# Peace Corps Small Grants Program

# Staff Handbook

March 2015

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# Foreword

Dear Peace Corps Staff,

We have seen the difference a small grant can make in a community's development. Whether it is bringing young girls together to participate in a GLOW camp, introducing clean cookstove technology to a local women's group, or implementing an HIV/AIDS training for at-risk individuals, small grants can lead to lasting positive change. Over this past year, we have worked to make it easier for Volunteers and their communities to access small grants—and for you to manage them.

It is my pleasure to introduce the Peace Corps Small Grants Program Staff Handbook. This resource, along with the Small Grants Program Volunteer Handbook, the combined Small Grants Program Application, and the Final Report, was developed by the Office of Strategic Partnerships and the Office of Global Health and HIV in collaboration with representatives from Peace Corps posts worldwide. The Small Grants Program incorporates recommendations from the agency's Comprehensive Agency Assessment to streamline small grants, better manage external funding, and improve monitoring and evaluation through the development of new materials and guidance.

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program includes Small Project Assistance (SPA), Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST), Energy Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA), Feed the Future (FTF), and the Global Education Framework (GEF). Though each program is supported by different funding sources and different offices at headquarters, they all share the same goal: to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable grassroots small grant projects that build capacity in communities where Volunteers serve.

The Small Grants Program offers a mechanism that enables posts to better support and enhance the Peace Corps' approach to development and to more thoroughly monitor, evaluate, and report on projects in line with Focus In/Train Up. We hope that it will assist communities and Volunteers to implement strong and lasting community-initiated development activities.

Please contact the Small Grants Program Working Group (smallgrants@peacecorps.gov) if you have questions.


Carrie Hessler-Radelet
Director

# Introduction

The Peace Corps makes funding available for small projects to Volunteers and the community organizations with which they work. This handbook for post staff provides guidance on the requirements and processes of the Peace Corps grant programs. Although each funding source has distinctive characteristics and requirements, the Peace Corps has made the guidance for all grant projects uniform to the maximum extent possible.

This handbook provides information on the basic rules and requirements that are applicable for all small grants. It also includes recommendations on post-level management of small grants programs and links to tools to help run them effectively.

The Peace Corps strongly recommends that each post use the same procedures and processes for each grant program, including the same project development and submission procedures, the same small grants committee, and a single small grants coordinator. This will provide clarity for Volunteers, ensure consistent project quality across all funding sources, and reduce redundancy and overlap in post staff responsibilities.

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program is comprised of several funding sources. However, not all of these sources are available at all posts, as some sources are geographically or programmatically limited. The funding sources are described briefly below:

| Grant Program | Funding Source | Post Eligibility | Contact for More Information |
|---|---|---|---|
| Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program | United States Agency for International Development (USAID) | Posts for which a USAID mission has contributed funds; posts with no in-country or regional presence are generally ineligible | spareports@peacecorps.gov |
| Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) | Private sector donations (including "RPCV/Friends of" groups as well as individuals and organizations) | All posts, all sectors | pcpp@peacecorps.gov |
| Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) | President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) | Any post that receives PEPFAR funds | vast@peacecorps.gov |
| Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) | Department of State, Bureau of Western | Select posts in Central and South America | Contact ECPA program representative |

| | Hemisphere Affairs | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Feed the Future (FTF) | USAID | Posts participating in the Feed the Future partnership | Contact FTF program representative |
| Global Education Framework (GEF) | USAID | Uganda and Mozambique for literacy and school library activities | Contact Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs |

# Considerations before Undertaking a Funded Project

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program is an excellent tool for Volunteers and their communities to access support for small-scale development projects. However, before planning and implementing a funded project, it is important to consider how the intervention complements the Peace Corps' approach to development. Additionally, staff and Volunteers must be aware of the rules surrounding external funding. External funding is any funding source supporting Volunteer work that is not included in the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

## I. Small Grant Funding in the Context of the Peace Corps Approach to Development

The Peace Corps' general approach to development is described in the Programming and Training Guidance.[1] Development in its broadest sense is any process that promotes the dignity of a people and their capacity to improve their own lives. Two key characteristics of the Peace Corps approach to development are capacity building and sustainability.

- **Capacity Building:** The focus of development work is on the development of the capacity of people, not things. Peace Corps Volunteers help people learn how to identify and prioritize what they would like to change, and to use their own strengths and learn new skills to achieve that change. With this approach, development is not just planting a garden to produce food for the community, but organizing and working with people to establish and maintain their own gardens. Volunteers direct their capacity-building efforts to several different, but integrated levels: individuals, service providers/trainers/multipliers, organizations, and communities.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability refers to the ability of a project to continue to meet the needs of a community once the initial grant or external source of funding has ended. Volunteers use gender-sensitive, participatory approaches to analyze, design, implement, and evaluate projects to ensure that they have considered different contextual factors, and to support the sustainability of the changes they promote. In addition, Volunteers work to facilitate systems improvements and organizational change that not only increase the potential for sustainability, but often improve the amount or quality of service provided or the volume of business conducted.

Small grants projects should be designed and implemented in a manner consistent with the Peace Corps' approach to development. Thus, even though the projects bring external funds into the community, they should include a significant capacity-building component and should be designed to maximize sustainability. In order to support the development of projects that align with the agency's approach to development, the Peace Corps recommends the following:

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[1] Peace Corps Programming and Training Guidance, Publication No. T0140 (Version: October 2011)

- Ensure that Volunteers understand the Peace Corps policy on external funding (see Section II below).

- When orienting Volunteers on the availability of small grant funds, hold a session on the appropriate use of small grant funds within the Peace Corps approach to development and some of the common pitfalls Volunteers face. (A session plan and accompanying PowerPoint are available for post use.)

- Ensure Volunteers are aware that the Peace Corps does not require Volunteers to apply for small grant funds. Applying for and managing a Peace Corps small grant is up to the discretion of the Volunteer.

- Provide Project Design and Management (PDM) training to Volunteers and counterparts; refer to the PDM training session that is part of the Focus In/Train Up Global Core Training Package.

- If a Volunteer determines it is appropriate to develop a funded project, s/he is required to engage the community in the planning and implementation of the project.

- Ensure that all projects include capacity building and planning for sustainability to ensure alignment with the Peace Corps' approach to development.

## II.    External Funding Policy

Peace Corps Manual Section 720 states "Volunteers are prohibited from accepting gifts on behalf of the Peace Corps." The definition of "gift" in the Peace Corps Manual 721 is "a gratuitous transfer of voluntary services, money, or property (whether real, personal or mixed, tangible or intangible), received by gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise. It includes but is not limited to grants or donations of money, in-kind, voluntary services, or technical assistance." **Volunteers may only directly accept funds through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.**[2] This program exists in order to facilitate the appropriate channeling of funds to a Volunteer's community by funding a small project that requires community engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and strong project design and management, as well as reporting on the completion of a project.

Post staff is responsible for relaying the external funding policy to Volunteers. Although Volunteers may never directly accept funds from any non-Peace Corps organization, they may *assist* their community members in grant writing or application development to help the community apply for funds from external (non-Peace Corps) organizations. Applications for external grants or funds must be written in the name of the community or a community representative, not in the name of the Peace Corps Volunteer. When proposing any project or initiative, the Volunteer should consider external funding only as it contributes or supports the Peace Corps approach to development.

Occasionally, external organizations may reach out to Volunteers or posts directly to encourage them to apply for funds. You should direct these organizations to the Office of Gifts and Grants

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[2] Volunteers may accept personal gifts from their friends and families. They may not accept in-kind or financial support for work they are doing as Peace Corps Volunteers except through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

Management (GGM) immediately. GGM will then clarify the Peace Corps' policy with the organization and convey the best way to proceed.

## III.   External Funding Procedure

As post staff work daily with Volunteers, they are best suited to ensure that Volunteers are aware of the MS 720 policy and comply with the policy. Informational materials should be distributed to Volunteers upon their arrival in-country at pre-service training and other in-service training conferences.

Post should undertake the following procedures to ensure Volunteer compliance with the MS 720 Policy:

### A.   Preventative steps

1.   Posts should incorporate the MS 720 policy into pre- and in-service training. Sharing the policy with Volunteers early and often throughout their service ensures they are well aware of how they can work with external funds, and how they cannot.

2.   As a result of specific post requests, the Small Grant Working Group has clarified and incorporated the policy into the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook (p. 82), the Peace Corps Small Grant Volunteer Handbook, and the "Volunteer Fundraising Do's and Don'ts" two-pager found in Appendix 1. Each post should circulate these documents to Volunteers early in their service, and make them available throughout their service to ensure compliance with the policy.

3.   An additional tool posts can utilize to ensure Volunteers are aware of, and comply with, the MS 720 policy is to make the Volunteer Reporting Form (VRF) Funding Tab available to Volunteers for completion. When Volunteers complete their VRF, utilizing the Funding Tab allows them to recognize the role of funding, and challenges them to consider how they are working with their communities to accept external funds. It also allows posts to review the way Volunteers are reporting the use of external funds, and can preempt violation of the policy.

4.   Lastly, posts should emphasize that Volunteers should feel comfortable communicating all questions and external funding opportunities with post. Often Volunteers hear of external funding opportunities through friends or family on the Internet, or directly from local organizations, non-governmental entities or embassies and foreign donors. Volunteers should not accept funds through or from these entities. Rather, if a Volunteer would like to learn more about a particular opportunity, he or she should contact the post grant coordinator immediately, and post may then guide them in the appropriate actions.

### B.   In-Service Steps

If post staff determines that a Volunteer has violated MS 720 and has accepted, is pursuing, or is in the process of receiving funds from a non-Peace Corps approved funding source (anything outside of the Small Grants Program), post staff should take immediate action, following these steps:

1.  Ask the Volunteer to cease use of the external funds or pursuit the external funding opportunity. Post staff should clarify the policy with the Volunteer immediately and suggest an alternative approach to accepting external funds. These approaches include working with the Volunteer to utilize the Small Grants Program or to ensure the funds are provided directly to the Volunteer's community. In the latter case, the Volunteer can assist his or her community in receiving the funds but may not directly accept them, thereby growing the community's financial capacity while adhering to the Peace Corps policy. Post staff may also communicate directly with headquarters for additional guidance or suggestions.

2.  Should the Volunteer refuse to cease work with external funders, and continues to directly receive funds from external entities, post should contact Peace Corps/headquarters for additional guidance and, if necessary, consultation with the Office of General Counsel (OGC).

3.  In some instances, Peace Corps/headquarters may be aware of a Volunteer's violation of MS 720 prior to the post being aware. If this occurs, Peace Corps/headquarters will notify the post grant coordinator immediately and post staff must work speedily to ensure the Volunteer does not further violate the policy. Post staff should work with the Volunteer to educate him/her on the appropriate use of external funds, and suggest ways the Volunteer can continue the work through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

4.  If a Volunteer remains in violation of MS 720 after post has communicated and suggested alternative and appropriate steps to the Volunteer, post staff must determine appropriate consequences for the Volunteer. This may require conversations with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and/or the OGC.

External funds must be carefully monitored and if a Volunteer is found in violation of MS 720, post staff must address the issue immediately. The Peace Corps Small Grants Program exists to support Volunteer work in the field and to ensure projects meet agency policies and procedures. When Volunteers work outside of the Small Grants Program, directly receiving funds from external entities, it not only makes them susceptible to greater safety and security risks, but also undermines the Peace Corps' approach to development and the work they are seeking to do in their communities.

## C.      Tools to Raise Awareness About and Track External Funds

The Office of Gifts and Grants Management (GGM) has created a document (Appendix 1) that post staff may distribute to Volunteers or incorporate into post-specific handbooks.

To assist posts in management and oversight of Volunteer use of external funds, the Small Grants Working Group and teams around the agency have updated the "help" language on the VRF, as a component of the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). Post staff should activate the funding tab option in the VRT for Volunteers when they are completing the VRF. Using this tool will help post staff and Peace Corps/headquarters

better evaluate the extent to which external funding is used, and better help Volunteers to comply with policy.

The Small Grants Program also worked with the Office of Global Operations to include external funding questions within the Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS). The survey questions will help determine areas where training or support regarding external funds may be necessary.

# Roles and Responsibilities

Numerous stakeholders work together to support small grants programs, including Peace Corps post and headquarters staff, Volunteers, counterparts, small grants committees and Peace Corps partners. This section describes the primary responsibilities of the many offices and staff involved with managing small grants.

## I. Peace Corps headquarters

### A. The Office of Strategic Partnerships

The Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) coordinates and oversees the development and implementation of strategic partnerships to support the agency's three goals and to enhance programs through every stage of Volunteer service. OSP, in coordination with relevant headquarters offices, establishes standards and policies for all small grants programs directly administered by the Peace Corps. In addition to this handbook, headquarters may issue supplemental guidance regarding the administration of small grants programs. The Office of Gifts and Grants Management (GGM) and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships (IGAP) are located in the Office of Strategic Partnerships.

### B. The Office of Gifts and Grants Management

The Office of Gifts and Grants Management (GGM) administers the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) in addition to managing and accepting general donations to the Peace Corps, both monetary and in-kind. GGM is responsible for accepting donations and applying them to PCPP projects, verifying compliance with small grants requirements for PCPP projects, posting projects on the Peace Corps website for fundraising, obligating funds for fully funded projects, reviewing project documentation, interpreting small grants requirements as related to the PCPP program, maintaining project records, and reporting to donors, partners, and Congress. GGM is the only office authorized to solicit funds on behalf of Volunteers

### C. The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships (IGAP) administers the Small Project Assistance (SPA) program. This includes management of the SPA agreement with U.S. Agency for International Development, supporting posts in their annual funding negotiations with USAID, collaborating with Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to establish and maintain SPA program administration in the agency's financial systems, verifying compliance with small grants requirements for SPA projects, reviewing project documentation, interpreting small grants requirements as they relate to the SPA program, and maintaining project records.

IGAP also provides technical support and assistance for project managers of other Peace Corps small grants funded by other U.S. government agencies. This includes grants under the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA), Feed the Future (FTF), Global Education Framework (GEF), and in-country funded agreements.

### D.     The Office of Global Health and HIV

The Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH) administers the Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) program. This includes managing the agency's overall PEPFAR agreement and portfolio, supporting posts in the negotiation of annual PEPFAR/VAST funding, working with OCFO to establish and maintain VAST program administration in the agency's financial systems, verifying compliance with small grants requirements for VAST projects, reviewing project documentation, interpreting small grants requirements related to the VAST program, and maintaining project records.

OGHH may be consulted for technical and programming advice regarding grant-supported health and HIV/AIDS interventions, regardless of funding source.

### E.     The Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

The Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS), together with the IAP Region, provides program management for the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) and the Global Education Framework (GEF) grant programs. This includes acting as a liaison with the Department of State and USAID, respectively, regarding the funding agreements; verifying compliance with small grants requirements for ECPA and GEF projects; reviewing project documentation; interpreting small grants requirements related to the ECPA and GEF programs; maintaining project records; and providing program direction and oversight for ECPA and GEF-funded small grants.

OPATS may be consulted for technical and programming advice regarding grant-supported interventions in all sectors except for HIV/AIDS and health, regardless of funding source.

### F.     The Office of the Chief Financial Officer

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) supports small grants financial management and maintains financial systems related to small grants programs. Working with the program offices that manage the Peace Corps Small Grants Program. OCFO establishes and operates systems for receiving, processing, making payments, and accounting for small grant funds.

### G.     Regions

Regions support posts in obtaining access to small grant funds and connecting posts to appropriate Peace Corps/headquarters small grants offices. Regions may also review projects for consistency with post, region, and agency programming priorities.

## II.     Peace Corps Posts

This section summarizes small grants management roles and responsibilities based on current best practices at posts. Country directors should assign specific small grants support and administration responsibilities to staff members to ensure that all necessary responsibilities are covered. Small grants administration and support duties should be included in job descriptions and performance plans.

