



Grant to Provide Volunteer Taxpayer Assistance Services

Prior Year Questions

All questions and answers in this document are related to the FY16 grant and prior. Please check the current year Request for Proposals for up-to-date information regarding the Grant to Provide Volunteer Taxpayer Assistance Services.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY22-23) Grant Questions

Questions from the FY22-23 Grant Reminders Webinar on July 20, 2022:

Can we spend grant funds in September 2022?

No. Any expenses during this time are not allowed for grant reimbursement. FY22 ends August 31, 2022, and FY23 begins on October 1, 2022.

Does mileage documentation need to provide starting and ending odometer readings? Or is the number of miles driven for that date sufficient?

Starting and ending odometer readings are preferred, but we will accept total miles driven.

If the authorized representative leaves an organization, who should sign the progress and final reports?

The interim authorized representative can sign the reports. Any time this position changes, you must send this updated information to the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

If we need to adjust our goals for FY23, should we explain that in the proposed budget narrative?

Yes. If there were any changes from your application last summer, put those in your proposed budget narrative.

Are there any opportunities to increase or decrease budget amounts?

We awarded all FY22-23 grant funds. If you are certain your organization does not need all the money awarded for FY23, let us know as soon as possible and we can award those funds out to another organization who can use the funds.

When will the FY24-25 grant process begin?

The grant RFP application period will open July 1, 2023, for FY24-25.

Will the next grant cycle be another two-year cycle?

Yes. We will administer this grant in two-year cycles going forward.



Questions from the Grant Webinar on Oct 19, 2021:

Do the guidelines for advertising approval include flyers for volunteer recruitment?

Yes. If you requested grant funds for advertisements, a copy of the advertisement must be approved by the department before printing or sharing digitally or electronically. This includes flyers, postcards, radio or TV ads, etc. for volunteer recruitment or promoting your free tax preparation sites. Advertising must be approved each grant period.

Do we have to have spent 50% of our grant award in order to submit a reimbursement request at the same time the progress report is due?

No. This is not a requirement. You may submit reimbursement requests when the progress report is due (mid-February), when the final report is due (early May), and before August 31.

You may request reimbursement for up to half of your grant award when the progress report is due and the second half when the final report is due. You may request any remaining grant amounts through August 31.

However, your organization should generally make requests shortly after you spent the funds and as soon as your organization's tax sites close.

If five of our tax sites are funded, do we need to have five people attend both the required MN tax and MN property tax sessions? Or if we have two tax site coordinators is it okay if just the two coordinators attend?

One representative from your organization must attend a required Minnesota income tax training webinar and a required Minnesota Property Tax training webinar. Your organization must have one representative attend for each free tax preparation site you receive grant funding for. The representative for each site should either provide training to your volunteers or be available at that site for technical guidance during the filing season.

When are reimbursement requests due?

You may submit reimbursement requests when the progress report is due (February), when the final report is due (May), and before August 31.

However, your organization should generally make requests shortly after you spent the funds and as soon as your organization's tax sites close.

How much can I request at a time?

You may request reimbursement for up to half of your grant award when the progress report is due and the second half when the final report is due. You may request any remaining grant amounts through August 31.



What time are reports due on the due date?

By Midnight. You can always submit progress and final reports before their due dates if you feel like you can adequately report on the questions in the reports. You do not need to wait till the final day.

For the upcoming trainings, if the program manager who oversees all the sites and provides training attends, does that meet the requirement? Or must each site coordinator attend to meet the requirement?

One representative from your organization must attend a required Minnesota income tax training webinar and a required Minnesota Property Tax training webinar. Your organization must have one representative attend for each free tax preparation site you receive grant funding for. The representative for each site should either provide training to your volunteers or be available at that site for technical guidance during the filing season.

How many grant requests were submitted?

38 organizations applied and received funding for FY 2022-23.

If we received a grant award that was less than our request, what are the requirements for sending in an updated budget?

Updated budgets can be sent via email to: volunteer.grant.mndor@state.mn.us

What is the effect, if any, if we obtain funding from other sources to make up the short fall?

Obtaining funding from other sources is encouraged.

Questions from the Grant Webinar on June 24, 2021:

Why is the Minnesota Department of Revenue moving to a 2-year grant cycle?

We continuously review our grant administration process to ensure a fair and efficient process for grantees and our staff. Two-year grant cycles allow grantees to spend less time on the request for proposal process and more time to identify their needs and expand their services. The change also allows us to focus more on promoting the grant to new organizations.

