2026 Minnesota Volunteer Generation Fund
Request for Proposals

OVERVIEW

ServeMinnesota is pleased to announce the continuation of the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) funding opportunity for volunteer connector organizations in Minnesota. Through VGF grants, AmeriCorps supports effective strategies to expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and leverage volunteer service to address critical community needs. ServeMinnesota intends to award $350,000 in VGF grants. Applicants can request funding amounts between $15,000 - $100,000.

ServeMinnesota uses VGF funds to support contracts with Volunteer Connector organizations to develop and implement innovative approaches that increase the number of volunteers connected to community organizations and initiatives statewide. Connector organizations—such as Volunteer Centers and United Ways—play a key role in supporting local and regional volunteer engagement, particularly in Greater Minnesota. Grants enable connectors to partner with nonprofits, schools, municipalities, and community organizations to grow volunteer participation and adopt new recruitment and retention practices. Funding eligibility also includes community collaborations in Greater Minnesota that create volunteer-sharing partnerships. These initiatives address gaps in volunteer availability by enabling volunteers to support multiple organizations to meet essential community needs, such as transportation for seniors or staffing food shelves.

Collectively, these initiatives are intended to strengthen local volunteer systems, improve adoption of best practices, and develop scalable models of volunteer engagement that can be replicated across nonprofit, educational, and civic organizations.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Purpose of Volunteer Generation Fund Grants

VGF grants support community-based entities in recruiting, managing, supporting, and retaining volunteers, with an emphasis on expanding volunteering and strengthening the capacity of volunteer connector organizations and community collaborations to engage volunteers. Funds will support efforts that help local nonprofits, schools, municipalities, and community organizations offer high-quality volunteer opportunities that address community challenges. Funded organizations will establish outputs and outcomes to measure capacity-building services, track the number of volunteers supported through grant-funded activities, and assess the effectiveness of innovative practices, with particular attention to improving volunteer recruitment, retention, and overall organizational capacity.

B. Contracts with Volunteer Connector Organizations

The contracts will be awarded to connector organizations and community collaborations that propose to expand the number of volunteers connected, and that implement practices to assist community organizations and initiative to recruit and retain volunteers for solving the state's most critical issues. The time period for the grants will be **April 15, 2026 to January 15, 2027**.

Examples of activities that might be take place through this grant are:
- Improving capability and capacity of volunteer connectors to work with community organizations

- Providing or hosting training for local organizations on effective volunteer management practices
- Testing a new approach to develop opportunities and recruit, connect and retain volunteers in your community
- Developing or improving a database to match volunteers with unique skills to organizations that can use their services
- Starting or expanding a corporate volunteer program that connects volunteers, including skill-based volunteers, with volunteer opportunities
- Developing new volunteer recruitment strategies for local organizations, such as community outreach campaigns or social media tools
- Starting or expanding an effort that targets increased recruitment and connection of volunteers to meet newly identified community needs
- Creating joint recruitment campaigns for volunteer-sharing initiatives
- Piloting processes that facilitate volunteer-sharing between partner organizations

C. Reporting
Twice during the grant period, Volunteer Connectors and community collaborations will report on both of these Performance Measures:
- G3-3.4: Number of organizations that received capacity building services (OUTPUT)
- G3-3.10A: Number of organizations that increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and/or program reach (OUTCOME)

In addition to reporting these outputs and outcomes and progress on a work plan, Volunteer Connector organizations will track data on volunteers supporting capacity-building services for the Volunteer Connector, and gather data from organizations receiving capacity-building services.

Additional data must be reported twice during the grant period (as applicable). Data collected must include:
- Number of volunteers of who were recruited, coordinated, or supported through grant activities
- Number of hours leveraged volunteers served during the reporting period

II. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants
Eligible applicants are existing organizations that provide, or seek to provide, services to connect volunteers with opportunities to serve their communities, or a community organization wishing to initiate such service to serve those currently not being served. Applicants must be a 501(c)3 nonprofit, local government, Indian Tribe, or institution of higher education and have an active SAM registration.

B. Matching Requirements
Applicants for this volunteer connector application must document a 53% match. The match can be cash or in-kind sources. Grant applicants must describe the expected source of their cash or in-kind match share in their application; this should be documented in notes to the attached budget form

III. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Application Content

All application will be submitted through an online application form and must provide a well-designed plan with a clear and compelling justification for receiving the requested funds. Reviewers will assess your application on the basis of your program design, organizational capacity, and cost-effectiveness and budget adequacy.

Application Link: Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) Connector Grant Application

Below is a preview of the questions included in the form so applicants may review the questions and prepare responses before completing the online application.

1. Organization Information
Provide basic contact information for the primary applicant.
- Contact Person Name
- Contact Person Email
- Contact Person Title
- Contact Person Phone
- Organization Name
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

2. Program Design and Work Plan
Describe your proposed project to strengthen volunteer engagement and organizational capacity.
- **Project Goal**: What is the primary goal of your project?
- **Expected Outcomes**: What measurable outcomes will result from this project?
- **Key Activities**: Describe the activities you will implement to achieve your goal.
- **Timeline**: When will these activities occur during the grant period?
- **Measurement of Success**: How will you measure the success of your project?

3. Organizational Capability
Describe your organization's staffing structure and experience implementing volunteer engagement or capacity-building initiatives. Include:
- Key staff roles
- Relevant experience
- Oversight structure
- Data collection or evaluation capacity

4. Cost Effectiveness and Match
Describe how your organization will meet the required 53% match associated with VGF funds. Include:
- Sources of match funding
- Whether match is secured, pending, or planned
- How in-kind contributions will be documented

5. Performance Measures
Applicants must report on the following AmeriCorps performance measures.

Output Measure – G3-3.4: Number of organizations receiving capacity-building services.
Applicants will provide:

- Target number of organizations served
- Data collection instrument
- Description of the instrument

Outcome Measure – G3-3.10A: Number of organizations that increase efficiency, effectiveness, and/or program reach. Applicants will provide:
- Target number of organizations demonstrating improvement
- Data collection instrument
- Description of how improvement will be measured

6. Budget Summary
Applicants will enter summary budget totals in the online application form, including:
- Total VGF Funds Requested
- Total Match Amount
- Total Project Budget

Applicants will also provide a brief budget narrative describing how the proposed budget supports project activities. Cost categories to consider include: personnel, personnel fringe, travel, supplies, consultants, training & other operating expenses.

7. Budget Template Upload
As part of the online application form, applicants must upload the completed VGF Budget Template, which includes:
- Budget Summary by cost category
- Personnel Detail
- Match Sources
- Budget Notes (optional)

The template must clearly show:
- Total Project Cost
- VGF Funds Requested
- Match Amount

Your completed online application must be submitted by April 3, 2026 at 5:00 pm CST.

TIMELINE
- RFP released: March 16, 2026
- Applications due: April 3, 2026 at 5:00 pm CST
- Notification of awards: April 9, 2026
- Grant start date: April 15, 2026
  - Staff can only be charged to the grant after they have completed a national service criminal history check
- Grants completion date: January 15, 2027

CONTACT

Please send questions to Kevin Hebert at kevin@serveminnesota.org.