Below are the small grant administration and support functions:
- Grant program management and oversight
- Seeking and allocating funds
- Working with funding partners and donors
- Financial management of grant funds
- Orienting and training Volunteers
- Project design
- Project review and approval
- Project implementation
- Project tracking and monitoring
- Reporting and closeout
- Program learning and evaluation

Post staff have varying levels of responsibilities for small grants. Some positions, such as the small grants coordinator, may have responsibilities in all 11 functions. Other staff positions, such as the director of management operations (DMO), are responsible for fewer functions. These roles and responsibilities may be adapted to fit the needs of each post.

## A.    Country Director
The country director (CD) provides oversight, direction, and accountability for the in-country administration of all small grants programs and related projects. In addition, the CD maintains relationships with in-country partners who provide funding for small grant programs.

Specific duties include the following:
- Grant program management and oversight
    - *Assign staff responsibilities:* Work with the director of programming and training (DPT) and the DMO, establish specific roles and responsibilities for post staff managing small grant programs, appoint a small grants coordinator(s) at post to provide day-to-day management, administration, and support for each active small grant project.
    - *Set post-level guidelines:* Establish specific small grant requirements consistent with guidance and requirements in this handbook.
- Seeking and allocating funds
    - *Seek and negotiate funding:* Access small grant resources consistent with post's needs and programming priorities, provide liaison with funding partners (i.e., USAID), and negotiate annual funding levels.
    - *Allocate available funding:* In coordination with the DPT and funding partners, determine allocation of SPA funds between grants and other allowable activities; for PCPP, allocate available country funds to individual projects.
    - *Ensure that all staff is familiar with MS 720 policy on external funding:* Train staff on MS-720 and make sure that post adheres to guidelines.
- Working with funding partners/donors
    - *Maintain relationships with partners:* Serve as the top-level liaison with partners and donors, agree on program scope and priorities with partners, and ensure proper reporting and day-to-day communication with partners.

- *Awareness raising:* Ensure that funding partners/donors are aware of the Peace Corps' policy on external funds.
- Orienting and training Volunteers
  - *Messaging to Volunteers:* Set the tone at post to support the use of small grants in appropriate circumstances, to further capacity building within communities where Volunteers serve and in the context of their Peace Corps assignments.
  - *Policy on external funds:* Ensure Volunteers understand MS 720 policy on external funds that Volunteers may not accept donations (monetary or in-kind) on behalf of the Peace Corps.
- Project design
  - In conjunction with the DPT, ensure that small grant applications address the post's key issues of capacity building and sustainability.
- Project review and approval
  - *Sign each approved grant:* Following review and recommendation by the small grants committee, the CD must give final approval on each grant application by signing the Volunteer Liability and the Project Agreement forms. If a project is to be canceled, transferred, or receive additional funds, the CD must certify and sign off on the project change.
  - *Approve costs that require special consideration:* This handbook provides the CD authority to approve or deny costs that require special consideration. A Volunteer may submit a Project Cost Approval form and the CD must approve or deny the request in writing.
- Project implementation
  - *Address lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted for funds:* Document and determine liability for lost or stolen funds; report to appropriate internal and external stakeholders.
- Project tracking and monitoring
  - When possible, the CD monitors ongoing projects during site visits.
- Reporting and closeout
  - Approve and sign small grant final report.
- Program learning and evaluation
  - *Oversee grant program evaluation:* Oversee in-country grant program evaluations funded by partners, donors, or other sources.

## B.    Director of Programming and Training

The director of programming and training (DPT) typically oversees the small grants committee and serves as the program chair of the committee. The DPT works with post staff to ensure small grant projects complement the post's programming priorities and are adapted to meet the local development context. The DPT works with staff to provide training to Volunteers, counterparts, and other staff on accessing small grant funding, appropriate use of small grant funds, and designing and managing small grant projects.

Specific duties include the following:
- Grant program management and oversight
  - *Ensure proper training and direction for staff:* With the small grants coordinator, train small grants committee members on committee responsibilities; ensure

associate Peace Corps directors (APCDs), program managers (PMs), and programming and training assistants/specialists (PTAs/PTS's) provide appropriate support to Volunteers in developing and implementing projects.

- *Ensure that all programming and training staff is familiar with MS 720 policy:* Train programming and training staff on MS 720 and make sure that post staff adhere to guidelines.

- Seeking and allocating funds
    - *Determine funding needs:* Based on post programming priorities, determine small grant funding needs that complement those priorities.
    - *Allocate available funding:* With CD (and in consultation with donors), determine allocation of available funds.
- Working with funding partners/donors
    - *Work with funding partners and donors:* Provide liaison with funding partners or donors; oversee drafting of post-level progress reports to funders.
    - *Awareness raising:* Ensure that funding partners/donors are aware of the Peace Corps' policy on external funds.
- Orienting and training Volunteers
    - *Ensure proper training for Volunteers:* Ensure training is provided to PCVs on the role of external funding within the Peace Corps' approach to development and on project design and management (PDM) and/or related topics.
- Project review and approval
    - *Oversee grant committee:* Sit on the small grants committee and provide oversight of the committee and the review process.
- Project tracking and monitoring
    - *Monitoring and evaluation:* Work with the small grants committee and staff to implement a system to monitor and evaluate small grant projects.
- Program learning and evaluation
    - *Manage grant program evaluation:* Manage in-country grant program evaluations funded by partners, donors, or other sources; work with research contractors and Peace Corps staff to support evaluation completion.

## C.    Small Grants Coordinator

The small grants coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day administration of grant projects at post. The coordinator serves as the primary grant program contact at each post for Volunteers, other post staff, and Peace Corps/headquarters grant program support staff. The coordinator stays abreast of program requirements and guidance and ensures that the post's policies, procedures, and approved grants are consistent with such guidance.

Every post is strongly encouraged to appoint a single small grants coordinator for all grant projects. If this is not feasible due to staffing, workload, or budget constraints, a post may appoint more than one coordinator for different grant programs. In this case, the post must ensure that the small grants coordinators employ consistent small grant management and oversight practices.

Specific duties include the following:

- Grant program management and oversight
  - *Program expertise:* Understand grant program rules and requirements; keep abreast of updates/best practices for grant programs and convey updates to the small grants committee and Volunteers.
  - *Communicate with Peace Corps/headquarters:* As primary liaison with Peace Corps/headquarters on grant program(s), contact Peace Corps/headquarters grant program points of contact with questions and program updates; submit all required reports to Peace Corps/headquarters.
  - *Grant files:* Establish and maintain official grant files.
  - *Small grants committee:* Organize, prepare for, and facilitate small grants committee meetings.
- Seeking and allocating funds
  - Provide support to CD and DPT in determining funding needs and negotiating new funds; provide input on funding needs based on remaining carryover funds and spending patterns.
- Working with funding partners/donors
  - *Liaison:* As delegated by the CD, serve as day-to-day liaison with in-country funding partners (USAID or other) regarding ongoing grant program operations.
  - *Reports:* Support DPT/CD in drafting regular reports to USAID or other funding partners.
  - *Awareness Raising:* Ensure that funding partners/donors are aware of Peace Corps' policy on external funds.
- Financial management of grant funds
  - *Funding balances:* In coordination with the administrative unit, track grant spending and available funds by grant program and by funding areas (e.g., by SPA program element).
  - Work with administrative unit to ensure financial processing of approved grants.
- Orienting and training Volunteers
  - *Orientation session for Volunteers:* Work with DPT to introduce grant programs to PCVs.
  - Advise PCVs on accessing grant funds and developing projects.
  - *Awareness raising:* Ensure that Volunteers are aware of the Peace Corps' policy on external funds.
- Project design
  - Understand PDM tools and ensure post consistency.
  - Provide Volunteers with feedback on applications submitted for approval.
  - Communicate acceptable activities and prohibited activities.
- Project review and approval
  - Receive grant applications from Volunteers and disseminate to small grants committee members and appropriate APCDs.
  - Facilitate communication with Volunteers to follow up on requested application revisions.
  - Ensure that funds are available in the proper funding source (including proper program element for SPA) prior to recommending approval of grants.
- Project implementation

- Work with Volunteer sponsor in the event of project cancelation, transfer, or amendment, to report to the relevant Peace Corps/headquarters office.
- Project tracking and monitoring
  - Track the status of all ongoing grant projects using PCGO.
  - Provide status updates to the CD, post staff, and relevant Peace Corps/headquarters staff.
- Reporting and closeout
  - Ensure that Volunteers' final reports meet all Small Grants Program guidelines. If the project meets the guidelines, submit the report to the director of management and operations. Maintain all Peace Corps Small Grants Program records at the post.
  - Collect and process all grant reports and SPA training activity reports; send reports to Peace Corps/headquarters.
  - Provide regular updates on small grants to USAID or other donors.
- Program learning and evaluation
  - Compile best practices to be used in future program planning.

## D.  Associate Peace Corps Director, Program Manager, and Programming and Training Assistant/Specialist

Associate Peace Corps director (APCD), program manager (PM), and programming and training specialist/assistant (PTS/PTA) support the Volunteers in their projects or programs to promote effective use of small grant funds.

Specific duties include the following:
- Grant program management and oversight
  - *Understand available funding:* Check balances periodically with small grants coordinator; present funding information to PCVs, trainees, and staff.
- Seeking and allocating funds
  - *Identify funding needs:* Discuss with DPT/CD and negotiate with USAID on appropriate program elements for projects.
- Working with funding partners/donors
  - With approval from the CD, participate in meetings with partners/donors who fund community projects in the APCDs program sector.
- Orienting and training Volunteers
  - *Guidance to Volunteers:* Keep records of success stories and share with PCVs/trainees.
  - *Training:* Overview of Small Grants Programs. Promote different grants according to PCV sector assignments, potential or anticipated secondary projects and site assignments; request/look for grants that support the project.
  - *Awareness raising:* Ensure that Volunteers are aware of the Peace Corps' policy on external funds.
- Project design
  - Support PCVs in developing projects; review applications and provide feedback to Volunteers on how to better design projects.
  - Help Volunteers consider all options, including local resource mobilization, before presenting a project to the post's small grants committee; APCDs, PMs,

and PTAs also serve as members of the committee. In some posts, these staff members provide a general orientation to Volunteers about fundraising, including the SPA Program and other external donors, as part of an early reconnect, a PDM in-service training (IST), or a technical IST.
- Clearly and frequently communicate to PCVs and community counterparts about the Peace Corps' approach to development.

- Project review and approval
  - *Vetting projects:* All small grants projects should be vetted by APCDs and PMs, ideally at the early stages of the project design process. Review projects within their sector to provide feedback to the committee on technical design and content.
  - *Grant committee:* Review and give feedback on grants as a member of the small grants committee.
- Project implementation
  - Provide technical support to Volunteers and counterparts for ongoing projects related to the APCDs program sector.
- Project tracking and monitoring
  - *Project monitoring:* Monitor ongoing grant projects during regularly scheduled site visits.
- Reporting and closeout
  - *Project closeout:* Review grant final reports for projects in their sector to gather lessons learned to support Volunteers with similar projects in the future.

## E.    Director of Management and Operations and Financial Assistant

The director of management and operations (DMO), with support from the financial assistant (FA), handles the financial administration of grant funds. The DMO certifies that Volunteers have presented all receipts and requirements to close out their small grants.

- Financial management of grant funds
  - Ensure that the financial administration of small grant projects is consistent with Peace Corps policies.
  - Upon request, provide the relevant financial information/documents to the CD, DPT, or small grants coordinator.
- Project review and approval
  - Sign off on approved projects.
- Reporting and closeout
  - Ensure accountability of funds and verification of project expenditures/receipts.
  - The DMO is responsible for certifying that all project funds are accounted for and spent in an approved manner.
  - Review final project reports to ensure that all funds raised for the project have been spent in accordance with the goals and objectives of the project.
  - If all funds are accounted for, sign the final report.
  - Collect unused funds.

There are different financial processes and responsibilities for Peace Corps Partnership Program grants, compared to the other types of small grants:

| **PCPP** | • If a project is canceled and related funds remain, the director of management and operations must return those funds to OSP.<br>• If all funds are not accounted for, the director of management and operations must collect the difference from the Volunteer and submit a budget reconciliation memo to OSP. |
|---|---|
| **SPA VAST ECPA FTF GEF** | • Create obligations for grants.<br>• Ensure that obligations are properly made, obligations are created for approved projects, and the timely liquidation of funds.<br>• Submit voucher requests to OCFO/Global Accounts Payable.<br>• Track fund balances in FORpost (in collaboration with small grants coordinator); provide quarterly updates on funding balances to small grants committee and program staff. |

## F.    Training Manager

Training managers play an important role in building into post training calendars opportunities to train Volunteers and their community counterparts in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be effective in planning and implementing small grant projects.

- Orienting and training Volunteers
    - Ensure training on project design and management is included in Volunteer training.
    - Include orientation on external funding and small grants in the training calendar (recommend orientation in pre-service training and complete small grants training in IST).
- Project implementation
    - Support Volunteers' planning and implementation of small grant projects that may have a training component.

## III.    Small Grant Committees

Each post is required to establish a small grants committee. This committee reviews and approves applications for grants, including SPA, PCPP, VAST, and other programs. Within the general guidance provided in this handbook, "Peace Corps Small Grants Staff Handbook," each post has discretion as to how its committee will be structured, the committee's specific functions and responsibilities, and the committee's grant approval process.

The small grants committee fulfills key three functions:

1. Establishes post-specific grant criteria/requirements and processes consistent with this handbook ("Peace Corps Small Grants Staff Handbook"), including application submission and review procedures, submission deadlines, etc.
2. Reviews and preliminarily approves grant applications (for final review and approval by the country director)
3. Monitors and evaluates small grants and the grants process and reviews and analyzes results, feedback, and data to improve the post's grant programs

## IV.    Volunteers and Counterparts

Volunteers work with counterparts and community members to identify and then support capacity-development projects that meet locally identified priorities. Throughout the small grants process, the Volunteer will do the following:

- Collaborates with community members to identify, develop, implement, and complete a project that meets local priorities.

- Helps community members to complete and submit a small grant application to the small grants coordinator and small grants committee for review and approval.

- Supports community members in maintaining accurate financial records and receipts.

- Ensures documentation for in-kind contributions.

- Regularly reports status updates to the small grants coordinator and small grants committee.

- Submits final reports with receipts and pictures to the small grants coordinator within three months of COS date.

- Submits a Transfer of Responsibility form and/or budget amendment, if necessary.

## V.    Peace Corps Partners and Donors

Peace Corps partners and donors contribute funds for posts to issue as small grants. The Peace Corps does not use its own appropriated funds for small grants. The Peace Corps is accountable for the use of funds from contributing partners and donors and may be required to provide reports.

# Grant Requirements

This section lays out the basic requirements that all small grants must meet. In addition, it pinpoints limitations on project costs that cannot be funded by a Small Grants Program grant and costs that require country director approval. Using these requirements, Peace Corps staff can ensure that projects meet community needs, as well as follow Peace Corps guidelines. **Peace Corps headquarters will defer to post-level guidance in cases where posts have implemented more stringent policies.[3]**

## I.     Basic Grant Requirements

Peace Corps Small Grant funds can be used in various ways to support community-led development initiatives in a wide variety of programmatic areas, including Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth in Development. Cross-sector programming priorities (CSPP) of gender equality and women's empowerment, youth as resources, girl's education, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, support for people with disabilities, volunteerism, and technology for development can also be addressed. Regardless of the funding source chosen by the Volunteer (SPA, VAST, PCPP, ECPA, GEF, or FTF), all projects supported with Peace Corps small grant funds **must do the following**:

- Be community initiated and directed

- Meet a determined community need

- Promote capacity building

- Include indicators of success through monitoring, reporting, and evaluation

- Incorporate cross-sector programming priorities where feasible

- Support a stand-alone activity with definite start and end dates and concrete goals and objectives

- Be scheduled for completion within one year and to end at least three months before the Volunteer's close of service date

- Not exceed U.S. $10,000 in funding from the Small Grants Program, except as authorized by the appropriate regional director and the associate director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) or the director of the Office of Global Health and HIV/AIDS (OGHH) for VAST projects

- Include a community contribution of at least 25 percent of the total estimated project cost

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[3] For example, if posts determine that projects should be less than $10,000, Peace Corps headquarters will defer to this post-level policy.