When will grant funds be awarded?

We will award first-year and second-year grant funds by October 1, 2021.

When can I spend grant funds?

You can spend first-year grant funds October 1, 2021 (or when the grant contract is fully executed, whichever is later) through August 31, 2022.

You can spend second-year grant funds October 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023.



Will there be an adjustment or increase in grant awards for the second year of the grant cycle (for instance, a 10% increase in the second-year award)? How will you award grant funds?

No. We will award grant funding for the first and second year by October 1, 2021.

Awards are based on factors such as:

- Available funds
- Requested amounts
- The number of organizations eligible for funding
- Previous grant performance
- Grant evaluation score

What are the reporting requirements?

Reporting requirements remain the same. For both the first and second year, grantees must complete a progress report in February and a final report in May.

Will organizations have an opportunity to apply in the second year?

No. Our application period opens every other year.

Can organizations readjust their budget for the second year?

Yes. In August 2022, organizations must submit a revised budget to match their funds awarded.

What if the state government shuts down on July 1, 2021? How would that affect the FY22-23 Request for Proposals (RFP) application process?

We will post the RFP to the Grant webpage by June 30. The application deadline would still be July 30, 2021. Review the RFP for a list of important dates and deadlines.

If you have questions about the RFP between July 1 and July 19, email them to us at Volunteer.Grant.MDOR@state.mn.us. We will monitor this inbox and reply to emails as quickly as possible.

How much funding is available for the FY22-23 grant period?

We continue to monitor the State Legislative session for the amount of available grant funding. We will communicate this amount when it is determined. We will also notify selected grant recipients by October 1, 2021.

Do we know what our scoring was the prior year and how it compares to your minimum threshold this year?

I would reach out individually to us to the grant email. We can share with you individually about prior year scores and what the threshold is for the FY22-23 grant cycle.



If we spend more than half of the funds for the first year, can we use some of the second-year funds to cover it?

No. Your organization will have one amount awarded for Fiscal Year 2022 and one amount awarded for Fiscal Year 2023. You must spend these funds separately between the two fiscal years.

Is the fund reimbursement deadline still a bit later than the final report?

Yes. The reimbursement deadline is August 31 for each fiscal year.

Can you submit a budget with different amounts in the two years? For example, if we expect to grow, can we request more money for the second year than the first?

Yes. When you submit your proposed budgets for the two fiscal years, consider your needs for both years and detail your requests accordingly.

Where can I find the scoring guidelines?

The scoring guidelines are listed in the RFP.

Is there any risk of not getting reimbursed for the current Fiscal Year, since we have not submitted our final reimbursement request yet due to the potential shutdown?

If possible, try to request final reimbursement before June 30, 2021, due to the potential shutdown. If there is a shutdown, we do not expect it to last more than a few weeks. You should still have time to request reimbursement and have it processed before August 31, 2021.

Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Grant Questions

FY21 Grant Questions received from the October 15 Required Grant Webinar

Is the \$10 per person limit for volunteer recognition items included in the \$500 limit for food and beverages?

No. The \$10 per person for volunteer recognition items and \$500 for food and beverages are separate allowable expenses.

If we pay a portion of the utilities for a month, can we provide details for one month and then apply that for the three months we are open?

Yes, if you pay the same amount each month. If your monthly utility costs vary, see Part 10 – Grant Payments in the RFP for more information.



What are the requirements for attending the tax trainings in December/January?

Your organization must have one representative attend the required tax training webinar for each site you receive grant funding for.

The trainings are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, December 16, 2020 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 22, 2020 – 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, January 14, 2020 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Have the FY21 grant awards amounts been confirmed?

Yes. Grant awards are final for FY21, and grant contracts were issued on October 1.

How do I request advance grant funds instead of reimbursed grant funds?

We will not consider advance grant funds if your proposal did not request them.

Is the AARP Tax-Aide Program eligible for this grant?

AARP sites can qualify for the grant if they partner with a qualifying non-profit organization applying for the grant.

The grant is available to organizations if both of these apply:

- They are a non-profit organization qualifying under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code
- They are registered with the IRS as part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs

If a partner who supports the program (but is not the grant holder) creates advertisements and are not applying for this grant, do they have to follow the same guidelines?

Yes. If you are using Minnesota Department of Revenue grant funds for advertising, the partner's advertisements must follow the grant program's guidelines.

Can my organization use grant funds to train volunteers on current federal and Minnesota tax rules?

