

**2026 – 2027
GROWTH & INVESTMENT IN VOLUNTEERS (GIV)
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Proposals Due: Friday September 4, 2026

ISSUED BY THE MASSACHUSETTS SERVICE ALLIANCE
WITH SUPPORT FROM AMERICORPS



VOLUNTEER GENERATION FUND

[Click Here to access MSA's Online Grants System and Submit your Application](#)

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For question, please email: volunteersupport@mass-service.org

About

Growth & Investment in Volunteers

The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) is pleased to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for its Growth & Investment in Volunteers (GIV) initiative, addressing a longstanding challenge in the nonprofit sector: volunteer engagement is essential, yet consistently under-resourced. More than half of organizations report that volunteers are central to achieving their mission, while also citing capacity constraints as a major barrier to engaging volunteers effectively. MSA recognizes the critical role of nonprofits and Volunteer Connector Organizations (VCOs)* in strengthening communities and driving meaningful change. MSA seeks to engage 10-15 organizations in GIV to support nonprofits and VCOs in leveraging evidence-based volunteer engagement practices to more effectively recruit, manage, and retain volunteers. Selected organizations will be awarded a matching grant of up to \$20,000 and will also participate in a cohort-based Training and Technical Assistance series, which includes 5 virtual learning sessions focused on practical skill-building, peer learning, and program development.

** Volunteer Connector Organizations include agencies that connect individuals with volunteer opportunities and support organizations in effectively using those volunteers to create meaningful change in local communities.*

Grant funding is contingent on the availability of funds from AmeriCorps. Grant payments will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Requests for reimbursement must be accompanied by all documentation required by MSA, in compliance with the rules for the administration of federal funds. Grants awarded under this initiative will be for the period of **December 1, 2026 – August 31, 2027.**

The Massachusetts Service Alliance

The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA), established in 1991, is a private, 501(c)(3) 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 volunteerism initiatives. We have a proven track record developed through more than 30 years 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. We seek to understand and address the changing needs of Massachusetts and its residents and allocate resources through a process that ensures all organizations have the opportunity to access and benefit from these resources.

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps provides support to organizations to help them to alleviate poverty, expand capacity in organizations and build economic opportunity through community-driven efforts across the country. The Volunteer Generation Fund grants are used to strengthen entities' ability to recruit, engage and support volunteers. At a time of social need, when Americans of all ages are looking for ways to give back, AmeriCorps seeks to fund effective approaches that strengthen the capacity and impact of volunteer and invest in innovative volunteer engagement practices. Administered by MSA, GIV is funded by the Volunteer Generation Fund which comes from AmeriCorps.

Grant Overview

Project Scope

Growth & Investment in Volunteers (GIV) is a multiprong initiative designed to help nonprofits and VCOs build the systems and practices needed to engage volunteers as partners in service, including strengthening existing volunteer engagement infrastructure and supporting the development or expansion of volunteer programs. Through a blend of monetary support, targeted training and technical assistance, and a cohort-based learning community, participating organizations strengthen their infrastructure, deepen their volunteer engagement strategies, and connect with peers working to address similar challenges across Massachusetts.

GIV support is to:

1. **Strengthen systems to recruit, manage, and retain volunteers**, such as:
 - Recruitment and Cultivation: Building systems to ensure a broad mix of community members with skills, interests, and abilities that advance your mission.
 - Training and Orientation: A clear plan for providing orientation and training, which is directly correlated with a volunteer's sense of belonging and organizational commitment.
 - Supervision and Support: Strategies for providing regular feedback and showing recognition, as these practices are significantly related to a volunteer's intent to continue serving.
 - Volunteer Management System: Improving volunteer engagement through stronger resource allocation, strategic planning, and communication.
 - Program Evaluation: Ensuring measurable program outcomes and improved programming.
2. **Design or expand volunteer engagement programs**, such as:
 - Co-designing a new volunteer model or program with community partners to meet a pressing community need.
 - Expanding a successful program into a new geographic area.
 - Engaging new populations of volunteers. For example, targeting specific demographic groups such as faith communities, youth service, generational/family volunteering, veteran and military family, skill-based volunteering or senior volunteering.

MSA will prioritize the following criteria in our award process:

- Organizations and initiatives serving Massachusetts communities **(required)**.
- Organizations located or serving in regions of the state that are considered underserved.
- Organizations proposing to engage volunteers in connection with pressing state challenges.
- MSA seeks to fund programs hosted by organizations that vary in size, location, and mission area.

Definition of Key Terms

Volunteer Engagement

The intentional, strategic, and mission-driven practice of engaging, supporting, and leading volunteers as core partners in an organization's work.

Volunteer Management

Is the process of recruiting, training, coordinating, engaging, and retaining the volunteers who power a nonprofit's mission.