Each post may also develop additional post-specific criteria to better reflect local community development issues and priorities. For example, a post can develop its own requirements regarding maximum grant size, minimum community contribution (at least 25 percent), or whether projects can be developed outside of a Volunteer's primary assignment or sector.

## II.  Key Components of a Project

The following are key components of a grant project:

### A.  Community Initiated

*The project must be community initiated and directed.* This ensures that the community is the driving force behind the project and will take ownership once it is completed. **All small grants projects should be initiated, designed, and implemented by a local community organization or group, with the support of a Peace Corps Volunteer.**

The first action a Volunteer should take before developing the project is to conduct a community needs assessment to ensure appropriate project selection and community buy-in. Volunteers should conduct this needs assessment using the skills they have acquired from the Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) manual, which is provided by Peace Corps Information, Collection, and Exchange (ICE).

Once a project has been identified, the following questions should be taken into consideration during project development and included on the application:
- Who first proposed this project?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of community members?
- How involved are the beneficiaries in project planning?
- How will the community oversee the project?
- If the project was proposed or is supported by a person outside of the local community, is it clear community members really want or need it, intend to participate, and want to use their resources in this way?

### B.  Meet a Community Need

*The project meets a pressing community need.* This guideline helps establish the merit of the particular project among a host of other expressed needs. The following questions should be asked:
- What indicates this project will meet a need community members consider important?
- What are the benefits—both immediate and long-term? Are these measurable, either quantitatively or qualitatively?
- Why is this project a priority?

### C.  Demonstrate Sustainability

*The project inherently promotes sustainable community development.* "Sustainable" refers to the ability of a project to continue to meet the needs of a community once the initial grant or external source of funding has ended. In order to build mechanisms into

the planning process that promote this type of long-term success, Volunteers and community partners should consider these questions:

- Can the project operate self-sufficiently or be revenue-generating?
- What external or internal activities will occur to sustain the project after outside funding ends?
- How long is this project anticipated to be in use or have an effect?
- Is there clear community participation and oversight for the project?
- How will any buildings, parts, or machinery be repaired or replaced?
- Does the community have the resources (human, financial, or material) to sustain the project long-term?
- Could the community replicate or teach the implementation of this project in the future?

## D.    Demonstrate Capacity Building

*A capacity-building element is included in the project.* "Capacity building" refers to strengthening the skills, competencies, and abilities of people in the local community so they can overcome obstacles that inhibit them from realizing their developmental goals. Capacity building is an important part of any project, as it helps to ensure continued development long after outside funding has ended.

Because development activities often address specific tangible needs, it is common for Volunteers to develop projects for municipal development-based projects such as school or latrine construction, building renovations, small business expansions, etc. These types of projects, though providing valuable assets for the community, must still demonstrate an active capacity-building aspect.

While the actual process of developing a small grant project in itself has value for the community, the project should contain aspects which achieve one or both of the following:

- *The project builds the capacity of people.* There is an inherent skill-building type of education that takes place during the project.—This could be informal (i.e., in constructing latrines, community members gain new knowledge that will allow them to replicate that activity in the future) or formal (i.e., the project trains community members on good hygiene practices in addition to building latrines).
- *The project builds the material capacity of the community.* The outcome of the project will increase self-sufficiency in development activities and/or enable community members to carry out activities that build the capacity of people. For example, a community might build a new room for the local school, which will enable them to better educate their children or a project might purchase a loom for a women's cooperative to help them get a weaving project off the ground.

Lastly, as all Small Grants projects include a budget and require financial management, a significant component of capacity building is ensuring the transfer and honing of financial management skills on the part of the community. The Peace Corps Small Grants

Program encourages the use of the Financial Management and Capacity Building Assessment Tool (Appendix 2) as a two-fold resource for Volunteers, their communities, and posts in determining initial capacity for financial management. The tool should be used (a) in the planning and design phase of the project between the community and Volunteer and (b) to determine which disbursement method is an option for the project (see Section B in Processing Approved Projects).

During the project design phase, the tool assists Volunteers and their communities to work through the strengths and challenges of a community's capacity for financial management, and determine a score that rates their level of readiness and the next project design steps. Though not lengthy, the tool requires critical thinking and action to ensure a project's finances will be used, managed, and reported on by a community in line with the project's stated goals. At the project design phase, the scores may equate to key actions:

| Score | Project Design Action |
|---|---|
| 0-6 | Volunteer should work to strengthen capacity of the community organization or group prior to designing a small grant project; work with the community to establish a bank account with several signatories; discuss and practice budget planning and project management; ensure counterparts attend PDM workshop; and community may not be directly responsible for managing funds |
| 7-12 | Volunteer should ensure counterparts attend PDM workshops; community may not be directly responsible for managing funds; Volunteer may need to assist in direct fund and project management |
| 13-18 | Volunteer's community is prepared and adequately trained to manage Peace Corps Small Grants funds and successfully implement a small grant project; Volunteer may proceed with project design and determine which community counterpart will assist or directly manage funds |

## E.     Demonstrate Value of Volunteer Work
*Monitoring and evaluation is built into every project plan.* The Peace Corps' contribution to the development community can be demonstrated through monitoring and evaluating Volunteer efforts and results. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan should be incorporated from the beginning of project design. Projects should include the following:

- An M&E component that has specific indicators for how learning or changes in behavior will be measured
- A plan to address how learning will be enhanced or how access to the information might promote behavior change among individuals who receive the training or service provided
- Set targets to demonstrate how the project will be beneficial to recipients and the community at large
- Project goals that state participant gains and improvements.

## F.    Include Indicators of Success

*Indicators of success are identified.* Indicators of success are quantifiable measurements, agreed to beforehand, that measure a project's progress toward its goals and objectives, and demonstrate desired changes are taking place. They measure both tangible (e.g., acres of forest preserved, number of women training in new gardening techniques) and intangible outcomes (e.g., an increase in self-esteem among the participants). Indicators include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Participants acquiring new skills that improve their quality of life (e.g., literacy, new English or math skills, or new agricultural techniques)
- Improved capacity of participants to define and meet goals and objectives in the future (e.g., ability to set up a working group to address a problem or enhanced planning skills)
- Presence of linkages with similar groups or networks (e.g., learning how to connect with other organizations and people)
- Improved decision making (e.g., changes in attitudes such as gender inclusiveness, willingness to share ideas)

## G.    Data Quality

All small grants require the collection of indicator data and the small grants coordinator should train Volunteers on the importance of quality data. At the most basic level, Volunteers should record attendance at small grant-funded events and submit signed participant lists with their final reports. Small grant coordinators must ensure that participant lists are saved in the appropriate small grant files for audit purposes. Peace Corps-specific data quality assurance (DQA) guidance is under review and is available, in draft form, from the Peace Corps monitoring and evaluation team. Email M&E_team@peacecorps.gov to request a copy. Grant coordinators may also reference the linked document from USAID to ensure data quality. Please review the "Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation of Small Grants Programs at Post" section of this handbook, sub-section II: "Data Quality Assessment" for more details and guidance.

## H.    Community Contribution

To verify community ownership and initiation, as well as to enhance the long-term sustainability of the project, a 25 percent **minimum** community contribution of the total project cost is required.

This contribution often includes the costs of all manual labor and transportation associated with the project. Host community contributions might also include direct contributions of raw materials or cash. (If the community contribution is cash, the project plan must clearly detail how the cash will be spent). Contributions from local or other in-country sources, such as indigenous organizations, local businesses, or government ministries, can also be considered as the community contribution. However, a contribution from an international organization cannot be considered as part of the community contribution (e.g., contributions from USAID, United Nations organizations, foreign embassies, or international NGOs such as CARE, Save the Children, or the International Red Cross). Please see Section I, below, for clarification on third-party contributions.

Volunteers may help their communities quantify how much time, labor, transportation, and financial or material support the community will provide (see Appendix 3). Most often, communities contribute well above the 25 percent minimum requirement.

## I.  Third-Party Contributions

Third-party contributions are contributions given by an entity (group or individual) outside of the community. These contributions may be in the form of cash or in-kind support for a project, but must be included separately in the project budget. Volunteers should work with their communities and post staff to determine how best to classify the organization, individual, or entity.

Contributions from the following may be considered a third-party contribution:

- Large, international NGOs (CARE, World Vision, Save the Children, Plan International, UN organizations, etc.) that are located in or near a Volunteer's community
- International NGOs located outside of the Volunteer's country

It is important for Volunteers to understand that including a third-party contribution increases the total project budget, which will, in turn, increase the required 25 percent community contribution. (The total project budget includes the amount requested from the Small Grants Program, the third-party contribution, and the community contribution.) This ensures that the community is fully invested in the project, and that third-party contributors are not leading or overtaking the project based on their own mission or goals. In some cases, third-party contributions raise the project total significantly, requiring the community contribution to increase proportionally, in order to maintain the minimum percentage.

While third-party contributions are certainly an option for cost sharing, **projects should never be designed around the option of having a third-party contribution.**

Volunteers should also be aware that funds from third-party contributors, particularly those larger, international organizations, may encounter some logistical challenges in transferring of funds to the project. Volunteers should not manage third-party funds; any funds from the third party must be directly given to the community or managed by local representatives of the third-party organization.

## III.  Limitations on Small Grants Program-Funded Project Costs

All costs funded with Peace Corps small grant funds must be reasonable, appropriate, and justified in light of the project activities and objectives. The following limitations apply specifically to costs covered by grant funds. If the local community chooses to provide or pay for any of the following outside of grant funds, it is acceptable and does not require an approval request.

- **Land and other capital assets**
  Grant funds cannot be used to purchase land. If grant funds are approved to construct or equip a building, prior to approving the project, the small grants committee must ensure that the community has clear title to the land on which the building will be located or has a signed, long-term lease or other officially approved agreement providing long-term access to the land. If the land is under a long-term lease, the community organization must demonstrate that it will be able to cover any monthly rent required by the landowner.

- **Loan funds**
  Grant funds cannot be used as loan collateral or to supplement a community organization's revolving credit or loan fund. However, if the community generates income as a result of grant project activities, it may elect to use this income to establish a credit or loan fund to continue or expand project activities.

- **"Sub-grant" projects**
  Recipients of Peace Corps small grant funds may not award project funds to other persons or groups in their community in the form of a secondary small grant/prize/loan. If grant project participants would like to use skills and/or knowledge gained as a result of project activities to design a follow-up project, the Volunteers and the community should apply for funding for the second project through the normal Peace Corps small grant application process.

- **Contingency funds/multiple funding sources**
  Grant budgets should not include funds for undefined or unexpected "contingencies" or similar cost categories (e.g., "unexpected costs"). This includes, but is not limited to, applying for funding from multiple grant sources.

- **Alcoholic beverages**
  Grant funds may not be used to purchase alcoholic beverages.

- **Recurring costs**
  Grant funds cannot be used to cover regularly recurring monthly expenses (e.g., rent, permanent salaries, telephone service and utilities, Internet service) beyond an initial start-up period of three months. Salaries of contracted workers necessary for actual project completion (e.g., construction workers building a library) are allowable, while permanent salaries (e.g., a librarian to staff the library) are not. Calculations of in-kind contributions should not include recurring costs beyond three months. If start-up costs will be covered by the grant, there must be a clear sustainability plan demonstrating how the community will pay for the costs beyond the start-up period.

# IV.   Costs that Require Country Director Approval

Country directors have authority to approve requests for certain costs that are normally not approved. These costs are to be included in grants **only** if deemed appropriate by post staff, and should be approved only after thorough review.

For any costs listed below, the Volunteer must attach a Project Cost Approval Request form (if deemed appropriate) when submitting a project to the small grants committee and CD for signature/approval. The request should include a brief justification describing how the costs will contribute to the overall success and capacity building of the project. To approve the request, the CD must sign the document, which must be maintained in the PCGO grant file. Most projects should not be designed in such a way that requires these costs, as requests are to be taken under consideration only when absolutely necessary. Should costs be incurred without a signed approval request, the Volunteer will be responsible for paying for the unapproved cost. A template of the approval request can be found in Appendix 4.

Project costs that require an approval request:

- **Giveaways, prizes, and celebrations**
  Generally, grant funds cannot be used to purchase giveaways,[4] prizes, celebrations, or other similar items or activities. However, if the use of grant funds to purchase these items will support the realization of project goals and objectives and the small grants committee supports this use of funds, volunteers may submit a Project Cost Approval Request form to the CD.

- **Motor vehicles and other conveyances**
  Grant funds cannot be used to purchase motor vehicles and other transportation conveyances that are intended primarily for personal use. In limited circumstances, funds may cover the costs of these items if the project clearly demonstrates that the goods are integral to the objectives of a project, intended for shared use, and benefit more than a single individual or business. Volunteers will be required to include a detailed description for the use of the vehicle, including plans for maintenance and upkeep.

- **Volunteer costs**
  Generally, grant funds may not cover costs to support or benefit Peace Corps Volunteers. Grant funds may not pay for per diem for Volunteers. The Volunteer may submit a Project Cost Approval Request form for country director approval for funds to cover modest travel, lodging, and food costs related to a project if the Volunteer is traveling with host country counterparts and such costs are necessary for the success of the project.

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[4] In most cases, T-shirts are considered giveaways; however, if T-shirts are given to participants as a uniform or a means of raising awareness, they may be included in the grant budget. If there is any question surrounding the cost, Volunteers should fill out a waiver.

- **International travel**
  Allowing international travel to be included in a project must be considered very carefully. Peace Corps headquarters strongly recommends not approving international travel costs due to potential logistic and liability issues. If a country director feels that the overall benefit of including international travel outweighs the risks associated with the trip, s/he may approve the request. Please consider the following questions before approving these costs:

  - Where is the training component? Take into consideration the distance necessary to travel. If the training is simply across a border, and participants may easily drive to the training, the inclusion of the travel cost may make sense. However, if airfare or several hours of travel is included, the inclusion of the travel cost should not be considered.

  - Will the attendees learn something new and transfer skills to others when they return?

  - Does the project meet the small grants requirement to be sustainable and to build local self-reliance?

  - Is this project making the best use of small grant funds? Could the participants/conference attendees and their organization get the same benefit from attending a conference or training in-country?

  - Have you considered potential logistical problems, i.e., if a person misses a plane ride and has to pay extra money to get home, how will this be paid for?

  - Who is responsible or liable for the person and/or his/her actions while traveling? If the Peace Corps is funding the travel, is the agency liable for anything that goes wrong when the attendees are in the States or another country?

# V.    Projects Requesting over $10,000

All Peace Corps small grants—regardless of funding source—have established a maximum grant request amount of $10,000 U.S. (Although the grant request may not exceed $10,000, total project costs may exceed $10,000 when added with the community contribution and, if included, a third-party contribution.)This limit takes into consideration several key factors:

- **Volunteer Safety and Security**
  As with all aspects of the agency's operations, Volunteer safety and security is a top priority. In cases where Volunteers receive small grant funds directly into their Peace Corps bank accounts, they inherently take on a measure of risk. For example, due to banking fees, Volunteers often opt to take out larger sums at once, which increases the risk of robbery or theft. Additionally, in cases where Volunteers are known to have access to large amounts of money, they may be pressured to use grant funds for costs not associated with the project. These situations, and more, can contribute to an overall view that Volunteers are a conduit for funds to the community, which may increase overall risk and diminish their effectiveness.