Yes.

Does an organization have to be part of the VITA or TCE program to receive grant funds?



Yes. The grant is only available to non-profit organizations that qualify under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are registered with the IRS as part of the VITA or TCE programs.

Can grantees reimburse non-VITA or non-TCE organizations for support services, such as scheduling?

Yes.

Is the reimbursement process the same as in prior years?

No. See the Request for Proposals (RFP) for specific information based on how much your organization is awarded.

Fiscal Year 2021 Grant Questions Received Between July 31 - August 14, 2020

Are images of tax information, Social Security cards or ITINs, and state-issued photo IDs sufficient to verify ID when video conferencing is not easily available?

Yes, this was sufficient for the 2020 filing season. Our Virtual VITA procedures that allow these images for taxpayer identification are based on the temporary IRS SPEC guidelines for the 2020 filing season. The IRS may change their guidance for the 2021 filing season.

All my volunteers will work remotely next season. Can we use grant funds to cover volunteers' technology costs, including computers, headsets, and phones?

Yes. These are qualified expenses for the grant program if you use them solely for volunteer taxpayer assistance services.

Does the Minnesota Department of Revenue require equipment to be locked up when not in use and returned by a certain date?

Yes. You must follow all requirements for the VITA and TCE programs. Review the IRS's security guidelines in [IRS Publication 4299](#).

Our tax site partners cannot confirm a space to safely provide services before the grant application deadline. Should we include data for all potential sites in our application, even if they end up not hosting our services?

Yes. When you know what sites will not be operating in 2021, you must notify the department. Email us at volunteer.grant.mdor@state.mn.us.



Do virtual and mail tax preparation opportunities offered to customers in Greater Minnesota, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, North Minneapolis, or Northeast Minneapolis meet the geographic criteria for additional points?

No. We will award additional points to organizations opening a new in-person site in Greater Minnesota, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, North Minneapolis, or Northeast Minneapolis. We will also award additional points to organizations offering virtual assistance.

We are exploring different service methods and options to provide resources and information to tax filers, but not all of these will be specific to tax preparation and filing. How will the department evaluate expansion of services within this context?

We will evaluate your organization based on the criteria listed in Part 6 – Selection Criteria and Weight of the RFP. This includes expanding volunteer taxpayer assistance service hours and weeks, opening new sites, and providing virtual assistance options.

We expect to revise our 2021 budget over the next few months as we follow up-to-date health guidelines. How should we account for ongoing changes in a budget proposal we submit by the end of August?

Complete your grant application with the information you have today. If your plans change how you will spend the grant money compared to your proposed budget, request a budget change approval from us before incurring those expenses. Email requests to volunteer.grant.mdor@state.mn.us.

My organization plans to maintain remote services for our immediate population and some remote services for clients in Greater Minnesota regardless of when the COVID-19 pandemic ends. Should we list "Greater Minnesota" as one of our site locations?

Yes.

Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Grant Questions

How is the May 1 deadline different from the August 31 deadline?

May 1 is when final reports are due.

August 31 is when final reimbursement requests are due.

Can my organization request advance grant funds instead of reimbursed grant funds?



If your organization has reason to request advance grant funds, your proposal must include a written explanation specifying the need for advance grant funds. You must explain why reimbursed grant funds would cause extraordinary cost to your organization. We will review requests for advance grant funds and may authorize them on a case-by-case basis. We will not consider advance grant funds if your proposal does not include a request.

Does my organization have to use grant funds for new sites? Can we use them to expand services to an existing site or create more locations beneath an existing site's efforts?

Your organization can use grant funds to operate new or existing volunteer tax preparation assistance sites in Minnesota. You can use grant funds to expand these services or add locations.

How many organizations were awarded grant funds in FY19? Were all the grant funds used?

For FY19, 32 non-profit organizations received grant funds. Those grantees can expend their grant award through August 30, 2019. All grant funds will be used and will not rollover into the FY20 grant cycle.

How much in funding is available for FY20?

The Commissioner of Revenue has authority to issue grants totaling \$1,200,000 for the 2020-2021 biennium. The FY20 Request for Proposals (RFP) is for \$600,000 in grant funds available in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

My organization has several sites in areas where you want to expand free tax preparation sites (North Minneapolis, North East Minneapolis, etc.). Will we only be eligible for more grant funding if we open additional sites? Or can we get more funding for continuing with our established sites in these areas?

