



**Volunteer Impact, Retention and Expansion (VIRE) Grants
Notice of Funding Availability
June 19, 2009**

I. Funding Opportunity Description

HandsOn Network, the leading business unit of Points of Light Institute, is pleased to announce the availability of up to \$1,500,000.00 in grant funding to strengthen our nation's volunteer infrastructure. This funding will support eligible organizations' ability to directly engage volunteers and volunteer leaders in expanded volunteer opportunities in a specified geographic area as well as funding to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations to effectively recruit, coordinate, train and manage volunteers to meet their missions in three key National Issue Areas.

Funding under this opportunity will be made available to three distinct types of applying entities: individual volunteer connector organizations; statewide entities that serve a leadership role in convening these organizations and others (including but not limited to State Volunteer Center Associations and State Service Commissions); and collaborative, community based entities led by a volunteer connector organization.

National Issues and Community Relevance:

Funding under this opportunity is designed to put Americans on a pathway to sustained service that goes beyond a one time experience or series of several disconnected volunteer projects. This funding is intended to help launch, sustain and deepen civic participation of Americans and drive impact and change in resolving critical community issues and priorities that are affecting all Americans.

Specifically, funding will lead to successful volunteer engagement that will add capacity and value to community organizations whose missions, core programs and services address one or more of the National Issue Areas outlined in this NOFA.

A. National Issue Areas: Funding will support initiatives that directly engage volunteers and volunteer leaders or those that build the volunteer capacity of community organizations in one or more of three National Issue areas Areas:

1. **Education:** Supporting educational success for all young people, particularly disadvantaged youth
2. **Environment:** Promoting clean energy, energy efficiency, resource conservation, and improving local environmental quality
3. **Economy:** Reducing poverty and increasing economic opportunity

B. Focus Areas: Funding will support initiatives in one or more of three focus areas:

1. **Expansion:** Expanding the supply of new volunteers and increasing the number of meaningful volunteer opportunities available.
2. **Sustainability and Retention:** Sustaining the engagement of the new wave of volunteers responding to President Obama's call to serve and increasing the rates of retention for volunteers already engaged in community service.
3. **Leveraging the Skills, Knowledge, Education and Experience of Volunteers:** Creating new and powerful pathways to engage a diverse range of volunteers to apply their targeted skills, education, experiences and knowledge in new ways to address a specific issue in communities or to enhance the capacity of under-resourced nonprofit organizations so they can carry out their missions. Volunteer target groups of special interest include Americans over the age of 55, retired Americans, newly displaced or unemployed Americans, volunteers from the private sector and federal, state and local government workers

II. Funding Authority

Support for the activities described in this NOFA is made possible through funding to Points of Light Institute in a three-year Cooperative Agreement (No. 08ERSGA001) awarded by The Corporation for National and Community Service (The Corporation). This NOFA represents the final opportunity for grant funding through this Cooperative Agreement

III. Eligibility

This competition is open to nonprofit organizations, units of state, local or tribal governments, and Colleges and Universities. Eligible organizations will fall into at least one of the three eligible organization categories:

- **Volunteer Connector Organizations:** Volunteer Connector organizations are those that meet the **required** criteria described in Appendix A of this Notice of Funding Availability.
- **Statewide Entities:** A statewide entity includes organizations such as a State Associations of Volunteer Centers, a State Service Commissions, or any statewide entity with a central purpose of convening and building the capacity of volunteer connector organizations, or leveraging community volunteers through National Service Members.
- **Collaborative, Community Based Entities:** A collaborative, community based entity refers to a group of community partners, organized to leverage combined assets to achieve optimal impact in addressing community issues through the effective practices of volunteer engagement, mobilization and leadership. The lead applying entity of a collaborative, community based entity must be a volunteer connector organization that meets all required criteria described in Appendix A.

IV. Award Information:

- A. **Number of Awards and Award Amounts:** HandsOn Network will award up to \$1,500,000.00 to 20 – 30 volunteer connector organizations, collaborative, community based entities, or statewide entities. The total funds to be awarded are expected to be divided as follows:
- **Continuation Grants:** Approximately 25% of the total funds available will be awarded to multi-year grantees awarded funding in Round 1 of VIRE funding, pending successful performance on contracted grant activities.
 - **New Grants:** The remainder of funds available will be awarded to new grantees in grant awards ranging from \$10,000.00 to \$75,000.00. Specific categories of funding and funding level guidelines will be available in the VIRE Grant Application to be published by July 20, 2009 (see Section VIII of this NOFA)
- B. **Competitive Pools of Funding:** HandsOn Network will consider grant application submissions in three distinct competitive processes so like entities will be competing with like entities. The three organizational entity

competitive categories are: Individual volunteer connector organizations, statewide entities and collaborative, community based entities.

C. **Future Funding:** This is the final round of VIRE grant funding made available through the 2008-2011 Cooperative Agreement between Points of Light Institute and the Corporation.