- **Logistics and Money Management**
  Projects in excess of $10,000 are considerably more difficult to manage and implement. Larger projects typically have a longer implementation timeline, and *all* project expenses and their corresponding receipts must be noted and secured throughout project implementation. If the Volunteer and his/her counterpart do not have prior experience with managing large sums of money, they must have a strategy in place to ensure funds are not lost or misused, and are kept in a secure place only accessible by the appropriate parties. Post staff must be prepared to work with or guide the Volunteer as he/she plans the financial management for the project.

- **Liability**
  Volunteers are required to sign the project agreement and liability forms, which state that "any project funds disbursed to the Peace Corps Volunteer that cannot be accounted for or were spent on non-approved costs, lost, or stolen may be deducted from the readjustment allowance as a debt owed to the Peace Corps (Pursuant to MS 223)." Accounting for and managing funds in excess of $10,000 exposes Volunteers to much greater liability, which may not be completely covered by their readjustment allowance. Employing a $10,000 limit mitigates, to some extent, risk to Volunteers.

- **The Peace Corps' approach to development and the role of outside funding**
  A $10,000 limit both facilitates the large majority of Volunteer projects and preserves the agency's mission to provide trained men and women—not funds—to aid its host countries. Remember, it is the Peace Corps *Small* Grants Program!

Though the $10,000 limit is in place for these reasons, in some cases it may be appropriate for a project to go above that amount. If a Volunteer would like to submit a grant request for more than $10,000, post staff will need to work with the Volunteer to complete the approval process detailed below.

### A.    Exceptions to the $10,000 U.S. Limit
The Small Grants Program acknowledges that there may be rare instances when it is necessary and appropriate for a project to exceed the $10,000 limit. Post staff will take into consideration the higher risks and responsibilities associated with a large-scale project and may need to allocate extra time and resources to ensure appropriate implementation and financial management.

### B.    Post-level Approval Process for Projects above $10,000
Projects requesting more than $10,000 must still satisfy all Small Grants Program requirements, as noted in the Grants Requirement section. Once the project is submitted, the small grants coordinator will work with the Volunteer to fill out the form Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request (Appendix 5). The request will contain written justification for the project and proof of financial management planning by the Volunteer and community. (If the project is requesting funds from PCPP, the Volunteer must show evidence of a resource strategy, including a network of potential donors. This will be used to demonstrate the ability for the project to receive donations that, together, will total greater than $10,000. These referrals will be contacted by Peace Corps on behalf of the Volunteer.)

The small grants coordinator will also complete a section of the Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request form that considers available funding at post and, if a PCPP, the additional time that will be required for fundraising. If the project is to be funded by SPA, VAST, ECPA, FTF, or GEF, the small grants coordinator will determine if there are enough funds at post to warrant one large project exceeding $10,000 versus several smaller projects. Post staff must consider if this particular project is the best use of these funds. For PCPP, post staff must consider the time it may take to fundraise for a project exceeding $10,000[5] and ensure the Volunteer has a backup plan in the event the fundraising goal is not reached in time.

The small grants coordinator will also be responsible for detailing the post's processes and procedures for ensuring the project will be successfully implemented and completed. This includes the post's strategy to assist the Volunteer throughout the life cycle of the project. These may include monthly check-ins with the Volunteer and community, periodically collecting written progress reports from the

**In-Country Post Process**

Project is submitted requesting over $10,000 of grant funds.

Grants coordinator works with Volunteer to prepare Approval Request: Project in Excess of $10,000 form.

Project is reviewed and approved by small grants committee and Project in Excess form signed by country director

Grants coordinator submits all documents (application, signature forms, and approval request form) to Peace Corps headquarters for review and final approval.

**Peace Corps headquarters Process**

Peace Corps headquarters Small Grants Program staff reviews and approves application and forwards to appropriate senior leadership for review and final approval.

| **SPA, PCPP, GEF, FTF, and ECPA:** Regional director and Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) associate director | **VAST:** Regional director and Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH) director |
|---|---|

Upon approval, project may be posted online or be authorized to receive funding.

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[5] Projects requesting $5,000 or below take an average three months to fund, depending on a Volunteer's fundraising plan. Often PCPP projects requesting $10,000 or above take an exceedingly long time to fund or Volunteers submit a budget amendment to implement the project on a smaller scale.

Volunteer, and/or reviewing project expenditures and receipts throughout the project life cycle.

It is important to note that the Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request will be reviewed by Peace Corps headquarters leadership, which includes the appropriate regional director, and the associate director of OSP or the director of OGHH. Justifications must be well-written and thorough to ensure final approval. Before submission of the project to the small grants committee at post, the Volunteer and small grants coordinator must sign the Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request form.

The completed and signed request form must be attached to the application and reviewed and approved by the post's small grants committee. Once the application is approved, the country director will sign the project agreement form, as well as the Projects in Excess of $10,000 approval request. The small grants coordinator must submit all documents signed by Volunteer, community, and CD (application, signature forms, and Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request form) to Peace Corps headquarters Small Grants Program staff for final approval.

## C.     Peace Corps headquarters Approval Process for Projects above $10,000

Once the application for a project in excess of $10,000 is received at Peace Corps headquarters, the appropriate Small Grants program staff will review the project documents and all supplementary materials for approval. Following this, the project must be approved by the appropriate regional director and either the associate director of OSP (SPA, PCPP, ECPA, FTF, or GEF) or the director of OGHH (VAST). Peace Corps headquarters staff will review each project, taking into consideration the key factors listed above (Volunteer Safety and Security, Logistics/Money Management, Liability, and the Peace Corps' Approach to Development and the role of external funding). Once approval is obtained and all signatures are collected, the project may be posted online for fundraising.

## D.     Implementing a Project

Projects in excess of $10,000 require a greater amount of oversight and management by post staff. Staff should define project milestones when filling out the Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request and undertake regular check-ins to ensure the project is on-time, on-budget, and properly managed. Project files should document regular check-ins from programming and financial staff and a quarterly review of receipts and project progress. Answers to these questions should be noted:
- Does documented spending (project log) match receipts?
- Does the calculated project balance match the bank balance?
- Have there been any delays in the timeline?
- If PCPP and fundraising online: What is the fundraising status? If the full project amount has yet to be donated, is there still time to implement the project?

In an effort to uphold the Peace Corps' approach to development, all projects in excess of $10,000 require detailed planning, thorough review, and several approvals. Volunteers

submitting projects above $10,000 should be prepared to undertake a more detailed initiative; they may wish to work with their communities to consider scaling down a large project into smaller individual activities that support the original project goals.

# VI. Projects that Require Special Consideration

## A. Scholarship Programs (PCPP and SPA Only)

Scholarship programs can be effective tools to encourage education and increase retention in schools. When creating a scholarship program, it is important to plan strategically for the long-term administration and sustainability of the program. Scholarships must also put in place checks and balances to ensure that funds are accounted for and applied as planned. This process involves significant planning and the inclusion of host country nationals and local organizations. The following key points must be addressed in order for a scholarship project to be approved for funding:

- **A small grants application must be submitted**
  Applications must be consistent with the small grants program guidelines outlined in this handbook. The application should spell out very specifically the process host country nationals will use to identify, evaluate, and select recipients and should show a plan for sustainability.

- **The program should become self-sustaining**
  The program's survival—financial and administrative—should not be continually dependent on Volunteers or small grants funding.

- **Help organize a selection committee**
  Creating a committee that will plan how the scholarship program will operate is one of the most important steps. The ultimate goal for the Volunteer should be to assist the community in developing a selection committee and process comprised entirely of host country participants. Volunteers should not be part of the selection process.

- **Selection process**
  Volunteers must not be in a position where they may be perceived as handing out money or be involved in the selection or evaluation of students as recipients of money. The project must demonstrate that only host country nationals should be in charge of the process of nomination, selection, and administration of any funds used for this purpose.

- **Host country nationals**
  Host country representatives from all levels—from the recipients' families to the local or national governments—should be involved.

- **Local organizations**
  If a local organization is involved with the scholarship program, Volunteers, with the help of post staff, should assess the reliability and capacity of the organization for stewardship and management of scholarship funds.

- **No scholarship project may last longer than a school year**
  No scholarship project may last longer than the current school year. If the community would like to have scholarships again the following year, a new small grant application must be submitted.

- **Expectations and evaluations**
  Set realistic expectations and evaluate how well these expectations have been met during the first year. In subsequent years, the scholarship program committee should meet annually to evaluate the previous year and make any changes to the next year's strategy.

- **Final reports must be sent in as well as any extra money**
  Scholarship reporting requirements are the same as Partnership Program requirements (i.e., final report, receipts with financial accounting summary). At the end of each year/project, as with all small grants projects, any unused funds should be returned to the appropriate small grant funding source.

## B.    Training and Skills Building Camps

Volunteers may provide training and skills building in a camp-like setting and, under certain conditions, camps may qualify for small grant support. However, Volunteers should not be setting up or running camps by themselves. Volunteers should work with a local school, community counterpart, or NGO that will sponsor or lead the camp. Appropriate roles for Volunteers include developing technical content and curricula, creating a learning environment, providing training to prepare camp counselors to lead camp sessions, supporting community-led fundraising efforts, and assistance with planning and logistics. Camps supported by small grants should not focus solely on sports or recreational activities. (See Peace Corps Youth Camps Manual for more information.)

Small grant projects for camp-related activities should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Include clear project descriptions with goals and objectives
- Obtain community buy-in, including community and counterpart contributions to cover up to 25 percent of the project cost
- Funds requested for infrastructure, equipment, and materials should support the training to be provided, and not be included as the principal justification for grant support
- Grant funds cannot be used to purchase giveaways, commemorative mugs, or prizes; when these items are considered essential to the success of a training project, funds to purchase them should be contributed by the community or a third-party organization

- Include monitoring and reporting indicators that will measure project outcomes
- Include follow-up plans for sharing the learning of campers with peers and the community at large and applying the skills learned during the camp experience in the community throughout the year
- Activities should generally take place within the community and not require travel on the part of the Volunteer or camp participants
- Camps must be safe and should make parents/guardians aware of activities involved
- Staffing of the camp should be well planned, as enough staff must be present to manage all participants
- As with any small grant, a community or organization should assume responsibility for designing the camp, submitting the application, managing the funds, running the camp, and completing reporting requirements, assisted by the Volunteer.

## C.    Water, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Management Projects (SPA and FTF)

As part of the Peace Corps' agreement with USAID, the FTF and SPA programs' Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) requires Peace Corps Volunteers to complete an environmental checklist for water, agriculture, and natural resource management small grants projects. Additionally, **USAID requires water quality testing for all well projects, including drinking water, agriculture, and/or irrigation wells**. While FTF funds may be used for agricultural and irrigation well projects (See Appendix 6: Well Project Requirements for FTF), **SPA funds should not be used for these projects.** As it pertains to water, SPA funds may only be used for water, sanitation and hygiene trainings; hand-washing projects; behavior change activities; materials development; community-led total sanitation; community organization; and latrine projects. These activities are consistent with USAID program element indicators for water sanitation and available Peace Corps WASH training materials.

# Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation of a Small Grants Project

## I.     Demonstrating Progress toward Project Goals & Objectives

One of the most important aspects of planning a project is for Volunteers to determine how to demonstrate, or measure, the success of projects once completed. Documenting the outcomes of small grants projects provides tangible evidence of the impact of Volunteer activities. Further, evaluating the success of a project advances the agency's ability to demonstrate the degree to which the Peace Corps is achieving its strategic goals and enables the Peace Corps to promote transparency by sharing the results of its work with communities and funding partners.

Volunteers and their community counterparts will create goals and objectives for their projects. This includes creating indicators to measure outcomes that will be reported in the final report at the end of the project. These indicators of success must be determined prior to project implementation.

Volunteers may find it useful to create a logical framework, or logic model, to plan their project and set up a monitoring plan for reporting at the completion of the project. A logic model is a visual representation showing the sequence of related events (e.g., inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact) that connect the need for a planned activity or set of activities with the desired outcomes and results (or goal and objective). Appendix 7 provides guidance for designing a logic model.

| Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes | Impact |
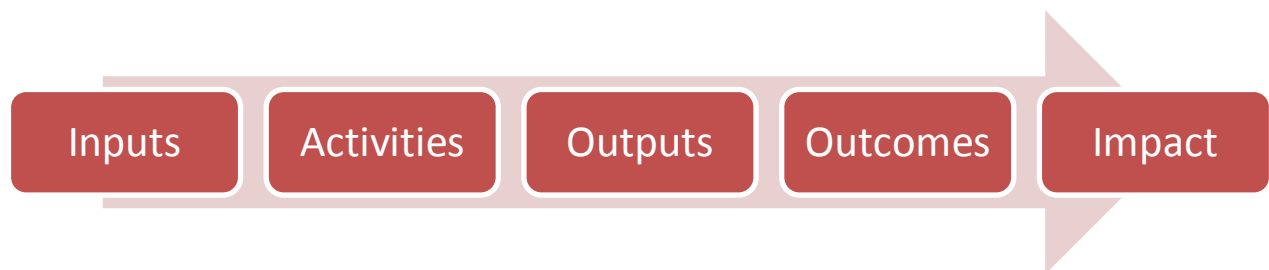
Each project must include indicators to measure progress toward a project's goals and objective, and can be included in the logic model as well.

All projects should have a clear purpose or intended outcome, and set goals and objectives for how the Volunteer and community plan to achieve the final result.

- Purpose: The project purpose statement describes the main target group and the broad public benefit that will result from the project (long-term outcome or impact). The purpose should reflect the visioning process that has occurred with stakeholders. Purpose statements should be long-term.

- Goal: Project goal statements articulate intermediate or longer-term outcomes that need to occur to achieve the project's purpose.

- Objectives: Project objectives articulate the most significant outcome(s) that will result from Volunteer and partner activities and will contribute to achievement of project goals.

A small grants project should not have more than three overarching goals. If the project is requesting funds from SPA, VAST, ECPA, GEF, or FTF, one of the goals may match the required program indicators (found in the Grant Selection Menu section).

Each goal and objective must be linked to an indicator of success for their project. See Grant Requirements, II. Key Components of a Project, Section F to learn more about creating indicators.

Last, Volunteers will need to determine who is responsible for collecting data for each indicator, and when the data collection should take place.

## II.    Standard Small Grants Indicators

In addition to the project-specific goals, objectives, and indicators, all Peace Corps small grants include a standard set of indicators that are applicable across all project types. As all projects are required to incorporate a capacity-building element, these standard indicators will measure if the project was able to build community capacity. Further, these indicators measure if the newly learned skills or technologies have been adopted by project participants. To this end, all small grants projects will measure against these indicators:

PCGO Portal, Peace Corps Application: Part 2 of 2, Tab 2: "Classification and Indicators, section Initial Indicators" shows indicators that must be measured across all small grants projects: capacity development and new technology and practices.

For the capacity-development indicator, the Volunteer must first determine the unit of measurement. Will the project target individuals, service providers, or an organization/association?
- **Individual members of the community:** The main focus of the Peace Corps, whether directly through the work of Volunteers and their work partners or through those trained by Volunteers, is to build capacities at the individual level so community members are empowered to improve their quality of life, be they individual students, farmers, clients served by an NGO, or others.
- **Service providers, trainers, or multipliers:** Strengthening capacity of service providers, trainers, or other multipliers, be they teachers, leaders of an NGO, peer educators, or managers of a farmers' cooperative, helps ensure local leadership for continuing activities into the future.
- **Organizations/associations:** Strengthening organizational capacity, such as management skills within an NGO, helps support other activities in an ongoing, functioning, and supportive environment.

For this indicator, the community and Volunteer will choose the one that best fits the project and determine a target for that indicator.