The grant review team will give additional consideration to organizations opening new free tax preparation sites in areas with underserved populations lacking access to free tax preparation services. These areas include:

- Portions of Greater Minnesota with low density of existing services
- Brooklyn Park
- Brooklyn Center
- North Minneapolis
- North East Minneapolis

Who can receive grant funding for salaries?

Your organization can pay salaries to individuals specifically for services performed for the volunteer taxpayer assistance program. This includes salaries (including fringe benefits) and stipends for:

- Tax site coordinators
- Electronic filing coordinators
- Volunteer coordinators



- Directors
- Receptionists
- Office assistants
- Outside trainers

You may not use grant funds to pay volunteers. Volunteer activities include, but are not limited to, conducting intake, preparing tax returns, doing quality review, and interpreting.

You **may not** request grant funds for salaries if your organization is exempt from registering with the Minnesota Attorney General because you do not pay persons to perform functions or activities. This rule does not apply to organizations exempt from registering with the Minnesota Attorney General for other reasons.

Is there a limit on how much organizations can request? Should organizations use discretion based on their needs in determining the amount of grant funds to apply for?

There is no limit to how much grant funds an organization can request. Grant requests typically exceed available grant funds. Many deserving organizations may not be awarded the full amount of grant funds they request.

What about expenses incurred between August 31, 2019, and October 1, 2019? Can you reimburse those expenses?

No. The FY19 grant period is October 1, 2018 through August 30, 2019. The FY20 grant period is October 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020. You cannot be reimbursed for expenses incurred during the month of September each fiscal year, as this is outside any grant period.

If interpreters come from a third party and not a volunteer, is that allowed for reimbursement?

Yes.

What if a volunteer is both a quality reviewer AND a site coordinator? Can they be paid salaries?

You may not use grant funds to pay volunteers. Volunteer activities include, but are not limited to, conducting intake, preparing tax returns, doing quality review, and interpreting.

Are there major changes in the RFP from last year to this year?

Yes. Some of the changes include:



- New FY20 grant program goals
- New questions related to diversity and inclusion
- Progress reports are now required for all organizations receiving grant funds
- New due date for the FY20 final report (May 1, 2020)
- New schedule for reimbursement requests of grant funds

We encourage you to review the FY20 RFP closely for all changes when we post it on our website July 10.

Are budget modifications allowed? For example, if advertising is underspent, can our organization spend grant funds in another category?

Yes. Budget changes are allowed as long as your organization spends grant funds in one of the four approved expense categories:

- Equipment and Accessories
- Advertising
- Salaries
- Other Expenses

Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Questions Received Between July 10 - August 2, 2019

What is the average grant size, either awarded previously or anticipated this year?

For Fiscal Year 2019, the average grant award was \$12,460. Grants are awarded based on need, impact, and performance. Grant requests typically exceed available grant funds, therefore many organizations may not be awarded the full amount of grant funds they request.

My organization provides subsidies to some of our partner sites to cover the costs of us using their spaces. Can we include these subsidies in our budget?

Yes. Your organization may use grant funds to rent space for training volunteers, preparing taxes, or any activity directly related to providing volunteer taxpayer assistance services.

My organization supports a nonresident alien tax site for international students and scholars. We file federal and Minnesota returns on paper. Since we do not file electronic returns, we do not have an Electronic Filing Identification Number (EFIN). Do we need to apply for an EFIN number to enter on our grant application?

If your organization is not required to have an EFIN because of an exception by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you do not need to provide this number on your grant application.



The FY20 RFP states that grant funds are available when the grant contract has been fully executed through August 31, 2020. My organization participates in events where we recruit volunteers in September. Can we be reimbursed for these expenses?

No. We cannot reimburse expenses incurred in September because we cannot reimburse for expenses incurred prior to all parties signing the grant contract. We intend to award grants and have contracts fully executed on or about October 1.

Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Questions Received October 16, 2019

Can you look into changing the \$500 limit per organization for food and beverages? The limit is difficult for organizations with multiple locations.

Thank you for the feedback. We will consider this for the Fiscal Year 2021 grant.

For the required Minnesota tax training, if we have one volunteer who works at two grant sites, can that volunteer attend the training on behalf of both grant sites?

Yes.

When will we be notified of our grant award?

Grant contracts were issued prior to October 1. If you have not heard about your grant award, contact your authorized representative listed on your grant application.

Can we show an invoice as proof of payment, or do we need a cancelled check?

You must submit the invoice and proof of payment (cancelled check, credit card or bank statement, etc.).

