



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 

## **The Role of a Senior Corps Project Sponsor**

### **Overview of the Corporation for National and Community Service**

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. To fulfill this mission, the Corporation partners with governor-appointed state commissions, other public agencies, non-profit agencies, faith-based groups, schools, and other civic organizations supporting a wide range of national and community service opportunities. For the five-year period 2006-2010, the Corporation has identified four strategic focus areas where our programs are already leading the way and where we intend to make an even more profound difference; mobilizing more volunteers, ensuring a brighter future for all of America's youth through service, engaging students in communities, and harnessing Baby Boomers' experience.

The Corporation's three major service initiatives are the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

## **Senior Corps Overview**

The Senior Corps is a network of more than half a million persons aged 55+ who are making a difference as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers. These programs tap the experience, skills, talents, interests, and people of seniors age 55 and over. More than thirty-five years ago, the Senior Corps pioneered volunteer opportunities for older adults. Today, the Senior Corps continues to serve as a leader in placing 55+ volunteers to meet community needs while using their skills and pursuing their interests.

The Senior Corps' three programs provide a wealth of volunteer opportunities to the 55+ population while meeting an array of community needs.

- The **Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)**, established in 1965, links income eligible seniors ages 60 and older to children and youth with special and exceptional needs.
- **RSVP**, established in 1971, engages senior volunteers age 55 and older who perform a myriad of services, including mentoring children, providing companionship services to frail seniors, organizing neighborhood block watches, identifying sources of groundwater contamination, and participating in disaster recovery.
- The **Senior Companion Program (SCP)**, established in 1974, creates opportunities for income eligible seniors age 60 and older to serve adults in need of extra support to continue living independently and with enhanced quality of life.

### **1) What is a sponsor?**

A sponsor is an organization that undertakes the legal and financial responsibility to administer a grant for one of the three Senior Corps programs: RSVP, FGP, or SCP in accordance with the applicable authorizing law and program regulations.

### **2) Who is eligible to serve as a sponsor?**

The Corporation awards grants to public agencies, including Indian tribes, and non-profit private organizations in the United States that have the authority to accept and the capability to administer a Senior Corps project.

### **3) What are the responsibilities of a sponsor?**

A sponsor is responsible for fulfilling all project management requirements necessary to accomplish the purposes of the program they are applying to sponsor, as specified in Title II of the [Domestic Volunteer Service Act](#). The Corporation has issued regulations for each of the three programs that provide details concerning a sponsor's responsibilities. These regulations are found in Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, [Part 2551](#) (Senior Companion Program), [Part 2552](#) (Foster Grandparent Program), and [Part 2553](#) (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program). A sponsor may not delegate or contract these responsibilities to another entity. A sponsor must comply with all program regulations and policies, and grant provisions prescribed by the Corporation.

### **4) What are a sponsor's program responsibilities?**

A sponsor must:

- Focus their project's resources on critical human and social needs within the project's service area.

- Assess the needs of the community in collaboration with other community organizations, or utilize an existing assessment of the needs of the community, and develop strategies to respond to those needs using Senior Corps volunteers.
- Develop and manage a system of volunteer stations by:
  - Ensuring that a volunteer station is a public or non-profit private organization, or an eligible proprietary health care organization, capable of serving as a volunteer station for the placement of Senior Corps volunteers;
  - Ensuring that the placement of Senior Corps volunteers is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding;
  - Annually assessing the placement of Senior Corps volunteers.
- Consider the demographic make-up of the project service area in the enrollment of Senior Corps volunteers, taking special efforts to recruit eligible individuals from minority groups, persons with disabilities, and other under-represented groups.
- Provide Senior Corps volunteers with:
  - assignments that show direct and demonstrable benefits to the people and the community served, the volunteers, and the volunteer station;
  - required cost reimbursements, including, for all Senior Corps volunteers, transportation assistance, meals, insurance, recognition, and, for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, stipends and physical examinations;
  - and, in the case of Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, not less than 40 hours of orientation of which 20 hours must be pre-service, and an average of 4 hours of monthly in-service training. [Volunteer stations provide training for their assigned RSVP volunteers.]
- Encourage the most efficient and effective use of Senior Corps volunteers by coordinating project services and activities with related national, state, and local programs, including other Corporation programs.
- Conduct an annual appraisal of volunteers' performance and, for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, annual review of their income eligibility.
- Develop, and annually update, a plan for promoting senior service within the project's service area.
- Annually assess the accomplishments and impact of the project on the identified needs and problems of the community.
- Establish written service policies.
- Secure community participation in local project operation by establishing an Advisory Council or a similar organizational structure with a membership that includes people:
  - Knowledgeable of human and social needs of the community;
  - Competent in the field of community service and volunteerism.

- Capable of helping the sponsor meet its administrative and program responsibilities including fund-raising, publicity and programming for impact;
- With interest in and knowledge of the capability of older adults; and
- Of a diverse composition that reflects the demographics of the service area.

### **5) What are a sponsor's administrative responsibilities?**

A sponsor must:

- Assume full responsibility for securing maximum and continuing community financial and in-kind support to operate the project successfully.
- Provide levels of staffing and resources appropriate to accomplish the purposes of the project and to carry out its project management responsibilities.
- Employ a full-time project director to accomplish program objectives and to manage the functions and activities delegated to project staff for the Senior Corps program(s) within its control. A full-time project director shall not serve concurrently in another capacity, paid or unpaid, during established working hours. The project director may participate in activities to coordinate program resources with those of related local agencies, boards or organizations. A sponsor may negotiate the employment of a part-time project director with the Corporation when it can be demonstrated that such an arrangement will not adversely affect the size, scope, and quality of project operations.
- Consider all project staff as sponsor employees subject to its personnel policies and procedures.
- Compensate project staff at a level that is comparable with other similar staff positions in the sponsor organization and/or project service area.
- Establish risk management policies and procedures covering project and Senior Corps volunteer activities. This includes provision of appropriate insurance coverage for volunteers, vehicles, and other properties used in the project.
- Establish record keeping/reporting systems in compliance with Corporation requirements that ensure quality of program and fiscal operations, facilitate timely and accurate submission of required reports, and cooperate with Corporation evaluation and data collection efforts.
- Comply with and ensure that all volunteer stations comply with all applicable civil rights laws and regulations, including providing reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities.

The Corporation has prepared Operations Handbooks for each of the three programs, which serve as technical assistance resources for sponsors and their project directors in carrying out their projects. These handbooks are available to download at the following web site:

[http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online\\_pubs/index.php#senior](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/index.php#senior).