For the new technology and practices indicator, the community and Volunteer must determine if project participants adopted or changed their behavior according to the project. For example, if the project focuses on gardening, how many participants are expected to adopt new fertilization or planting techniques? If this were a latrine-building project, how many community members might incorporate hand-washing after using the new latrine?

## III.   Funding-Specific Indicators

Volunteers are required to provide indicator information for their selected funding source (for SPA, VAST, ECPA, GEF, and FTF in particular). Post staff should assist Volunteers in understanding which indicators apply to their projects. These indicators are essential to monitoring and evaluating projects and programs, and will be submitted to the appropriate Peace Corps office for reporting purposes. The graphic below summarizes the reporting requirements specific to each program:

**PCPP**

- Peace Corps Partnership Program will solicit friends and families on behalf of the Volunteer, as Manual Section 720 prohibits Volunteers from directly soliciting for funds. In the referral section of the application, Volunteers should provide contact information of friends, familiy, and/or organizations for Peace Corps headquarters to solicit these individuals or organizations. Volunteers are free to share the project webpage when it has been posted to the Peace Corps website to assist in fundraising.
- Project indicators should be outlined and maintained in the monitoring and evaluation section of the application. PCPP and the Volunteer should review the goals and objectives sections when monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the project.

**SPA**

- For all SPA-funded small grants, Volunteers must report on Foreign Assistance Framework standard and custom indicators according to the program element(s) agreed upon by the Peace Corps and USAID.
- Additionally, for SPA and FTF projects only, an environmental checklist is required for agriculture, water, and natural resources management small grants.
- Indicator and activity data must be reported to the mission in a mid-year and annual report.

| VAST | •For all posts, the application and completion report include a set of standard indicators for VAST that have been established by the Peace Corps and the PEPFAR initiative.<br>•These indicators are the same as those used by posts for reporting all HIV/AIDS work in the Agency Initiatives Report. |
| --- | --- |
| ECPA | •The ECPA program is established through an agreement with USAID and operates in the same manner as SPA.<br>•Select posts that have ECPA should work with the USAID mission to identify "custom" indicators specific to their country. |
| GEF | •The GEF program is established through an agreement with USAID and operates much in the same manner as SPA.<br>•Select posts that have GEF funds available to them should work with their Peace Corps headquarters contact to determine indicators specific to their country. |
| FTF | •FTF indicators are determined by the FTF coordinator along with the USAID mission in-country. Volunteers should report on all indicators relevant to their projects. |

## IV.   Discerning Beneficiaries from Participants

Volunteers may need guidance when determining the beneficiaries for their projects. When deciding who is a beneficiary and who is a participant, Volunteers should consider these guidelines (Appendix 8):

- Participants: Those directly involved in the design and implementation of the project, including those who attend trainings or workshops.
    - Participants are usually involved in the project during the project planning and/or implementation phases.
    - Participants receive a transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a result of participation in project activities and may go on to teach what they learned during the project to other community members.
- Beneficiaries: Those who receive an indirect benefit from the execution of the project, but are not involved in its planning or implementation.
    - Beneficiaries often benefit from the execution of the project after the main period of project implementation has passed.

- Beneficiaries may receive a transfer of knowledge, skills, or abilities from participants who were trained during the main period of project implementation.

## V.    Data Quality

Data demonstrate results, measure progress toward goals, and help inform policy decision making. Key data quality standards include validity, integrity, precision, reliability, and timeliness. All small grants require the collection of indicator data. At the most basic level, Volunteers should record attendance at small grant-funded events and submit signed participant lists with their final reports. This helps to ensure that the data reported to partners and donors is accurate and auditable.

## VI.    Data Collection

It is essential that indicators are measured through quality data collection tools. Some helpful tools are included below:
- Participant attendance lists
- Anonymous post-training or workshop surveys
- Detailed tracking sheets
- Pre- or post-test assessments

These types of data collection tools provide valid and reliable information about the project's successes and goals and allow for more accurate reporting in the final report. They should be considered at the onset of the project, and utilized throughout implementation.

# Application Process

Applying for a small grant begins well before a Volunteer physically fills out the small grants application. Volunteers must earn the trust of community partners to determine an appropriate project to plan and implement. When a Volunteer and his or her community are ready to apply for small grant funding, they should do so according to the post-specific procedures on which they have received training.

The web-based application system, Peace Corps Grants Online (PCGO), enables Volunteers to apply for small grant funds through an online portal system. This system is linked with a post-level PCGO database that allows each post to comprehensively manage all of its grant programs, including applications and final reports. While the database will assist posts in administrative oversight, each post may develop post-specific criteria and/or procedures outlining the application process for Volunteers. Additionally, posts may create a brief supplemental application or guide in the local language for Volunteers and community members to complete together, to facilitate community engagement in the needs assessment process. (See the PCGO Self-Guided Staff Training to learn how to use the portal and database.)

The following section outlines the process for Volunteers and communities when developing small-scale development projects and applying for Peace Corps Small Grants funding.

## I.     Orienting Volunteers

All Volunteers should be oriented and trained by post staff on how to access small grants during their service. As part of this training, Volunteers should have an understanding of the role of small grants within the Peace Corps' approach to development and methods to design projects and write applications. This can be presented during pre-service training (PST) and/or during in-service training (IST). (Post staff may use this PowerPoint and Session Plan to introduce Peace Corps Small Grants and PCGO to Volunteers. Staff should edit these tools to match the funding sources available at your post.)

Post staff should provide an overview document (see example from Guyana) to Volunteers explaining the different funding sources available to Volunteers at their post and the specific requirements. The Small Grants Volunteer Handbook provides specific program information for Volunteers and guidance for developing strong projects. Volunteers should be knowledgeable of which small grant resources (SPA, PCPP, VAST, ECPA, GEF, FTF) are available in their country and the post-specific requirements for submitting a small grant application. Volunteers should also be made aware of their responsibility to follow Peace Corps requirements and guidelines that do not allow them to solicit funds outside of the Small Grants Program. Volunteers are prohibited from accepting gifts on behalf of the Peace Corps. Volunteers may, however, promote approved Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) projects among their family and friends in accordance with Peace Corps guidance. Volunteers should refer any other potential donor to the country director. The country director may then work with GGM and OGC to determine whether the gift is appropriate and how best to receive the donation (MS721).

Lastly, post staff should familiarize Volunteers with the online grant application process when initially training Volunteers on the types of small grant funding opportunities available at that post. Volunteers should be made aware of the review process and the types of confirmation emails they can expect throughout the application and implementation process.

## II.    Funding Availability

Each program utilizes different funding sources for Volunteer community projects. Due to the nature of the PCPP program, which fundraises for projects, the program operates on a rolling funding basis without set funding amounts or limits each fiscal year. However, other small grant programs that are supported by U.S. government agencies and posts receive set amounts of money each year for the grant programs that may be available at post (SPA, VAST, ECPA, GEF, FTF, etc.). These programs are further limited in that funding may only support grants in particular programmatic areas. Therefore, posts should think strategically about how to communicate with Volunteers about funding availability across programs when calling for grant applications.

## III.    When a Volunteer Can Apply

Volunteers may apply for funding for small grant projects after a minimum of three months at a site, and preferably after having received PDM training.

- Volunteers should only begin working with their communities to design and submit an application after discussing the proposed project with their APCD or other appropriate programming staff.
- Volunteers should acquaint themselves with the PCGO system. They may start an application, enter project details, and keep their application in "draft" status for the duration of the planning period until they are ready to submit.
- To allow sufficient time for completion of a project prior to a Volunteer's close of service, Volunteers may not submit projects during the last three months of their service unless the country director approves a written justification explaining how the project will be implemented and completed before the Volunteer's close of service date.
- Peace Corps headquarters recommends that Volunteers implement **one grant at a time**. Once a Volunteer has successfully completed and closed a small grant, the small grants coordinator and other appropriate staff may permit a Volunteer to undertake the management of simultaneous grants.
- Additionally, Volunteers **cannot utilize two different funding sources to contribute to the same project** (e.g., SPA and PCPP funds may not be applied to the same project).

## IV.    Community Involvement

Volunteers should work with the community organizations throughout the entire application process. As Peace Corps small grants support community development, projects should be initiated and driven by the Volunteer's community, rather than solely by the Volunteer.

As the PDM manual states, "Community projects are most successful when they result from locally perceived desires or needs and where community members take part in the planning, implementation, and evaluation. This development process builds the community's capacity to better its own situation, strengthen its resources, and work toward solving problems more independently in the future" (Page 25). Thus, it is important for post staff to ensure that each project demonstrates community engagement and involvement, that there is a clear and specific need for the project, and that it will be sustainable upon the Volunteer's departure.

Here are ways to ensure community involvement:
- Local language summary or document
- Counterparts come to post for project advocacy[6]
- Counterparts attend PDM workshops with Volunteers
- Post staff visit project/community sites
- PACA mapping
- Community assessment tools

To verify community ownership and initiation, and as mentioned in the Grant Requirements, II. Key Components of a Project, Section H, a 25 percent **minimum** community contribution of the total project cost is required for each small grant project. Volunteers may help their communities quantify how much time, labor, transportation, and financial or material support the community will provide. Most often, communities contribute much more than 25 percent in material, financial, or physical contributions. Post staff may utilize and distribute the guide in Appendix 3 for valuing in-kind contributions.

## V.    Required Materials and Project Development

### A.    Application
The Peace Corps small grants application guides Volunteers through a series of sections that ask Volunteers and their communities to think through all aspects of the project, including timeline, budget, and how the project will be monitored and evaluated. If a post decides to request additional information (a local language summary, for example), it may do so, though this will be a separate, supplementary document that should be uploaded to the project in the PCGO system.

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[6] Some posts have found it helpful to have community counterparts come to the post to advocate for the funding of their project application. This depends on the size of the country and community members' ability to travel to the post. While it is something that ensures community members are engaged and serious about the project, the distance could be prohibitive.

The application must be filled out for all grant projects. Volunteers and community counterparts should complete Part One and Part Two together, to the greatest extent possible. Important things to know about the PCGO application are below:

- For Volunteers with limited Internet access, an offline solution does exist. The first four sections (five for SPA) must be completed online, then a custom application can be downloaded as a printable Word or PDF document. Volunteers will still need to transfer application details into the PCGO portal, when ready to submit. Please contact pcgo@peacecorps.gov for any PCGO questions or to request a workaround solution.
- All applications are editable until final submission. Volunteers should save often and complete each section.
- All applications must be submitted in the PCGO format.
- Volunteers should follow the Step-by-Step Guide for help with filling out their PCGO application.

The application has formal signature forms at the end of the document. All forms must be completed and signed by all parties. Signature forms should be signed, scanned, and uploaded to PCGO.

### B.    Additional Forms

Volunteers are required to submit additional forms in the following instances:

- **If the project budget is more than $10,000,** the Volunteer will need to fill out the Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request form.
- **If the budget includes items that require approval,** such as prizes, motor vehicles, costs for Volunteers, or international travel, the Volunteer will need to submit a Project Cost Approval Request.

## VI.    Pre-Committee Review

Each post has a small grants committee, which reviews all applications. **At a minimum, all approved projects must follow the basic grant guidelines.**

Applications for SPA and VAST projects must also fall within the scope of the program areas or elements under which the mission and PEPFAR has contributed funds. The small grants coordinator should use the PCGO database to monitor all funding availability throughout the fiscal year, with particular focus at the beginning of the fiscal year for VAST and SPA programs.

Post small grant programs are meant to function as agile funding mechanisms. Although projects must be considered for their capacity-building potential, the application review process should be structured to facilitate timely decision making and distribution of funds, with minimal paperwork for Volunteers and Peace Corps staff.

In managing the application review process and calendar, post staff may find it useful to consider
- the total amount of the post's SPA and VAST grant authority;
- seasonal activity calendars of Volunteers and their counterparts (e.g., education Volunteers might request funds for projects that will take place during school breaks);
- budget cycle realities and the potential effects of a continuing resolution; and

- dates of PDM workshops or other similar trainings, after which application submissions may increase.

Post staff must ensure that small grant guidelines, deadlines, and review procedures are effectively communicated to Volunteers. Effective means of communicating small grant information include distributing informational pamphlets, including programmatic updates and reminders in Volunteer newsletters, and scheduling small grant orientation sessions at PST or IST.

Prior to committee review, the small grants coordinator should review each application to ensure that all sections have been thoughtfully completed and meet the minimum requirements for approval. The coordinator will have an opportunity to request changes or updates from the Volunteer through the PCGO system. Once a project has been reviewed by the coordinator and all requirements have been met, the application may be passed on (electronically, or converted to a PDF report and printed out) to the review committee participants.

## VII.  Grant Committee Review

Posts are required to review and approve small grants projects through a small grants committee. Typically, post-level small grants committees have four to six members and are composed of one or more of the following:

- Country director (CD)
- Small grants coordinator
- Director of programming and training (DPT)
- Associate Peace Corps directors (APCD) or program managers (PM)
- Director of management and operations (DMO)
- Program assistants and training assistants
- Financial assistants
- Volunteers (posts must take into consideration Volunteer safety and security and potential interference with community work before placing Volunteers on the small grants committee. Volunteer members are typically third-year Volunteers, Volunteer leaders, or Volunteers who have completed a successful small grants project)
- For SPA: a USAID mission representative (at the mission's discretion for SPA projects)
- Host country nationals and/or NGO representatives, as appropriate or possible

One member of the committee should serve as the grant coordinator. The small grants coordinator is responsible for organizing any meetings, collecting and distributing project applications to committee members before review meetings, ensuring all members of the committee have reviewed (either in person or through the PCGO database) and approved the application, ensuring all electronic or post-required approval signatures have been obtained, and ensuring project status is accurate for each project under review or implementation.

The grant committee should meet (in person or electronically) to review applications at least quarterly, and more frequently (e.g., monthly) if the volume of applications necessitates more

frequent review. The calendar should be established far in advance and publicized to Volunteers in newsletters and other formats, so that Volunteers can plan ahead to submit their applications on time. As PCPP projects may be submitted on a rolling basis, committee review may have to be more frequent or may be done virtually.

The small grants committee should establish the following:
- Post-specific project criteria or requirements
- Submission, review, and approval procedures
- A review calendar and application submission deadlines
- Post-specific grant materials (e.g., local small grants handbook, small grant funding announcements, training materials, etc.)

Most posts use a project review checklist to help Peace Corps staff, Volunteers, and communities assess the strengths and weaknesses of small grant projects. Such a checklist should become part of any information guide that the post disseminates to Volunteers and communities. These topics for review are incorporated into the PCGO database and Portal systems; for posts that wish to use a paper copy for in-person meeting reviews, a sample project review checklist is included in Appendix 9. Post staff must provide orientation and training to the members of the small grants committee. Also, longer-serving members should play a role in providing guidance to newer committee members.


# VIII.  Assigning Project Numbers

Once the grant committee approves the application, the post's small grants coordinator will change the grant status in PCGO to Post Approved. This will automatically assign a number to the project in PCGO. The number will be tied to the application and will serve as the identifying factor for the project in the PCGO database. This number is used to track the project in the PCGO database, and should also be included when obligating the project in FORPost (not applicable to PCPP projects).

The project number identifies the grant's funding source, the fiscal year in which the project is funded, and the post (by a three-digit country location code), and will be used to track it until it is completed and all programmatic and financial reports have been submitted.

Below are the codes for each grant program:
- Small Project Assistance (SPA) = **SP**
- Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) = **PP**
- Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) = **VA**
- Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) = **EC**
- Feed the Future (FTF) = **FF**
- Global Education Framework (GEF) = **GEF**

Approved projects are numbered as follows, using the example of a project in Albania that was approved and obligated in October 2015:

| | |
|---|---|
| **SP** | = SPA Program |
| **15** | = Fiscal year 2015 |
| **304** | = the location code for Albania |
| **002** | = the second SPA project for which funding was obligated in Albania during fiscal year 2015 |

In this example, **SP-15-304-002** becomes the assigned number. For VAST, PCPP, FTF, GEF, or ECPA, the prefix will differ and be auto-populated by the application when the project status is changed to "Post Approved."