Can you send an email with the required Minnesota tax training webinar dates and times?

Yes. We will send an email message in early November with the dates and links for registration.

FY19 Questions Received

Regarding the new guidelines of \$500 max for food and beverages – is this \$500 limit per grant or per free tax preparation site in my district?

Grant funds used to purchase food and beverages for volunteers may not exceed \$500 per grant recipient.

Is the \$500 limit for food and beverages in addition to the volunteer appreciation event, or would food for the event come out of the \$500 food budget?



The \$500 limit for food and beverages includes all purchases of food and beverages made throughout the grant period whether for training days, tax site snacks or lunches, volunteer recognition events, etc.

We have been using grant funds for computer lab rental for our training. However, we would also like to have grant funding cover rental of the tax preparation room during the tax season. Does rental space include space for tax preparation and space for training activities?

Yes. Your organization may use grant funds to rent space for training volunteers, preparing taxes, or any activity directly related to providing volunteer taxpayer assistance services.

I have a question about the representative who must attend the new required Minnesota tax training. Can this representative be a volunteer with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs rather than a volunteer or employee of the sponsoring organization?

Yes. This representative should be someone who is knowledgeable about Minnesota taxes and trains volunteers or is available at your organization's site for technical guidance during the filing season. Examples of someone you may want to have attend the training could be the Site Coordinator or the Training Coordinator for VITA/TCE Program.

We have a main tax site, but we also visit several senior housing units. We identify these as "sites," but they are really "ad hoc sites" that are part of our main tax site. Does the person attending your required Minnesota tax training for our main tax site satisfy the training requirement for these "ad hoc sites" as well?

Yes. If your organization travels to senior housing units to prepare taxes for clients, these "ad hoc sites" are not considered separate tax sites.

Please clarify this question in the grant workbook: "Describe the diversity and inclusiveness of your organization's taxpayer assistance service volunteers. Include the languages spoken."

This question is asking you to describe whether your organization's volunteers are from diverse backgrounds or communities, including the languages they speak. You may consider the following questions when writing your response:

- How do your volunteers value the perspectives and contributions of all people?
- How do your volunteers incorporate the needs and perspectives of the diverse communities they serve?
- How does your organization train staff and volunteers to promote a sense of belonging and respect for all people?

For populations served, there is a new population listed for "Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex (LGBTQQI)." We have no idea how to answer this question because we do not ask clients for this information.



It is okay if you do not ask your clients this information. The key information we want to learn about is how your free tax preparation sites are welcoming and inclusive of all people who visit (i.e., open to all regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, or disability). It is important that your organization provides taxpayer assistance for all people in the community, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people. For organizations who focus on serving this population, please provide detail.

Can my organization use grant funds to pay a Certified Acceptance Agent's salary?

Yes.

I had a question on the Site Data tab in the Grant Workbook. When you ask for numbers for Tax Year 2017 and the previous year, does that include the returns filed year to date or those filed within the tax season? What are the exact dates that time period encompasses?

You should include all returns filed year to date.

I had a question on the Site Data tab in the Grant Workbook. Should staff be captured under the number of volunteers since staff are required to be certified under the standards of conduct?

For your organization's number of volunteers, include anyone who conducted intake, prepared tax returns, did quality review, and interpreting.

The budget section of the workbook has prescribed position titles. Not all of these titles match the roles within our organization, and we have additional positions working on tax preparation. Would you like us to adapt our titles and positions to best fit the workbook, or do you have other suggestions?

You may write in additional positions or attach a separate document listing out the specific positions and their roles.

October 23, 2018 Webinar Questions Received

Our grant contract says we should submit the final report no later than August 30 or 45 days after services end. Since we provide services through October, should we adhere to the June 1 report date or the August 30 date?

Final reports for Fiscal Year 2019 are due June 1, 2019, regardless of when your volunteer taxpayer assistance services end. You can still submit reimbursement requests until August 30, 2019 but final reports are due June 1, 2019.

I understand that if we purchase computers with grant funds, we cannot use them for anything other than tax preparation (even during the off-season). However, if we used funds



to replace old computers, can we then use the old computers that we no longer use for tax preparation?

You must use all items purchased with grant funds solely for the volunteer taxpayer assistance services. When computers are no longer able to be used in the volunteer tax assistance program they can be used for other purposes.

Do we need someone to attend the training session even if we received the grant in past years?

Yes. The Minnesota tax training in December is required for all Fiscal Year 2019 grantees.