D. **Funding Instrument:** Grant Agreement

E. **Selection Criteria:** HandsOn Network will select organizations for funding based upon scoring in the following key areas:

- a. Program Design (45%)
- b. Organizational Capacity (35%)
- c. Financial Management, Budget and Cost Effectiveness (20%)

Program Design (45%)

The program design tells the story of outcomes and impact the organization expects to achieve through a proposed set of funded programs, products, services and activities. Excellence in program design is achieved when the applicant clearly and cohesively presents a proposed set of targeted actions that support:

- Measurable goals, objectives and outcomes addressing one or more of the identified VIRE Grant National Issue Areas outlined in this NOFA. These outcomes will reflect a clear and compelling contribution that grantees will make directly in a geographic area, or those that will result from building volunteer capacity of local community organizations whose mission address one or more of the issue areas.
- Measurable goals and objectives and outcomes addressing one or more of the identified VIRE Grant Focus Areas outlined in this NOFA. These goals and objectives will reflect clear and compelling strategies that grantees will utilize to engage more volunteers in expanded service opportunities, to deepen engagement of volunteers ultimately resulting in retention of volunteers in service and reaching out to targeted volunteer groups to leverage their skills, knowledge, education and experience resulting in more meaningful service experiences that meet identified national and community needs.

Organizational Capacity (35%)

HandsOn Network will assess the degree to which applicants are prepared to deliver the proposed services based on their organizational capacity. Elements of sound organizational capacity include:

- Demonstrated and consistent partnership and collaboration with a diverse range of community partners, including other volunteer

connector organizations to build capacity, leverage resources and address specific National Issue areas outlined in this NOFA.

- Demonstrated capacity to mobilize volunteers and increase civic participation of a diverse set of volunteers and volunteer leaders to deliver measurable outcomes addressing one or more of the National Issue areas outlined in this NOFA.
- Demonstrated track record of significant achievements and measurable results in core program areas that have resulted in sustainable change in the Focus Area outlined in this NOFA and for which the applicant is applying for VIRE Funding.
- Proven experience in program design, development and implementation.
- Demonstration of adequate staffing, resources and associated infrastructure to assure transparency and accountability.
- Qualified and demonstrated leadership of key staff associated with proposed program delivery, operations management, and administration.
- Demonstrated ability and commitment to capturing relevant programmatic and performance data and records necessary to monitor grantee performance and measure overall program success towards meeting stated goals, objectives, outcomes and impact.

Financial Management, Budget and Cost Effectiveness (20%)

- **Financial Management:** HandsOn Network is interested in funding organizations with strong organizational capacity to properly manage and report on expenditures of grant funds. An organization will be expected to demonstrate a sound record of good financial and grants management experience. HandsOn Network will carefully assess the applicant's current financial management systems as well as federal grants management experience. HandsOn Network's due diligence review will require review of annual financial audit, management letter and OMB Circular A-133 audit and management letter, where applicable.
- **Budget and Cost Effectiveness** of the proposed program and activities based upon the following:
 - The budget is accurate and the each line item of the proposed budget aligns clearly with activities described in the program design narrative.

- The proposed cost of program activities is reasonable and cost efficient demonstrating a strong the return on investment.

IV. Eligible Legal Entities: Eligible organizations meet the legal eligibility requirements set forward in this Notice of Funding Availability. This includes nonprofit organizations, units of state, local and tribal governments, and colleges and universities.

V. Matching Requirement: All funded organizations must meet a cash or in-kind match of \$0.75 for every \$1.00 of grant funds awarded.

VI. Other: The following activities are prohibited with VIRE grant funding:

- Lobbying – Any organization described in Section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c) (4) that engages in lobbying is not eligible to apply.
- Fundraising – Grant funds may not be used for any activity that generates funding to the applicant organization including meeting the matching requirements of this grant.

VII. Reporting requirements:

Funded organizations must be able to demonstrate organizational ability to collect and manage programmatic data as well as outcomes, impact and performance in core funding areas. There will be a summary annual report required that includes detailed information on programmatic activities completed, information describing volunteers, partners and collaborators and their participation in programmatic activities, and the resulting outcomes and impact achieved through the funded program. Grantees are also required to complete quarterly programmatic reports describing accomplishments achieved during the quarter, which will be utilized by program officers to monitor grantee performance and develop training and technical assistance needed by individual grantees. Training and technical support will be provided to grantees to prepare them to successfully complete evaluation and reporting activities including access to instruments and forms developed by HandsOn Network for collecting and reporting information.

Successful applicants will be required to complete a monthly or quarterly financial report that will be the basis for reimbursement. The report will require grantees to report actual expenses for the federal share and the match as well as information on funded activities during the period. There will also be an annual financial report.