The grant number should **not** be confused with the obligation number.

Also, please note that the project number sequence (i.e., 002 in the example above) should be kept separate for each program and each fiscal year. For posts with several SPA program elements, project numbers will continue in numerical sequence regardless of the SPA program element. So continuing with the example above, the third project for which funding is obligated through SPA in Albania during fiscal year 2015 would have the number SP-15-304-003. And if the last project in fiscal year 2014 for SPA was SP-14-304-019, the first project in fiscal year 2015 would be SP-15-304-001, **not** SP-15-304-020.

**All emails pertaining information about a small grant must include project numbers.**

## IX.    Tracking Projects

The new PCGO database serves as a detailed tracking system for posts. All projects, from submitted applications, to approved projects being implemented in the field, to projects that are closed out or cancelled, are registered and searchable within the PCGO database at each post.

The database electronically records and manages projects and their status seamlessly (connecting the Volunteer application and final report portal system with the post and headquarters PCGO database). The grant coordinator has access to the database, and manages the projects within the database. Peace Corps headquarters also has the ability to see project status and information in the same database. This resource not only assists posts in tracking and managing all projects and funding programs, but allows Peace Corps headquarters access to information on a global scale without burdening posts with information and reporting requests.

Additionally, PCGO serves as an electronic record and these files do not need to be duplicated in the shared files, nor printed and saved in paper files. Post staff should refrain from doing so, and instead use the database as their tracking tool to follow a project from application, submission, review, funding, implementation, and close out.

# Processing Approved Projects

## I.  Processing Guidelines for all Small Grants Programs

### A.  Information Disseminated to Volunteers Prior to Receiving Funds

- If appropriate, Volunteers should complete the [Financial Management and Capacity Building Tool](#) during the project design phase to assist in determining which disbursement method is most appropriate for their project. After the Volunteer completes the form, the post should review disbursement options with Volunteers referencing the results from the tool.
- Volunteers and their community partners must receive specific instructions on how to account for the use of small grant project funds, the level of documentation required to substantiate procurements, and any additional post-specific accounting procedures.
- Volunteers and/or community organizations should not expect to be reimbursed if they spend their own money on project expenses prior to receiving grant funds from the Peace Corps with the expectation of being reimbursed.
- **Volunteers may never directly accept funds except through an approved Peace Corps small grant project. Volunteers may not accept or manage funds on behalf of the Peace Corps, community groups, or any other entity.**

### B.  Disbursement of Small Grants Funds

The Financial Management and Capacity Building Assessment Tool ([Appendix 2](#)), used by Volunteers in the project planning and design phase, may be used to help determine which disbursement method is most appropriate for the small grant project. Post staff should review each project using the scores from the Financial Management and Capacity Building Assessment Tool, as each small grant project is specific to the community and Volunteer(s) implementing the initiative. Additionally, local concerns such as banking restrictions, Volunteer safety and security, and general post procedure may determine fund disbursement regardless of the scores achieved in the tool.

- **Disbursement directly to community organization**
  Depositing funds in the community organization's bank account gives the organization direct experience in managing money, strengthens the financial management capacity of the organization, and reduces the need for Volunteers to travel with or handle large sums of money.

- **Disbursement into a joint account**
  If the community organization does not have an account or if there are concerns about the organization's ability to manage funds on its own, the Volunteer and community organization may seek to open up a joint account for the project funds. The Volunteer should be aware of the fact that because it

is a joint account, the Volunteer shares in the liability for the funds placed in the account.

- **Disbursement to Volunteer in a separate project account**
  If local banking laws make it difficult or impossible to open joint accounts, funds may be deposited into a separate account the Volunteer opens for the project. This reduces potential accountability problems that can result from commingling project funds and the Volunteer's living allowance.

- **Disbursement to Volunteer in his/her primary account**
  If payment cannot be made directly to the community organization and in-country banking restrictions make it exceedingly difficult to establish a joint or separate project account, funds may be deposited in the Volunteer's primary account. Peace Corps headquarters does not recommend commingling a Volunteer's living allowance with small grant funds. If small grant funds must be deposited in a Volunteer's account, Peace Corps headquarters recommends opening a project account following the small grant deposit. If there are fees associated with opening an additional account, it may be included in the project budget. If a Volunteer must keep the funds in a personal account, the DMO or small grants coordinator must establish appropriate safeguards and procedures to ensure that all small grant funds are accounted for prior to a Volunteer's close of service so that Volunteers do not leave the country with small grant funds.

Both the Volunteer and community organization/group implementing the small grant project must sign the small grant liability and agreement forms. The entity or individual receiving the funds is responsible for purchasing and utilizing the funds in accordance with the small grant budget outlined in the application, and for the recording and collection of all receipts and invoices. Any unused funds must be returned to the Peace Corps upon completion of the project and no later than a Volunteer's close of service.

## C. Financial Management and Capacity Building Assessment Tool Scoring

The scores below may be used by post to determine which disbursement method may be applicable to the small grant project. These are suggested options and posts may have specific rules for grant disbursement, which the Small Grants Program at Peace Corps headquarters supports.

| Score | Disbursement Option |
|-------|---------------------|
| 0-6 | - Disbursement to Volunteer in his/her primary account<br>- Disbursement to Volunteer in a separate project account |
| 7-12 | - Disbursement to Volunteer in his/her primary account<br>- Disbursement to Volunteer in a separate project account<br>- Disbursement to a joint account |
| 13-18 | - Disbursement to Volunteer in his/her primary account<br>- Disbursement to Volunteer in a separate project account |

| | • Disbursement to a joint account |
| | • Disbursement directly to community organization |

### D. Ensuring Small Grant Funds are not issued to prohibited sources

It is vitally important that Peace Corps Small Grants Program funds are not sent to organizations or individuals whom the U.S. federal government has identified as a prohibited vendor. Therefore, when a Small Grants Program project identifies an organization or individual other than the Volunteer as the recipient of Small Grants funds, post financial staff must follow the guidance found in OCFO's vendor guidance, Section B, part 8 and 9. All newly created vendors must be checked against the System for Award Management (SAM) and Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) databases. If they are listed as a prohibited vendor, funds cannot be issued to the proposed vendor and the post must inform the regional security officer (RSO).

## II. Processing Approved SPA/VAST/ECPA/FTF Grants

### A. Budget Authority

Transfers of budget authority for the small grant programs funded by U.S. government agencies (SPA, ECPA, GEF, FTF[7]) are distributed to posts at the beginning of each fiscal year, usually in mid- to late October. (VAST funding is distributed on the PEPFAR funding cycle; contact OGHH for specific funding information.) On occasion, due to agency-level budgetary and fiscal considerations, and especially during a continuing resolution, the total amount of the transfer for each program may be spread out over the course of the year. Posts are advised **not to exceed** their grant authority by approving projects in excess of authority already transferred to post. If additional grant authority is needed, posts should contact the Peace Corps headquarters office responsible for the administration of the grant program in question with as much notice as possible.

> U.S. government partner agency obligates funds to the Peace Corps **(beginning of October)**
>
> ⬇
>
> Peace Corps headquarters sends the total fiscal year's budget authority to post, or may send it in installments throughout the year under certain circumstances such as a continuing resolution **(mid- to late October)**
>
> ⬇
>
> Post reviews and approves grant proposals **(throughout the fiscal year)**
>
> ⬇
>
> For each approved proposal, post creates an obligation in FORPost and requests payment by sending a completed project agreement and consent and liability form to OCFO/IGAP, which issues payment via EFT to the Volunteer or community bank account or orders a check to be sent to post **(throughout the fiscal year)**

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[7] FTF small grants projects will only be funded once USAID approves the Environmental Review Form.

## B.      Creating Obligations for U.S. Government-Funded Grant Projects

The DMO or financial assistant creates an obligation for **each** approved project against available budget authority. **Posts must create a separate obligation for each grant.** The DMO maintains an up-to-date accounting of grant obligations through FORPost. The Peace Corps Small Grant Project Agreement is the principal obligating document. In addition to the standard fiscal coding attached to the obligating document, each approved grant project will be given a specific project number (see Application Process, Section VIII about Assigning Project Numbers).

The small grants coordinator sends the Peace Corps Small Grant Project Agreement (signed by the appropriate community representative, the Volunteer, and the country director) for each approved grant project to the post's administrative unit. Either the DMO or another financial staff member will create the obligation and assign an obligation number. When creating the obligation, the DMO or financial assistant should **enter the grant project number in the "item description" line.**

It is possible to request more than one payment for an approved grant project obligation to reduce the Volunteer's or community group's liability in handling these funds. Payments should be made based on a planned activity implementation schedule.

## C.      Requesting Payment for Approved U.S. Government-Funded Grant Projects

To request payment for approved grant projects, a post's DMO or financial assistant must send **copies** of the completed Peace Corps Small Grant Project Agreement with complete fiscal code to the Office of Global Accounts Payable (OCFO/GAP). The **original forms should be retained by post** in the grant project files.

Electronic funds transfers (EFT) are required for all posts with EFT capacity. For those posts without EFT capacity, checks may be ordered or, in exceptional circumstances and for cash-only posts, imprest funds may be used based on a post-specific waiver provided by the Office of Global Accounts Payable.

In general, EFTs are received five business days after processing and checks are received 14 days after processing. Processing information is available in OdyWeb through the EFT Confirmation Report.

# III.   Processing Approved PCPP Grants

Once a PCPP project has been approved by the small grants committee, the small grant application must be submitted to Peace Corps headquarters, which receives donations for all PCPP projects and obligates funds. The figure in the following section shows the PCPP funding process.

## A. Fundraising for Approved PCPP Projects

Upon receipt and acceptance of the application, PCPP markets the project in several ways. Each Volunteer should submit a list of individuals and organizations with whom the Volunteer has a personal connection. These generally include friends, family, and professional contacts. GGM will contact each of these referrals directly and list the Volunteer's summary on the Peace Corps website.

Volunteers can help by contacting friends, family, fraternal organizations, civic groups (such as Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs), and other parties to tell them about their projects. All donations and potential donors should be directed to GGM. The fundraising time frame depends on the project type, amount requested, strength of the Volunteer's referrals, and clarity of the summary provided in the application. Projects remain online until they are fully funded, at which point the project is automatically removed from the website and online donations can no longer be made toward the project. Though there is no guarantee a project will be funded, on average it takes three to four months for projects under $4,000 to be funded.

**Peace Corps headquarters receives notification of approved project through PCGO**
- PCPP accepts proposals throughout the year and they may be funded at any time
- Country director may submit country fund authorization at this time to partially or fully fund project

**PCPP Project posted on the Peace Corps website for fundraising**
- Peace Corps headquarters contacts (email or mail) all referrals included in PCPP application
- Any donor may give to PCPP projects fundraising online
- Volunteer may request budget amendment if neccessary

**PCPP project fully funded**
- Peace Corps headquarters staff takes project offline, creates authorization memo and obligation
- Signed authorization memo is given to OCFO/GAP to send funds to designated account

**Post notification**
- Peace Corps headquarters sends notification to post that funds are en route
-Peace Corps headquarters includes list of donors (who have given consent) for Volunteer to contact/thank

**Note: If a proposed project does not reach its fundraising goal, GGM will not release the funds already raised for that project. If the Volunteer would still like to access the amount raised, s/he will need to submit a budget amendment (see section C) and a narrative detailing how a scaled-down version of the project would be possible with less funding. If this is not possible, the project will be canceled and funds will not be released.**

## B.    Obligation and Sending of Funds from Peace Corps headquarters

Once a project is fully funded, the Partnership Program authorizes funds to be disbursed to the Volunteer. Funds remain in Peace Corps headquarters until they are obligated to the specific Partnership project and disbursed to the Volunteer, when the project is fully funded. Once funds are obligated by GGM, the authorization memo is sent to the Office of Global Accounts Payable in Peace Corps headquarters, which sends funds to the Volunteer's Peace Corps bank account.

Once funds are sent to the Volunteer, the authorization memo is sent to post and with a donor list and information on the sponsors. This information should be kept on file at post and given to the Volunteer to write thank-you letters and send progress updates to donors.

As a U.S. government agency, the Peace Corps is bound by the Privacy Act: "No agency shall disclose any record which is contained in a system of records by any means of communication to any person, or to another agency, except pursuant to a written request by, or with the prior written consent of, the individual to whom the record pertains." If a donor gives permission for the Peace Corps to share his/her contact information with the Volunteer, it will be included in the donor list. If the donor does not give permission, Peace Corps staff will not include the information. The Peace Corps will only share the name and contact information with Volunteers if authorized and, if included, a personal message. The Peace Corps does not include the donation amount.

## C.    Budget Amendments

If it is necessary to alter the proposed budget between submission and full funding, an updated budget and narrative can be submitted to the country director, small grants coordinator, and the program manager for approval. The Volunteer should include a narrative explaining the changes and the reasons for them. Additionally, be mindful of the following:

- Budget decrease: If the new (lower) amount has already been raised, the funds will be released to the Volunteer immediately.
- Budget increase: The community contribution must still total at least 25 percent of the new budget amount. If a project needs more funds after it has been fully funded, a budget amendment will be considered on an individual case basis.

## D.    Use of Country Funds to Support PCPP Projects

The objective of country funds is to give posts the ability to better leverage private-sector support for approved Peace Corps Partnership Program projects. Country funds give returned Volunteer groups, other private-sector entities, and individuals the opportunity to support a specific country while giving posts the flexibility to determine how the money may be allocated among their approved PCPP projects. All donations to GGM country funds will be used only for approved PCPP projects. Country funds are subject to GGM country fund guidance.

Each post may determine its own guidelines for distributing country funds—when those funds are available—to PCPP projects. If a post would like to fund a project quickly, post staff may submit a country fund authorization form at the same time as the approved

small grants application. Once the application with the country fund authorization is received by Peace Corps headquarters, funds can be allocated to the PCPP project and obligated to the designated account.

The small grants coordinator or country director may request country fund balance updates. They may also request a donor list from a PCPP program specialist, so they know who has given or if funds are for special projects, such as to support Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment projects. **Donor lists for country funds are for post staff only and are not to be shared with Volunteers.** Donors must give express permission for their information to be shared: The donor lists supplied to posts do not filter the donor information to be viewed by Volunteers.

# Grant Management

## I.      Volunteer, Community, and Post Management of Grant Funds

It is essential that all small grant funds are accounted for and properly documented throughout the small grant process. Though each grant program receives funds from varying sources (VAST, FTF, GEF, and SPA from the U.S. government, PCPP from private donors), all programs are subject to audit by the funding agency or grantor. In addition, the Peace Corps inspector general may review Small Grants Program documentation during the course of an audit or program evaluation. The DMO, in coordination with a post's small grants committee, is responsible for establishing appropriate procedures to safeguard funds and to monitor budgets for each grant throughout the life of the project.

As a part of the application process, Volunteers and counterparts/communities must sign liability and project agreement forms in order to complete and submit their projects. These documents hold the Volunteer or community liable—depending on whom the funds are disbursed to—for the funds they are receiving. The individual receiving the funds is also responsible for documenting all purchases made throughout the duration of the project, and submitting corresponding receipts.

## II.      Using PCGO to Track Project Expenditures

As part of their orientation to the Small Grants Program, or upon approval of a project, Volunteers and their community partners must receive instructions on how to account for the use of project funds and the documentation they are required to obtain to track purchases and procurements.