Is it okay if one category of expenses exceeds our requested amount while another category has less than requested?

We award grant funds as one lump sum to your organization. Once we execute the contract, you may spend the total amount awarded in any of the four categories.

May we attend the required training via webinar?

Yes. We will have webinars for the required training, but only on the following dates:

- December 12 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. CST
- December 18 from 12 to 3 p.m. CST

Can we use grant funds to pay salaries for office staff who help with the VITA program?

You may pay office staff specifically for services performed for the volunteer taxpayer assistance program. These positions may include a tax site coordinator, electronic filing coordinator, volunteer coordinator, director, receptionist, office assistant, etc. Also included are contracted payments for services such as translators, interpreters, outside trainers, etc.

You may not use salary funding to pay volunteers who are conducting intake, preparing tax returns, doing quality review, interpreting, etc.

If we have 12 sites, do we need 12 people to attend the required training?

Each organization must have one person for each site attend the training. If you have someone who volunteers at more than one of your sites, they may attend the training for those sites.

Will there be educational resources available for us to review before that training in December?

Yes. We have a [Tax Law Changes webpage](#) where you can find [a list of Frequently Asked Questions](#) and other resources. You can also check out the [draft forms for tax year 2018 on our website](#).

Will the webinar replace the in-person training we completed last year?



The webinar training in December is specifically for Fiscal Year 2019 grant organizations, and it has similar content as our in-person January training. We will still conduct in-person training in January for those who are interested.

Will the webinar in December be available as a recorded training? I may want my volunteers to watch part or all of it.

Thank you for the suggestion. We will look into this possibility and will communicate if this is an option closer to the date of the webinar. Your volunteers are welcome to listen in to the December training webinars.

If we receive \$3,000 in grant funds but pay \$10,000 in salaries for the free tax preparation program, do we submit payroll records and receipts for \$3,000 or \$10,000?

Submit your reimbursement request and payroll records for the \$3,000 in grant funds you used to pay salaries. We do not need to see records for the additional \$7,000.

FY18 Questions Received

Are larger grant requests considered with different criteria than smaller requests?

No, all grant requests are considered using the same evaluation criteria. See Part Six. Evaluations of Proposals in the “FY18 Request for Proposals” for details.

For progress reports, how much does the grant have to be?

If you receive a grant of \$5,000 or more, a progress report is required. Progress reports are due February 15, 2018.

When will we be notified if we are approved for grant funds?

Before October 1, 2017.

If and when you run out of grant money do you give more organizations partial amounts that they requested or do you fully fund fewer organizations?

The grant is for \$400,000 for fiscal year 2018. The grant evaluation team evaluates and scores each application. Depending on the number of qualifying organizations that submit complete applications to be considered for grant funds, the grant funds are distributed based on the grant evaluation team score. Typically, we have requests over \$400,000 each fiscal year. See Part Six. Evaluations of Proposals in the “FY18 Request for Proposals” for details on the grant evaluation criteria.

Are grant funds renewed each year?

No. Your organization must apply for the grant funds each fiscal year.



How much was awarded in FY17?

Grant contracts totaling \$400,000 were executed in fiscal year 2017.

Are there examples of successful grants that we can review?

If you know of another organization that has been awarded grant funds in the past and you're familiar with them and could reach out to see if they'd be willing to share that information with you.

All data submitted in a grant application becomes public once the evaluation process is completed. Contact the grant coordinator at Volunteer.Grant.MDOR@state.mn.us or 651-556-3052 if you are interested in this information.

Is there a way to view a sample previous RFP?

Yes. The Fiscal Year 2017 Request for Proposals is currently on the website. The Fiscal Year 2018 Request for Proposals will be on the website beginning June 30, 2017.

Do we need to include copies of our print advertising with the proposal submission or only if our organization is awarded funding, and then prior to printing?

Copies of advertisements are not required to be sent in with the proposal. If they are ready to be reviewed, they can be submitted.

If your organization requests grant funds for print advertisements, a copy of the advertisement must be sent to the department to review prior to being printed. Advertisements must be reviewed and approved each grant period. If advertisements are not approved by the department prior to being printed, grant funds for print advertisements will not be reimbursed.

FY18 Grant workbook, page 1, the information is asking for Federal Tax ID and State Tax ID numbers. Which entity are they referring to AARP Tax-Aide or my 501(c)(3) sponsor?

Include the Federal Tax ID, State ID, Name, Address, etc. for the qualifying 501 (c)(3) that your AARP Tax-Aide site is being sponsored by.