VIII. VIRE Grant Application and Review Timeline:

July 20, 2009: A complete Volunteer Impact, Retention and Expansion Grant Application, Notice of Intent to Apply Form and Accompanying Materials will be distributed to field and available at www.handsonnetwork.org

July 29, 2009: Interested applicants must submit a Notice of Intent to Apply to: viregrants@handsonnetwork.org

July 27th, August 4th and August 12th, 2009: Grant Application Technical Assistance Calls. Times and webinar information will be published in the VIRE Grant Application and posted on www.handsonnetwork.org

August 14, 2009: Completed VIRE Grant Applications due in electronic and hard copy to HandsOn Network. *NOTE: All incomplete applications will not be processed or reviewed by HandsOn Network. All applications not received by HandsOn Network in both electronic and hard copy formats by the due date will not be processed or reviewed by HandsOn Network.*

By October 16, 2009: Grant Awards announced

By mid-November, 2009: Required three-day Grant Management Training held for selected grantees.

For Additional Information:

Send questions with subject line 'VIRE Grant Information' to: viregrants@handsonnetwork.org



Hands On
NETWORK

**Volunteer Impact, Retention and Engagement Notice of Funding Availability
Appendix A
June 19, 2009**

An Operational Definition of “Volunteer Connector Organizations”

Background and Context Setting: Any organization applying for funding under the Volunteer Impact, Retention and Engagement (VIRE) Funding Opportunity (under the 2009 Cooperative Agreement between Points of Light Institute and the Corporation), will be required to meet core competency criteria as a ‘Volunteer Connector Organization’ or ‘Statewide Entity’ as outlined in this document. Any organization submitting a proposal as a ‘Collaborative, Community Based Entity’ must also meet criteria outlined for ‘Volunteer Connector Organization’

Determining Eligibility:

Volunteer Connector Organization is defined as one that meets all of the required core competency criteria listed below and any one of the preferred core competencies.

Statewide Entities must demonstrate how they effectively convene and support Volunteer Connector Organizations on an ongoing and program specific basis.

REQUIRED Core Competencies Criteria of a Volunteer Connector Organization:

- 1. Primary Mission** The organization’s primary mission is to activate, connect, mobilize and manage meaningful opportunities for volunteers to serve in their community.
- 2. Community Recognition:** The organization is widely recognized in its community as an expert and leader in civic engagement, volunteering and service.

3. **Partnership Development:** The organization's demonstrates knowledge of and commitment to convening community partners to build productive and citizen-led responses to meet pressing community needs.
4. **Engages Workplace Volunteers:** Organizations develop capacity and increase effectiveness of workplace volunteers and workplace volunteer leaders. Includes engaging skills based or pro-bono volunteers to serve as community volunteers, or leveraging their unique contributions through volunteer service opportunities or on a nonprofit advisory or governing board of directors.
5. **Leadership Development:** The organization actively develops leaders to serve in their community as volunteers and volunteer leaders. To meet this requirement, organizations must address each of the following:
 - a. **Developing Volunteer Leaders:** Developing leadership skills of volunteers leading other volunteers in service through formal leadership development training and/or hands on experiences.
 - b. **Provides Capacity Building Services to Professional Volunteer Resource Managers/Administrators:** Developing leadership capabilities of professional nonprofit staff that have primary responsibility for recruitment, engagement, organization, and direct oversight of volunteers.
 - c. **Directly Develops and Implements Volunteer Opportunities:** Organizations develop, organize and manage volunteer opportunities for individuals and/or teams of volunteers..
 - d. **Demonstrated Capacity for Activating New Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders:** Organization creates and implements strategies for recruiting individuals to participate in service opportunities developed with and for community based nonprofit partners.
 - e. **Volunteer Serving on Nonprofit Boards:** Organizations develop capacity and increase effectiveness of community volunteers and volunteer leaders serve on nonprofit advisory or governing boards of directors.

PREFERRED Core Competencies Criteria of a Volunteer Connector Organization:

- 1. The organization directly applies its expertise and knowledge of volunteering, service and leadership** to broaden volunteers' scope of influence as agents of change in their communities by raising awareness of social issues, and equipping volunteers with knowledge and skills necessary to serve as agents of change.
- 2. The organization activates, mobilizes, and equips volunteers to serve** through a diverse network of community partnerships and through multiple pathways of engagement. The organization has an electronic database to capture volunteer placement and track success of each placement.

Note: A fully operating electronic database to catalogue all volunteers engaged by the Volunteer Connector Organization and the referral/placement opportunity they were connected with is considered essential and will influence selection. If the organization doesn't have capacity to track the outcome of each referral, they may be asked to provide a statement outlining their plan to meet this requirement for the program activities proposed.

- 3. National Service Members:** The organization hosts or partners with another organization to maximize service and volunteering through partnership of community volunteers and National Service members.

Core Competencies Criteria for Statewide or Regional Entities:

Entities must demonstrate how they support and convene Volunteer Connector Organizations on a regular basis (to be defined in grant application) for knowledge sharing, and to create impact across a region or state.