At a minimum, Volunteers and partners must do the following:

- Volunteers must document each project expenditure in the PCGO final report. Volunteers should work with the local organization to keep the "Final Report" under the "Budget" tab up-to-date, thereby building the community's capability to manage and account for grant funds. If the community organization does not have computer or Internet access, the Volunteer can print out the final report and fill it in manually with the community organization.[8] The "Final Report" tab within the final report budget should represent all spending of the grant funds as well as the community contributions (in-kind or monetary).

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[8] While PCGO allows Volunteers to print the application and final report to fill in by hand, it should be noted that all documents can only be officially submitted in electronic format via the PCGO system. For example, if a Volunteer prints out the project log to monitor project expenses on paper, he or she must transfer the expenses to the electronic version for submission.

- Invoices should be obtained for all large purchases. Invoices should be legible, include an English translation, and contain the name of the vendor, name of the purchaser, date of the purchase, and an itemization of materials purchased, including quantity, unit cost, and the total amount of the purchase.

- For goods and services where invoices are not traditionally used (e.g., artisan skilled labor), receipts should be collected to confirm the date the service was provided, the name of the service provider, the number of hours or days worked, an hourly or daily rate, and the total amount paid, converted to U.S. dollars.

- All invoices and receipts (documenting purchases and/or in-kind contributions) must be submitted by the community and Volunteer to the post's small grants coordinator. Invoices representative of the community contribution amount (including in-kind transactions) should be clearly labeled, as should invoices representing costs covered by grant funds. While both should be submitted for review, the post needs to keep only the grant fund expenditure receipts on file. Along with invoices and receipts, Volunteers and their community must submit the final report via the PCGO system upon conclusion of the project and prior to the Volunteer's departure from post.

- Volunteers must provide an accounting of **all** expenditures of grant funds in the "Final Report" budget tab within the final report. If a purchase was made with grant funds that was not outlined in the initial budget, Volunteers **must still document the transaction** in this tab. The DMO should review this report to ensure that all funds are accounted for and that funds were spent in accordance with the approved budget. Discrepancies must be resolved prior to the close of service of the Volunteer. The DMO has the right to request proof from a Volunteer to verify a purchase or transaction. A Volunteer must be prepared to provide this if he or she is unable to account for lost or missing receipts or invoices.

## III. Post-Approval for Changes to Grants

Each post should establish a process for implementing changes to project activities or budgets after a project is underway. If changes do not require requesting additional funds, are relatively minor, do not change the project scope or objectives, or do not entail significant revisions to the approved budget, then it may not be necessary for the Volunteer and community to contact the small grants committee. In these scenarios, though a budget amendment is not needed, the Volunteer should ensure all purchases, contributions, and changes to the project are recorded in the final report. However, where activities significantly change the approved activities, budget, or the scope or objectives of the project, then the Volunteer or community should receive prior approval from the small grants committee to ensure that funds are being used appropriately.

For budget changes in particular, posts can set a threshold above which prior approval is required. A suggested threshold is 25 percent change in any budget categories. For example, a post might require that if a budget reallocation would result in an increase or decrease of 25 percent from the approved budget in any budget category, then prior approval would be required.

Such prior approval need not be a lengthy process and may be carried out by email or phone, depending upon available means of communication. Post staff should ensure that post-approved changes are appropriately documented in the project file.

Budget changes that result in either an excess or shortage of funds must be accounted for in both the detailed budget and the narrative sections of the final report. The line item in the detailed budget may state something like "Bill of Collection issued … $100" or "Additional funds issued due to …" The narrative section should explain why the budget needed to change.

## IV.    Supplemental Funding Amendments

Posts generally should not approve amendments to add funds to existing projects. Volunteers and their communities should receive sufficient orientation to the Small Grants Program (or participate in Project Design and Management training) to enable them to prepare realistic budgets that include all necessary and appropriate costs. Volunteers may also consult with the small grants committee or financial staff at post during the project development process for assistance in preparing budgets.

In the case of budget shortfalls resulting from poor budgeting or incorrect calculations, the small grants coordinator can suggest the following:

- The community contributes additional funds.
- The project be redesigned to stay within the original approved budget.
- The budget be revised to eliminate unnecessary costs and cover the shortfall.

If post believes that, in an exceptional case, supplemental funding should be approved, the post should contact the appropriate Peace Corps headquarters Small Grants contact for approval before proceeding to amend any project budget.

| | |
|---|---|
| **PCPP** | • If there are funds in the country fund, the country director could allocate funds to the project in need of more funds.<br>• With approval from Peace Corps headquarters, the project could be placed back online to raise the additional funds needed. |
| **SPA**<br>**VAST**<br>**ECPA**<br>**FTF**<br>**GEF** | • The country director must review and approve increases to the project budget. The DMO should increase the original obligation accordingly, keeping the same project number.<br>• When the project is completed, the Volunteers must report on the total amount of funding received for the project.<br>• To offset the possible negative effects of inflation, posts are encouraged to obligate and liquidate projects as close as possible to their scheduled start dates, so that there is the shortest possible time between project approval, payment requests, and transfer of funds. |

## V.    Unused Funds

In almost all instances, any funds remaining at the end of a project should be returned to the post. Volunteers or community organizations cannot use remaining funds to start new projects or to significantly expand the scope of the original project. Small grants training should emphasize that well-designed and -managed projects are completed on time and within budget. In other words, the Peace Corps expects that approved project budgets and timelines will closely correspond to actual expenditures and timelines. However, at the discretion of the small grants committee, if only a small amount of funds remain, they may be used to fund additional reasonable costs that fall within the scope of the original project.

The post's DMO should follow standard agency collection procedures to credit unused funds against the original obligation. For PCPP, when funds are returned, they will be placed in the global fund and allocated to projects based on the Global Fund Guidance. For SPA, FTF, GEF, and VAST, posts are able to use the "recovered" budget authority to support additional grants during the same fiscal year. Unused funds are extremely difficult to collect once a Volunteer has left post, therefore every effort should be made to collect unused funds while a Volunteer is in-country.

# VI. Lost, Stolen, Misused or Unaccounted for Funds

If grant funds or project supplies (such as bags of concrete or computers for a lab) are lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted for during the implementation of a project, the Volunteer must immediately notify the small grants coordinator at post who will, in turn, notify the DMO, safety and security coordinator, and other staff as appropriate. The DMO and/or small grants coordinator should then contact the appropriate Peace Corps headquarters Small Grants Program contact immediately (i.e., your SPA, PCPP, VAST, ECPA, FTF, GEF contact at headquarters). The Small Grants Program contact will then report the incident/issue to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in accordance with MS 861. The OIG may choose to open an investigation or may refer it back to the agency to handle. If the project is funded by SPA, the CD should notify the USAID mission of the incident, the amount lost, the steps taken to resolve the situation, and the possibility of recovering funds and/or supplies.

If the OIG refers the case back to the agency, it is up to the CD and Peace Corps staff to determine liability. The small grants coordinator will direct the Volunteer to submit a memo to explain the circumstances of the missing funds or misuse of funds. If appropriate, the DMO may ask the Volunteer or community to file a police report or post staff may communicate directly with local authorities as appropriate.

The CD will determine whether or not the Volunteer was negligent and should be held liable for repaying all or part of the small grant funds. The CD will then prepare a memo to the appropriate Peace Corps headquarters small grants contact of his/her determination of liability. This memo is to be submitted as soon as possible, along with a copy of the consent and liability acceptance form that was signed at the time of project approval. If the Volunteer was determined negligent, the Volunteer will be responsible for repaying the funds and/or the amount equal to the worth of the lost supplies. The DMO should initiate collection procedures at post to obtain repayment as soon as possible by having a bill of collection issued to the Volunteer.

Generally, when funds are lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted for, the Volunteer and the community work together to determine what can be accomplished with the remaining funds. Typically, additional funds will not be awarded to replace lost or stolen funds, though this may be addressed by post with the Small Grants Program contact at headquarters on a case-by-case basis. When submitting the small grants final report, the Volunteer must report on the full amount of funding allocated to the project, including the lost or stolen funds and/or supplies.

If a Volunteer or staff person is uncomfortable or concerned about reporting lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted for funds to the post, he or she may contact the Peace Corps OIG hotline directly:

OIG Hotline: 202.692.2915
Toll-free: 800.233.5874
Email: oig@peacecorps.gov

## VII. Early Termination and Transfer of Project Responsibility

### A. Early Termination

In the event of the early termination (including resignation, medical separation, administrative separation, or interrupted service) of a Volunteer with an ongoing small grant project, post staff must determine if the project can be completed. If all small grant funds have been disbursed and used to carry out the major portion of project activities, a post may allow the community to finish the project on its own, without the need to transfer responsibility to another Volunteer. However, if the project is not near completion and major project activities remain incomplete or funds remain unspent, post staff should either cancel the project and collect unspent funds or transfer responsibility to another willing Volunteer. (Note: In the case of an official evacuation or temporary suspension of a Peace Corps post, posts should contact the appropriate Peace Corps headquarters small grants contact for advice on closing out open projects.)

Whether the project is transferred or canceled, post staff should make every effort to obtain an update on the status of the project and an accurate accounting of the use of grant funds up to the date of termination. Accordingly, prior to the departure of the early terminating Volunteer, the small grants coordinator or DMO should verify receipts for expenditures already incurred and logged in the budget tab under "Final Report."

### B. Transfer of Project Responsibility

If post elects to transfer responsibility to another Volunteer, this transfer should be clearly documented using the Transfer of Responsibility form (Appendix 10) and, if the new Volunteer will be accepting funds directly, a Volunteer Liability Signature Form (available under "Documents and Print Outs" on PCGO). The new Volunteer must accept the transfer willingly, be oriented on his or her responsibilities in overseeing the completion of the project, and agree to assume responsibility for all reporting obligations. An explanation for any discrepancies between funds allocated to the Volunteer and receipts collected should be documented and attached to the transfer form. Posts must upload the Transfer of Responsibility form to PCGO and alert the appropriate Peace Corps headquarters small grants contact. Transfer of a project may occur at any time during the process of the project's life cycle. For PCPP projects, projects may be transferred even if the project is still fundraising online.

### C. Canceling a Project

If the post elects to cancel a small grants project due to early termination, the post should attempt to recover all unexpended funds. **The collection should be completed before the Volunteer leaves the country.** If the Volunteer leaves the country without accounting for and returning unused small grant funds in his or her possession, the post should contact Volunteer and PSC Services in OCFO to send a bill of collection to the Volunteer, requesting repayment of the funds in question. When received from the Volunteer, these funds will be posted against the original obligation(s) and the Volunteer will incur no additional liability.

If possible, the small grants coordinator should obtain a final report for the project, regardless of whether the project was completed or not. The report should include

information on the progress made toward meeting project objectives, the results or outcomes achieved, and a final financial accounting.

# VIII. Logos, Branding, and Marking

## A. Peace Corps Logo Guidance

The Peace Corps name and logo may be used only to designate programs authorized under the Peace Corps Act, which may include Peace Corps recruiting and Third Goal activities. The Peace Corps logo may not be altered or manipulated in any manner. Also, the Peace Corps name and logo may not be used by third parties for commercial or fundraising purposes, or for endorsement or promotion of such third parties or their respective goods or services.

In accordance with these guidelines, the name and logo may be used by/for the following:

- In connection with Peace Corps programs, events, and activities that are held to publicize Peace Corps programs at home and abroad (e.g., handouts and logo items to promote Peace Corps programs to the local community), Peace Corps publications (e.g., posts' annual reports or materials, such as brochures, paper fliers), and banners and logo items (e.g., T-shirts) for service project events, trainings, and PST swearing-in ceremonies.
- In connection with Volunteer primary or secondary projects with the written consent of the country director.

As Peace Corps small grants support Volunteer primary or secondary projects, Volunteers may use the Peace Corps logo to raise awareness for their small grants project. However, any flier or website must link back to the Peace Corps website. For example, if a Volunteer is creating a flier to raise awareness for his/her PCPP project fundraising online, the flier must direct donors to the Peace Corps website, where the project is listed. Volunteers should contact the Office of Communications at design@peacecorps.gov for further guidance on the use of the Peace Corps Logo.

Additionally, Peace Corps-produced web banners may be used on websites and social media sites and are available for download at www.peacecorps.gov/media/psa/webbanners. The web banners are intended to promote general awareness and recruitment for the Peace Corps. Web banners must link to the Peace Corps website and may not be altered in any way. The use of a web banner does not constitute authorization to use the Peace Corps name and logo separate and apart from the banner.

## B. SPA, GEF, and FTF Logo Guidance

For SPA and FTF projects, the Peace Corps has agreed to co-brand or co-mark with USAID or Feed the Future logos. This means where SPA/FTF-funded materials, equipment, construction sites, etc., are branded with the Peace Corps name and/or logo, they must be co-branded with the USAID logo in a similar manner. There is no requirement to use the Peace Corps name or logo, but if one does then the USAID name

or logo must also be used. Waiver provisions must be followed if one does not co-brand, i.e., if the Peace Corps name or logo is used without the USAID name or logo. Specific instructions on waivers and the placement of the USAID logo are available via the USAID website at http://www.usaid.gov/branding/. Post staff should contact the USAID mission for in-kind support.

## C. VAST Logo Guidance

For VAST projects, the Peace Corps has also agreed to co-brand or co-mark with PEPFAR. Three logos exist for use by the U.S. government and implementing partners to brand PEPFAR. The PEPFAR logo should be the lead brand, followed by any specific agency logos, when marking PEPFAR-funded materials or programs in-country.

Currently, PEPFAR country-specific logos exist for 30 countries, and they should be used when marking country-specific materials. Those countries without a country-specific logo should use the general PEPFAR logo for foreign audiences. The country-specific logos are available in JPG and EPS.

Whenever the materials will be viewed by a foreign audience that is not country-specific, including at international conferences, the PEPFAR general logo for foreign audiences must be used. This logo includes an image of the standard, rectangular U.S. flag paired with the PEPFAR logo.

In addition, the general logo for foreign audiences must be used any time a PEPFAR program is implemented by the Department of State rather than another implementing agency (for example: an ambassador's small grants programs, regional procurement support office, etc.). This logo includes an image of the standard, rectangular U.S. flag paired with the PEPFAR logo.

The PEPFAR general logo for U.S. audiences should be used when marking program materials that are not country-specific and are directed at an American audience. The general logo is available in JPG and EPS in color and JPG in grayscale.

Contact the small grants coordinator for access to the appropriate PEPFAR logo and further guidance on logo size and placement.

# Project Closeout

At the close of a project, Volunteers and their communities must prepare and submit a small grants final report to their small grants coordinator and Peace Corps headquarters. For PCPP, the small grants final report also acts as a final report for donors who supported the project. Volunteers are encouraged to include photographs showing the implementation and final result of the project with their final report. Peace Corps headquarters will share the final report to donors and other agencies upon request.

## I.    Final Report

The final report mirrors the small grant application. It is similar in that all Volunteers completing a small grant fill out the same document, tailored to the appropriate funding source. As in the application, each funding source requires some unique information that must be reported by the Volunteer in the final report. **The final report should be provided to the Volunteer when their project begins implementation so as to better record goals, outcomes, project spending, and indicators throughout implementation.**

### A.    Submission of Final Report to Post's Small Grants Coordinator by the Volunteer

The Volunteer must submit the small grants final report as soon as the project is completed, and no less than one month prior to his or her close of service. **Posts should not establish a policy that allows Volunteers to wait until their close of service date to submit the final report.** Failure to submit reports in a timely manner reduces the opportunity to address problems that may be identified in the report.

The small grants coordinator should review the reports to ensure completeness and verify that the Volunteer has entered all narrative and budget information requested. As with the application process, the small grants coordinator should utilize the PCGO database to anticipate project closure and ensure all steps have been completed. For SPA, VAST, ECPA, GEF, and FTF the small grants coordinator must ensure that appropriate indicator data is filled out in the appropriate tab of the report (see below).

The small grants final report must be signed by the Volunteer, the small grants coordinator, the director of management and operations, and the country director.