Our host non-profit is asking for 10% of our grant award amount to defray administrative costs for managing the grant. Is this an acceptable expense and which category would it be added under?

Grant funds cannot be used for administrative costs for managing the grant. See Part Two. Description of Project in the Fiscal Year 2017 RFP where it lists:

What activities are allowed for grant funds?

- Recruiting volunteers to provide volunteer taxpayer assistance services
- Creating training materials for volunteers to provide volunteer taxpayer assistance services
- Training volunteers to prepare accurate income tax and property tax refund returns



- Creating advertising materials to promote volunteer taxpayer assistance services or recruit volunteers, including translating materials in languages other than English
- Materials and equipment that directly aid in providing volunteer taxpayer assistance services
- Salaries paid to employees in positions necessary to provide volunteer taxpayer assistance services (excluding volunteers conducting intake, preparing tax returns, quality review, etc.)

FY17 Questions Received

Are per diems allowed to reimburse reviewers to come to the site location and attend training, take tests, and go over administrative processes? If so, what would be reasonable?

For volunteers, mileage reimbursement is allowable if they are attending a training, volunteering at a site, etc. that requires some travel. Mileage reimbursement to volunteers is limited to the [current business standard mileage rate](#) from the IRS. Expenses must be reasonable and necessary for your organization to provide volunteer taxpayer assistance services to low-income and disadvantaged Minnesota residents.

Will current grantees be able to apply for additional funds for FY17? Our costs already exceed the amount of the grant. With the new requirements to submit supporting documentation for reimbursement, the cost to administer this grant will be even greater.

Yes. Current grantees for the FY16 grant can apply for the FY17 grant.

What determines how much an organization applies for? What is the minimum and maximum an organization can request?

Proposals are scored on the basis of need, impact, and performance. Up to 140 points will be awarded based on evaluation of the proposal work plan to assist low-income and disadvantaged Minnesota residents in preparing and filing individual income tax and property tax refund returns. There are nine factors that will be evaluated and scored by our grant review team. The Request for Proposals (RFP) outlines these nine factors.

How are funds allocated? Is it based on the number of people served or based on the expenses of the organization?

Proposals are scored on the basis of need, impact, and performance. Up to 140 points will be awarded based on evaluation of the proposal work plan to assist low-income and disadvantaged Minnesota residents in preparing and filing individual income tax and property tax refund returns. There are nine factors that will be evaluated and scored by our grant review team. The Request for Proposals (RFP) outlines these nine factors.

Are funds for the VITA grant able to pay stipends for interns?



Yes, grant funds can be paid to individuals specifically for services performed for the volunteer taxpayer assistance program. This includes salaries for volunteer coordinators, electronic filing coordinators, tax site coordinators, directors, receptionists, office assistants, as well as contracted payments for services such as translators, outside trainers, etc. Salary funding cannot be used to pay volunteers for conducting intake, preparing tax returns, doing quality review, etc.

Could the narrative be included as an attachment/ printed copy for the State of Minnesota Revenue? It is included in the grant workbook sheet.

Yes, the narrative can be included as an attachment.

Can grant funds be used to pay for a facility to train volunteers in? How about a wheeled cart for moving and storing computers, etc.? And a secure locking cabinet on wheels for storage on site?

Grant funds can be used for training facility expenses, a wheeled cart, and a secure locking cabinet on wheels. These would all qualify under the "Other Expenses" category.

We need to submit the grant workbook and attachments via email. Do you have specific instructions for signature as you do for mailed applications?

No, there are no specific instructions listed in the RFP for emailed applications.

On the data table, we have greeter volunteers as well as preparers. It looks as if we just add them together. Is there some place you want us to break it down?

No, include one number for all volunteers. You do not need to break it down.

On the "Expand Services" question: We hope to have more preparers to serve more taxpayers, but I don't see the grant as directly impacting that. It helps us greatly in other areas, but it seems to me, at this point our services are about as much as we can do, without more preparers.

Answer the question as you see fit.

On the goals and mission statement: Do we include just our goals and mission, since we are the ones who actually provide the service? Or should we include the 501(c)(3)'s as well? They don't do anything on taxes except through us, and their mission is primarily to assist older adults in various ways.

You only need to include your goals and missions.

I don't know how to even interpret the "collaboration" question. We work with another organization, of course. Is this basically what you want? We will also be trying through local churches to get more preparers, and I give a talk to the Habitat for Humanities people about our services.