Underserved Communities

Populations or geographic areas that experience limited or inequitable access to resources, opportunities, or services - including but not limited to education, economic opportunity, healthcare, transportation, civic engagement, or social support - due to systemic, socioeconomic, geographic, or environmental barriers.

Timeline

Informational Webinar

MSA will provide an optional Informational Session for this RFP on Tuesday August 18th at 1:00PM. This webinar will be recorded and posted on www.mass-service.org. If you are unable to attend, a copy of the recording will also be sent to all registrants. [Click here to register for the info session webinar](#).

Submission Deadline

Proposals must be received by **Friday September 4, 2026** and must be submitted through MSA's online grant system. Applicants will be notified of the status of their grant proposal in early November.

Grant Timeline

The GIV program period will begin December 1, 2026, and end on August 31, 2027. All grant funded project work must be completed (and all grant funds expended) by August 31, 2027. Sub-grantees are required to submit a midterm financial report by April 30, 2027, and final financial and programmatic reports by September 30, 2027.

Please note: Project expenditures occurring outside of the grant period will not be eligible for reimbursement or as a source of match unless the sub-grantee has received prior written approval from MSA.

Eligibility/Restrictions

Eligibility

Funding for this proposal is made available to the following organizations in Massachusetts: a nonprofit organization (incorporated with 501(c)(3) status); an institution of higher education; a state agency; a community or faith-based organization; a federally recognized Tribal Nation; city, council, or other municipal government entity; or a partnership of any of the above entities.

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, including funding AmeriCorps Member stipends/member support costs or Commonwealth Corps member stipends. Additionally, MSA will not fund activities that engage in the following*:

1. Attempting to influence legislation;
2. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
3. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
4. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
5. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
6. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
7. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
8. Providing a direct benefit to— a. A business organized for profit; b. A labor union; c. A partisan political organization; d. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at

their own initiative; and e. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph 7. above, unless AmeriCorps assistance is not used to support those religious activities;

9. Conducting a voter registration drive or using AmeriCorps funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
10. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services;
11. Engaging in activities that are prohibited by applicable executive orders; and
12. Such other activities as AmeriCorps may prohibit.

**Organizations are not otherwise prohibited in engaging in these activities if they are funded by alternate funding sources and not included as match.*

Administrative Requirements

General Requirements

Organizations receiving these funds are required to:

- Participate in the Orientation and Compliance Webinar prior to grant start date (currently scheduled for November 19, 2026, at 1:00 pm; subject to change).
- Participate in 5 cohort-based learning calls throughout the year.
- Participate in a mandatory mid-year Fiscal Compliance Webinar (date TBD).
- Complete pre and post grant program surveys.
- Complete the required National Service Criminal History Check process described below for all staff listed on the program budget, whether on the federal or match share.
- Create or access a tracking system necessary to collect and report on data that demonstrates results.
- Include MSA and AmeriCorps logos on program materials, volunteer recognition items, and in publicity.
- Host a site visit by MSA staff.
- Submit a final report on the program that includes reporting on the performance measurements listed on page 7 and narrative questions (template will be provided by MSA).
- Submit two financial reports/requests for reimbursement, with all required documentation of expenditures, by April 30, 2027 (covering 12/1/26 – 3/31/27), and September 30, 2027 (covering 4/1/27 – 8/31/27). Only expenses for which proper documentation has been received will be reimbursed.

Criminal History Checks

Per federal AmeriCorps requirements, ALL staff members listed on the 2027 GIV grant budget (under requested and/or matching funds) must have a compliant National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC). NSCHC is not a background check; NSCHC is the specific combination of criminal history checks required to be a staff person for an AmeriCorps program. All checks must be conducted, reviewed, and an eligibility determination made *before* the individual begins charging time to the grant. **MSA will order, pay for, and adjudicate NSCHC checks for all staff members listed on the grant budget.** In order to charge time to the grant, staff members listed on the grant budget will be required to follow MSA's instructions to complete the NSCHC requirements.

A staff person is ineligible to charge time to an AmeriCorps grant if they:

- Are registered or required to be registered on a State Sex Offender Registry
- Convicted of murder
- Make a false statement in connection with an NSCHC
- Refuse to consent to the required checks

If you were a MSA sub-grantee during the 2025-2026 program year, only personnel who were not previously cleared by MSA must go through the NSCHC process for 2026-2027. Please note, if there was a break in employment of a period 180 days or longer, then the staff member will need to go through the NSCHC process again. When asked, please still provide the information around all employees who will charge time to the grant so that MSA can make sure we have previous staff on record as being cleared of the NSCHC process.

