clearly identified need for volunteer program enhancement/adaptation as a result of COVID-19.
- Provide a description of the capacity-building initiative, including
  - the overall objective,
  - proposed activities to enhance/adapt the organization’s volunteer program,
  - timeline and benchmarks of activities taking place during the grant period.
  - anticipated number of volunteers impacted through proposed capacity-building efforts, including new volunteers obtained (if applicable).
- Describe how capacity-building efforts will increase the organization’s impact on the community.
- Describe how the organization will partner with other agencies or groups in the local community to assist with project development and/or volunteer recruitment.

Project Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes (400 word limit)
- State at least one clear and measurable goal for each of the following:
  - Desired outcome (change or benefit) for the community being served or the organization as a whole
  - Desired outcome (change or benefit) for the engaged volunteers
- Describe how success will be measured and the specific methods/tools used for project evaluation, which includes collecting data on specific outputs and analyzing results.
- Describe how the project addresses the identified need in a sustainable way.
**Budget Instructions**

You may download the budget form through [this link](#). This file will be uploaded as part of your [online application](#). A sample budget with acceptable calculations and descriptions can be accessed [here](#).

**Budget Summary (Tab 1)**

- **Request/Total (Column A)** – The dollar amount by line item category for which you are applying. This total amount cannot exceed the maximum award amount of $4,000.

**Budget Narrative (Tab 2)**

1) **Staff**

   a. **Definition:** Professional staff that provide direct services to the project.
   b. **Description Column:** Include each individual staff’s full-year salary and FTE rate (the percentage of time individual staff will directly work on the project) OR hourly rate as well as the number of hours per week and number of weeks assigned to this project. Each staff salary should be pro-rated to reflect the grant period ([Oct. 15, 2020 – April 30, 2021](#)).
   c. **Considerations:**
      i. Organizations may not replace staff time already being covered by existing MSA grant funding with funds to be provided through the grant described in this RFP.
      ii. Funds may not be used to pay volunteers and/or additional AmeriCorps and Commonwealth Corps member stipends for service performed in connection with the projects/initiatives of this grant.
      iii. Any staff listed in the budget will be required to undergo the appropriate criminal history checks.

2) **Fringe Benefits**

   a. **Definition:** Allowable fringe benefits typically include FICA, Worker’s Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K.
   b. **Description Column:** Provide a calculation or rate for total benefits as a percentage of the salaries to which they apply or list each benefit as a separate item. If a fringe benefit rate is over 30%, please list each benefit separately.
   c. **Considerations:**
      i. Holidays, leave, and other vacation benefits are not included in the fringe benefit rate but rather are absorbed into the salary budget (staff line item)

3) **Consultants & Contractual Services**

   a. **Definition:** Services that cannot be provided by any employees of the organization.
   b. **Description Column:** Include description of services being provided as well as an hourly rate and the number of hours to be provided.

4) **Supplies and Materials**

   a. **Definition:** Project related supplies and materials.
   b. **Description Column:** Each supply and material expense must have its own line item and description. All line items over $500 require a detailed description of how amount was derived, including cost per unit (i.e., total amount / number of units = cost per unit).
c. **Considerations:**
   i. MSA will not fund more than $500 for the purchase of food and refreshments.
   ii. MSA will not fund more than $700 for the purchase of volunteer appreciation items (e.g., t-shirts, mugs, etc.).
   iii. MSA will not fund the purchase of equipment (see page 8).

5) **Travel**
   a. **Definition:** Costs for any official business travel related to the project (e.g., delivery services, fuel expended, taxi services).
   b. **Description Column:** Each travel expense must have its own line item and description. Please include per mile costs.
   c. **Considerations:**
      i. MSA cannot reimburse above the federally approved mileage reimbursement rate. This rate is currently .575 cents/mile. If the federal rate changes in 2021, grantees may use the updated rate.

6) **Occupancy**
   a. **Definition:** Costs of space for staff, meetings, etc. used directly for project planning and implementation.
   b. **Description Column:** Each occupancy expense must have its own line item and description. For each expense, provide a pro-rated cost allocation calculation.

7) **Communication**
   a. **Definition:** Postage, advertisement, delivery costs, etc. needed for the project.
   b. **Description Column:** Each expense must have its own line item and description.

8) **Other**
   a. **Definition:** Special costs related to the individual project. Costs not listed in any of the above categories.
   b. **Description Column:** Provide a detailed description of each line item.