Yes, however you work with other organizations to provide taxpayer assistance.



On the budget page, do we put in our computer lab rental (for training) under “Volunteer Training”, as we have before? There is a new category of space, and I’m not sure what that would be for. Do the MN grants now fund tax-preparation space?

Rent costs associated with providing volunteer taxpayer assistance services can be included under Other Expenses.

Is there actually going to be separate Tax Time Savings funding available to cover the cost of providing financial services and promoting savings at tax sites? How and/or when do VITA programs apply for this extra funding, if any?

The tax bill, as passed by the legislature, was not enacted. This bill included the Tax Time Savings grant. We are monitoring the discussion around a possible special session and will continue to analyze the impact for the department and our customers.

If there will be no Tax Time Savings request for proposals, can we apply for funding to cover financial services as part of the VITA grant?

No, the VITA grant is available to coordinate, facilitate, encourage, and provide volunteer taxpayer assistance services. Financial services is not included under the VITA grant.

How do we include attachments and an MS Word document holding additional narrative pages to an emailed application? Should all attachments be combined into one single PDF file?

There is no specific way it needs to be attached. Use your discretion.

Can I email the narrative as a PDF file rather than an MS Word document?

There is no specific way it needs to be submitted. Use your discretion.

If sending an application by mail, should we print out all tabs of the grant workbook?

Yes, you will need to include all tabs of the workbook when you submit it.

Should all grant workbook tabs be printed out in color to maintain its styling?

You can print it in black and white or color.

Because there is a cost associated with receiving a hard copy of the Attorney General’s Registration Certification, our agency did not request it. Is there any other verification we can submit with the grant in lieu of this letter?

You can print from online here: <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Charity/CharitySearch.asp>

Once your application is received, Revenue will verify with the AG’s Office to make sure your organization is Active.



Can grant funds be used to pay for training space? Also, at the tax site there is the need for wheeled cart for moving and storing computers, printers, scanners, etc. in a locked space in the library. Another tax site has a similar need, except in this case it would be for a secure locking cabinet on wheels.

Grant funds can be used for training facility expenses, a wheeled cart, and secure locking cabinet on wheels. These would all qualify under the “Other Expenses” category.

FY16 and Prior Questions Received

When are grant payments mailed out?

Checks are mailed out or sent via electronic funds transfer in the week after the grant contract is fully executed i.e. signed by the Grantee (Authorized Representative) and the Department of Revenue, and received by the Contracts Unit at the Department of Revenue.

In the grant contract I requested \$1,200 for advertising. I only spent \$1,000 of this. Can I purchase some flash drives with the leftover money?

No. Since advertising is in the “Advertising” category and flash drives are in the “Equipment and Accessories” category the grant funds cannot be transferred. The Grant Evaluation Team has approved the total amount for each category so changes within category types are allowed, but not transfers from one category to another.

Failure to spend within the categories specified by the grant contract may result in your organization returning grant funds that were used improperly.

There are times when clients walk in for tax help and only a staff member is available to assist. Is the specific equipment only to be used by volunteers?

Staff may also use the equipment to provide taxpayer assistance.

Is the following a conflict of interest, as I would be writing checks to myself for reimbursement? The sponsoring organization I am considering meets all requirements, however, I am the volunteer treasurer and sit on the Board of Directors. I, along with the President of the Board, have signature authority individually and do not require dual signatures.

This would be a question for the sponsoring organization as it is not related to the grant itself.



Does the following type of request meet the requirements of the grant program? I am a qualified AARP tax preparer, as well as local coordinator and Instructor. I am qualified to prepare military returns. I have been asked in the past to prepare returns for military personnel, primarily National Guard families. Last year, at the request of the National Guard, I prepared returns on Saturday/Sunday at Marshall on Saturday, and Montevideo on Sunday. The distance, one way, is about 100 miles to Marshall, and 130 miles to Montevideo. I normally set up about 7:30 a.m. to start counseling at 8:00. The last taxpayer is scheduled at 5 p.m., but I often close up shop about 7 to 9 p.m. and then drive home. This I did on two different weekends last year, with 15 taxpayers (10 low-income) at Marshall and 17 taxpayers (12 low-income) at Montevideo. My grant proposal will request funding for round trip mileage, overnight lodging, and meals (those not furnished by the National Guard). I anticipate that I will be called on for more military returns next year, as a large number of National Guardsmen have been deployed this year.

Yes, if the sponsoring organization is a qualified 501(c)(3) organization.