Reporting

Organizations should be prepared to track the following during the full grant period, to be submitted in the final project report:

- Number of total volunteers, who were recruited, coordinated, and supported by the grant funds
- Total number of hours volunteers served during the grant period
- Number of new (anticipated) volunteers recruited/managed because of this specific initiative
- Number of hours new volunteers have contributed to your organization
- Impact to the community (decided on by the sub-grantee)

Match Overview and Usage of Funds

Match Requirement

The Massachusetts Service Alliance anticipates awarding grants of up to \$20,000 each. Sub-grantees will be required to match MSA's funding by providing at least 20% of the total budget (federal plus match share) from the organization's funds. All programs receiving support will be required to report the resources utilized to match grant funds. Matching funds can be a combination of cash and in-kind match. Volunteer time contributed to the program is NOT an acceptable source of match. Programs may only use other federal funds to match this grant with prior written permission from the other awarding agency.

Use of Funds

GIV sub-grants originate from the federal government. As such, all federal compliance regulations must be followed both for the funds requested for reimbursement and those expenses claimed as match. See the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at [2 CFR.200](#) for further details (MSA will assist those organizations unfamiliar with the CFR to ensure all expenses are compliant).

Funds are intended for volunteer service/initiative development and implementation, including:

- Staff and/or consultant time that is used for the development or implementation of the program.
 - Staff salaries are only eligible for reimbursement (or claimed as match) if the staff listed on the budget have completed the National Service Criminal History Check.
 - Consultants are not required to complete the National Service Criminal History Check.
 - Applicants must have clear tracking systems in place to track the hours that staff listed on the budget spend working specifically on the program supported by the GIV grant as well as documenting hours spent on all other activities in order to determine the specific percentage that is allocable to GIV. Documentation such as timesheets, paystubs, and wage authorization forms are required for reimbursement.
 - Employer-paid FICA costs corresponding to the amount of salaries charged to GIV are allowable, but no other fringe costs may be charged to the award.
- Costs for supplies, materials, etc. directly related to the implementation of grant activities;
 - MSA will not award funding for the purchase of food and refreshments.
- Volunteer recruitment, screening, orientation and training, and recognition;
 - MSA will not award more than \$1,000 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 program/initiative;

- Communication materials and activities designed to share program/initiative or program/initiative results with the community and prospective volunteers; and
- Costs of occupancy for staff, volunteers, meetings, etc., used directly for GIV project planning and implementation, only with a clear, written cost allocation methodology distinguishing GIV usage from other general usage of your office space. For any costs associated with your own space (whether rented or owned), there are very specific federal guidelines that must be followed. Please discuss with MSA.

Prohibited Use of Funds

- Volunteer or service member (such as AmeriCorps or Commonwealth Corps) payments or stipends (also an unallowable source of match)
 - You may provide a volunteer stipend if it comes from another funding source and is not claimed as match.
- 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 \$10,000 or more per unit.
- The purchase of gift cards/gift certificates (purchased and donated gift cards/gift certificates are also an unallowable source of match)
- Indirect costs, unless your organization has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA) or has elected the *de minimis* rate across all your federal grant awards (costs that may generally be considered indirect could be budgeted as direct costs as long as this method aligns with your organizational policies and cost allocation plan)
- Food and refreshments
- Fringe benefits excepting employer-paid FICA (including, but not limited to Worker's Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K)

Application Instructions

Your application must be submitted online through our grants system. Please make sure to complete and submit each of the following components. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. *Please note that all attachments will be uploaded as part of your application.*

Online Application Checklist

- ☐ Application Cover Page/Organizational Information
- ☐ Project/Initiative Proposal Narrative
- ☐ Upload: Budget Form (linked below; please do not use a form from a previous MSA grant program)
- ☐ Upload: Most recent audit (or 990 if you have not completed an audit within the past fiscal year)
- ☐ Uploaded: 501(c)(3) letter (or equivalent)

**[Click here
to access
application!](#)**

Submission Deadline: 5:00pm, Friday September 4, 2026

Project 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 the project you wish to fund.

Background / History of Organization (400-word limit)

- Describe the organization's history, mission, overall goals and/or objectives.
- Provide examples of your organization's experience and accomplishments managing volunteers.
- Describe the staffing and infrastructure that your organization has in place to ensure effective oversight of the project being proposed.

Fiscal Oversight (300-word limit)

- Describe the organization's capacity to manage a federal grant and to provide appropriate fiscal and programmatic oversight. If applicable, provide examples of other federal/state grants received.
- Describe current systems in place to ensure fiscal requirements are followed (i.e., providing sufficient back-up and supporting documentation for reimbursement request and matching funds; tracking time for staff who are included on the GIV budget).
- Describe your organization's ability to secure donations and/or other resources to meet the matching requirement.

Community Need (300-word limit)

- Define the community your organization currently serves and/or intends to expand to (if applicable) through this project.
- Describe the specific need that your proposed program or project will address. If available, provide specific data points and/or examples regarding the need.
- How will participation in the GIV initiative enhance your capacity to meet the needs of the community and/or volunteers?

Program/Project Design and Development (1,400-word limit)

- Explain the program/project being proposed and its scope. Discuss the goals, objectives, activities, and structure.
- Clearly define which of the two target areas the project being proposed focuses and why:
 1. Strengthen systems to recruit, manage, and retain volunteers
 2. Design or expand volunteer engagement programs
- Provide a brief timeline of activities and benchmarks for the grant period.
- Describe the plan for recruitment of volunteers and/or outreach to other community organizations and partners. Please include any current partnerships in place that will help in achieving the outcomes of this project.
- Describe how volunteers will be utilized as part of the proposed program/project and the volunteer management practices currently in place such as onboarding, training, supervision, and recognition.

Performance Measures and Evaluation (400-word limit)

- Outline at least **one clear programmatic goal**, with measurable outcomes. Please specify how you will identify and measure impact.
- Outline at least **one clear goal for volunteers engaged in the program**, with measurable outcomes. Please specify how you will identify and measure this goal.
- Describe the tools being used to measure the progress toward the outcomes outlined above (e.g., pre/post testing).
- Describe the plan and process for collecting overall data (number of participants, number of volunteer hours, etc.) and evaluating your program's effectiveness.
- What is the overall change you would like to see after the 10-month grant cycle?

Training and Technical Assistance (300-word limit)

- Describe one to two things your organization's staff would like to get out of the cohort-based **Training and Technical Assistance** series, which includes five virtual learning sessions focused on practical skill-building, peer learning, and program development.

Budget Instructions

You may download the budget form below. This file will be uploaded as part of your online application.

Select one of two templates:

1. [Workbook #1](#): for organizations with a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) or that have elected the *de minimis* rate across all your federal awards
2. [Workbook #2](#): all other organizations

Budget Categories

1) Staff

- a. Definition: Professional staff that provide direct services to the proposed program.
- b. Considerations:
 - i. Applicants must have clear tracking systems in place to track the hours that staff listed on the budget spend working specifically on the GIV grant and all other activities. **You may not charge time simply based on the budgeted amount of time approved; time must be substantiated by actual time records.** Documentation such as timesheets, paystubs, and wage authorization forms are required for reimbursement.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. Salaries paid by federal monies are ineligible as match, unless the organization receives prior written approval from the awarding agency.
 - iv. Funds may not be used to pay volunteers and/or AmeriCorps and Commonwealth Corps member stipends for service performed in connection with projects/initiatives (nor are volunteer or service member hours an appropriate source of match).
 - v. Any staff listed in the budget (request or match) will be required to undergo the appropriate National Service Criminal History Checks.
 - vi. Fringe benefits except employer-paid FICA costs may NOT be included (this includes, but is not limited to, Worker's Compensation, Retirement, SUTA, Health and Life Insurance, IRA, and 401K)

2) Consultants & Contractual Services

- a. Definition: Services that cannot be provided by any employees of the organization.
- b. Considerations:
 - i. Consultants are not required to undergo National Service Criminal History Checks.

3) Supplies and Materials

- a. Definition: Project-related supplies and materials.
- b. Considerations:
 - i. MSA will not provide funding for food or refreshments.
 - ii. MSA will not fund more than \$1,000 for the purchase of volunteer appreciation items (e.g., t-shirts, mugs, etc.).
 - iii. MSA will not fund the purchase of equipment (see "prohibited use of funds" section above).

4) Travel

- a. Definition: Costs for any official business travel related to the project (e.g., mileage reimbursements, ride share, public transportation).

b. Considerations:

- i. MSA can reimburse sub-grantees up to the federally approved mileage reimbursement rate, but sub-grantees should report mileage at a rate consistent with their organizational policies. This rate is currently \$0.76 cents/mile. If the federal rate changes in 2027, sub-grantees may use the updated rate.

5) Occupancy

- a. Definition: Costs of space for staff, volunteers, meetings, etc., used directly for project planning and implementation.
- b. Considerations:
 - i. If you are claiming a portion of your office space, you must have a clear, written cost allocation methodology distinguishing GIV usage from other general usage of your office space.
 - ii. For any costs associated with your own space (whether rented or owned), there are very specific federal guidelines that must be followed. Please discuss with MSA.

6) Communication

- a. Definition: Postage, community outreach, printing, delivery costs, etc., needed for the project.

7) Other

- a. Definition: Special costs related to the individual project. Costs not listed in any of the above categories.
- b. Considerations:
 - i. Please see above for Prohibited Use of Funds.