### B.    Submission of Final Report to Peace Corps Headquarters by Post's Small Grants Coordinator

Once a Volunteer's project has been reviewed, funds have been returned (if necessary), and all appropriate documents have been signed, the small grants coordinator will change the status of the project in the PCGO database. Peace Corps headquarters will review all

documents, ensure all unused funds have been returned and appropriate paperwork has been submitted, and will then officially close the project in the PCGO system.

## II.   Reporting and Indicators

Within the final report, as with the application, indicators and reporting are required. This data is submitted to the Peace Corps' partnering agencies and initiatives (USAID, Feed the Future, PEPFAR) to report on the wide and comprehensive work Volunteers implement in the field.

**PCPP**

- PCPP does not require indicators as other Peace Corps programs. This is because the grant funds are not provided by the U.S. government but, rather, by private donors.
- Volunteers should complete the final report in the same manner they would for any other program, as donors (foundations, corporations, high-net-worth individuals) often request the final report for their files and reporting.
- All reporting on projects is essential to monitoring and evaluating the Peace Corps Small Grants Program as a whole and its effects on the communities the Peace Corps serves.

**SPA**
**VAST**
**ECPA**
**FTF**
**GEF**

- If the project was funded by SPA, VAST, ECPA, FTF, or GEF, Volunteers must report on one or more indicators. The small grants final report contains a subset of standard indicators that correspond with activities that Volunteers typically engage in under the program elements for which Peace Corps posts frequently receive funds. The indicators found in the final report should match those included in the small grant application the Volunteer submitted.
- SPA program elements are agreed upon by the USAID mission representative and Peace Corps country director during the annual funding discussions, and may not be changed without explicit approval of the USAID mission.

## III. Verifying Budget and Receipts

The small grants coordinator or the director of management operations (DMO) is responsible for verifying that all purchases and procurements are accounted for and that funds were spent in accordance with the approved budget. Discrepancies must be resolved prior to the close of service date of the Volunteer. As post staff close out Volunteer small grant projects, they may want to reference Appendix 11, which includes a guide for reviewing final reports.

The small grants coordinator or DMO should ensure the following:

- Each disbursement of funds is documented in the project log.
- A final budget may also be provided in addition to the project log.
- Invoices are included for all large purchases. Invoices must be legible, include an English translation, and contain the name of the vendor, name of the purchaser, date of the purchase, an itemization of materials purchased, including quantity, unit cost, and the total amount of the purchase.
- Receipts are included for goods and services for which invoices may not traditionally be used (e.g., artisan/skilled labor). Receipts confirm the date the service was provided, the name of the service provider, the number of hours or days worked, an hourly or daily rate, and the total amount paid, converted to U.S. dollars.
- In the event that funds were spent but have not been recorded with a receipt or invoice, it is the responsibility of the DMO to determine if the funds were spent accurately. This may be done by recording photographs or testimonies from local community members.
- Once the final report, receipts, and finances have been reviewed and verified, the Volunteer and small grant coordinator must ensure that all required signatures are obtained.
- Upon obtaining all necessary signatures, the final report must be submitted to Peace Corps headquarters for close out. It is not necessary for invoices and receipts to be submitted to Peace Corps headquarters, but they must be retained for records at the post.
- Excess or shortages of grant funds must be accounted for in the detailed budget and narrative sections. Increased obligations or bills of collection must be entered as line items in the detailed budget. If the grant application amount and final report amount do not match, this must be addressed.

Volunteers must submit final report data into PCGO through the online portal. All completed signature forms will need to be scanned and uploaded to PCGO. Without all signatures, projects cannot be closed.

## IV. Returning Funds

Once the final report has been reviewed at post, the director of management and operations will determine if there are unused funds that must be returned to Peace Corps headquarters. If there are unused funds at the end of project implementation, Volunteers should try to utilize those

funds to support or enhance their project in line with its original goals and scope. If that is not possible, Volunteers must return the funds. The collection of these funds must be completed before the Volunteer leaves the country.

If funds remain and are turned in by the Volunteer with the final report, the DMO should create a bill of collection to document that the funds were returned to post. The DMO will then submit the returned funds to Peace Corps headquarters through the FORPost system using the original payment obligation for the project.

If the Volunteer does not return unused small grant funds in his or her possession, the post should contact VPS to send a bill of collection (which will include the appropriate fiscal coding) to the Volunteer, requesting repayment of the funds in question. When received from the Volunteer, these funds will be posted against the original obligation(s) and the Volunteer will incur no additional liability.

# Reporting Requirements and Records Management

The final phase of all Peace Corps small grant projects is the submission of the final report to both the post and Peace Corps headquarters at least three months prior to the Volunteer's close of service date. Once a project has been approved in PCGO, Volunteers are able to see the final report template in the PCGO online portal. Volunteers should utilize the final report throughout project implementation to document activities and record information, spending, indicators, goals, objectives, outcomes, and challenges encountered. Submission of a final report for any Volunteers applying for and receiving small grant funds should be incorporated into the COS check-out packet.

## I.      Reporting on Projects

In both the application and final report, indicators are required for reporting purposes. Peace Corps headquarters utilizes these indicators to report the Peace Corps' effects and work in the field to USAID, PEPFAR, and the Feed the Future Initiative. Indicators are essential to the Peace Corps' reporting, and posts should ensure that Volunteers are accurately completing the indicator sections in both the application and the final report.

Posts may also collect project information from Volunteers for their own post-level reporting of the Peace Corps Small Grants Program. The Volunteer Reporting Form (VRF) may be utilized by posts to collect small grant project information for their own reporting purposes.

## II.     Post-level Records Management

Records management at the post-level must be consistent for all Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects.

The retention period for Peace Corps small grant-related files has not yet been scheduled by the National Archives. Therefore, **submitted small grant files cannot be destroyed nor deleted from the PCGO system until further notice**. The Small Grants Working group will notify posts when this has changed. Additional details can be found in the Post Guide to Peace Corps' Records Schedule (Page 19).

The small grants coordinator must retain a complete grant file containing all documentation related to the project (see list below) at post. Starting from FY 2014, all small grant files must be scanned and uploaded to PCGO, including receipts, signature pages, and additional project documentation. PCGO serves as an electronic record and these files do not need to be duplicated in post or Peace Corps headquarters files.  All files should be maintained in accordance with Peace Corps directives on file management and utilize the established naming convention (program name, fiscal year, project number, document title). The Small Grants Project Records

Checklist ([Appendix 12](#)) may assist with ensuring each project file is complete with all necessary documents.

The following materials comprise a complete small grant project file:
- Application (revised versions as well as the final submission)
- Final report
- Signature pages
- Transfer of responsibility form (if applicable)
- Budget amendments
- Original liability forms
- Project agreements
- Post-level agreements
- Reports and evaluations
- Financial documents
- Authorization memos
- Donor lists
- Waivers (from country director and/or Peace Corps headquarters, if applicable)
- Country fund authorization memos (if applicable)
- Significant communication

# Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation of Small Grants Program at Post

This section describes post-level monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRE) of the Peace corps Small Grants Program. MRE is carried out to ensure that small grant programs are properly functioning at posts, to verify that Volunteers are successfully moving projects toward completion, and to assess why grant projects are or are not effective at supporting post's broader program projects and initiatives. MRE can also measure the impact small grants have within the local community, and whether small grants are achieving capacity building and sustainability for the host country. (See Appendix 13: OPATS MRE System)

Taking into consideration the tools and techniques described below and in the Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation (MRE) Toolkit, each year the small grants committee should discuss how the post will monitor and evaluate its grant programs and develop a plan for continuing monitoring and evaluation that lays out clear staff responsibilities and action items. Promising practices that are determined as a result of MRE should be shared with Peace Corps headquarters so the information can be shared with other posts and included in any subsequent grants guidance.

## I.     Grant Program Monitoring and Tracking

### A.     PCGO Database
At any given time, posts will typically have a large number of prospective and ongoing grant projects, spread across different funding sources and at different stages in the process. In order to effectively support Volunteers and be accountable to internal and external audiences (including funding partners), it is critical that each post track the status of each project from application to completion in the PCGO database. In general, the small grants coordinator will be responsible for coordinating day-to-day monitoring and tracking, however other staff may have licenses for the PCGO system, and may play a role in monitoring  projects in the database.

The PCGO database provides a seamless, "one-stop shop" where Volunteers can apply for funds through an application portal, which automatically links to the database for monitoring upon submission. Throughout the process, from draft stage to submission of final report, the project can be tracked by any staff member with access to the database. However, the grants coordinator should have responsibility of overseeing project statuses and contacting the Volunteer if additional information is necessary for a project. All small grant funding sources utilize the PCGO database and need not be tracked externally in a spreadsheet document or other programs; any data housed in PCGO can be exported to Excel for analysis or creation of reports.

Once a Volunteer submits a project, the Volunteer will receive an automatic email stating that his/her project application is under review. The grant coordinator is responsible for

ensuring the project is reviewed and approved, and assigning the correct project status to the application in the database. For key status changes, the Volunteer will receive an automatic email notifying them of the change. When a project is near to completion (three months prior to the initially stated project end date), the PCGO database will automatically send an email to the Volunteer to remind him or her to submit the final report. Once the final sections of a Volunteer's project are completed and submitted, post staff must conduct a final review (led by the grant coordinator), and the project status may be changed to "Completed."

The database is also used to run post-level small grant status reports (i.e., number of projects per fiscal year, beneficiaries, indicators, types of projects by sector, projects that still need funding, etc.). Status reports allow both Peace Corps headquarters and individual posts to quickly gauge the Peace Corps Small Grants Program progress/status in each country.

**Note: When the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) performs audits or evaluations, it will typically review how a post is tracking grant projects. In order to avoid negative findings in OIG reports, posts should ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of the PCGO database, that it is kept up-to-date, and is incorporated into regular business operations.**

## B.      Collecting Data/Information from Volunteers

Post staff should be proactive in monitoring small grants rather than simply reacting to information provided by Volunteers. The PCGO database will assist post in this proactive approach. Each post must ensure it is collecting updates from Volunteers with outstanding projects at least quarterly. Although each post may use whatever means it finds appropriate and effective, including new tools provided in the database, a few options that posts have employed include the following:

### 1.      Reaching Out to Volunteers Directly

The small grants coordinator can proactively reach out to Volunteers by phone, email, text message, or other means to inquire about project status, particularly if there has been no communication via the PCGO system. The small grants coordinator should ensure that s/he records the date that the communication occurs and note any project status updates in the database. The small grants coordinator should also follow up with Volunteers who do not respond within a reasonable timeframe. Finally, project updates should be shared with appropriate staff.

This kind of outreach is effective because Volunteers are often more responsive and may provide more substantive feedback to an individual. Because the database system provides automatic notification emails, the grant coordinator doesn't *need* to communicate with Volunteers on their project status; however, check-ins may be useful for closer project oversight, such as to ensure funds have been received, feedback on budget issues are understood, and general lines of communication are open. Though the shared database cuts down on time-consuming check-ins with hundreds of Volunteers, it is helpful for a grant

coordinator to schedule calls with Volunteers at least once per quarter. The small grants coordinator should spread check-ins over time to reduce the workload. For example, a small grants coordinator can schedule two or three calls a week, rather than doing them all at the end of the quarter.

### 2.    Requiring Regular Status Updates from Volunteers

Though the database prompts Volunteers to submit their final report in a timely manner, some posts may wish to monitor Volunteer work more frequently. Brief status updates can be short and submitted informally through email. Such an update could include

- A brief description of project activities status (What have you done and what is planned next?)
- A budget update (How much of the funds have been spent?)
- Major changes (Do you expect any significant changes to be made to the project?)
- The expected completion date (When do you expect to finish the project?)
- Challenges (What challenges are you facing during project implementation and what support can the Peace Corps provide to help you successfully navigate these challenges?)

### 3.    Volunteer Reporting Tool

To help post staff and Volunteers more accurately report on the work being done in the field, questions may be inserted into the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) to receive regular grant project updates.

## C.    Site Visits

Site visits are perhaps the best way to learn the status of grant projects and to observe first-hand the progress to date. In addition, site visits provide an opportunity to directly engage with host country national work partners regarding the status of the project and gain a more comprehensive picture of the project and its progress.

If resources are available, posts can schedule visits by the small grants coordinator, DPT, or other appropriate staff solely for the purpose of monitoring grants. (Note: If the USAID mission agrees, SPA funds can pay for the travel costs for such a monitoring visit. However, SPA funds may only be used to monitor SPA projects.) If funds for separate monitoring trips are not available, however, posts can capitalize on otherwise scheduled site visits by APCDs or other post staff.

In order to gather comprehensive information from a site visit, the staff member conducting the visit should bring a short interview questionnaire to fill out. This can also be shared with the small grants coordinator, the small grants committee, and any other staff so that appropriate support can be provided to the Volunteer.

## II.    Data Quality Assessment (DQA)

Volunteers will collect small grant activity data for reporting in both PCGO and the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). Post staff should work with Volunteers to emphasize the importance of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRE) processes and quality data collection. The Peace Corps is responsible for data collection, aggregation, and analysis to inform project and program decisions and report to partners and funders. These data must be reliable to be usable, and the Peace Corps is developing guidance to improve the quality of data collected by Volunteers as part of their small grant projects and/or other activities. Data quality includes utilizing tools to track work accurately, in a timely manner. Monitoring project activities correctly, transcribing results appropriately, and storing back-up evidence and records in easy-to-use formats are essential components of the process. Assessing the quality of data involves many steps, all of which strengthen the Peace Corps' work in the field. Data must exhibit these five components:

- Validity - Data clearly and adequately represents the intended result
- Reliability - Data reflects stable and consistent data collection processes and analysis methods over time (e.g. using the same participant list or survey for every workshop conducted throughout the implementation of a small grant)
- Precision - Data have sufficient level of detail to support decision making. For example, if the average number of weeks women breastfeed needs to be collected, data is collected to the nearest week, and not to the nearest month.
- Timeliness - Data are available at a useful frequency, current, and timely enough to help draw conclusions and influence decision making
- Integrity - Data collected have safeguards to minimize the risk of transcription error, manipulation, or error.

Post staff should work with the Volunteers as they design their small grant projects to ensure their indicators will be tracked with reliable and valid data. This process will allow the Peace Corps to:

VERIFY the quality of reported data at posts, and the ability of data-management systems to collect, manage, report, and use quality data.

IMPLEMENT correct measures to strengthen the data management and reporting system and improve data quality.

MONITOR and improve overall Volunteer quality of service, MRE capacity at posts and headquarters, and the capacity of the data management and reporting system to produce quality data.

Peace Corps-specific data quality assurance (DQA) guidance is under review and is available, in draft form, from the Peace Corps monitoring and evaluation team.. Post staff my email this address, M&E_team@peacecorps.gov, to request a copy.

# III.  Grant Program Evaluation

In addition to monitoring and tracking grant operations, posts should engage in more comprehensive program evaluation at the post-level. The purpose of evaluation efforts is to periodically consider not only what results are achieved from small grants, but why projects succeed or fail, and how to improve upon program management. This information allows posts to design strategies to better support Volunteers to design and implement effective small grant projects that promote sustainable results and build capacity. Post should be well acquainted with the [Peace Corps MRE toolkit](#), which is a useful resource for post-level monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

As mentioned earlier in the section each post must pay close attention to the quality of their data. In the context of a small grant project, post must assist the Volunteer in identifying and designing accurate data collection tools, that will most comprehensively measure both baseline data and the end line data collected at the final report stage. In the broader, post-level program evaluation context, data quality is essential for ensuring program funds are being well-managed, projects and review processes are implemented and conducted in a timely manner, and the projects are effectively building capacity and ensuring sustainability for host countries. Quality data also ensures evaluations represent accurately the work Volunteers and posts do in country.

This section describes different ways that posts can engage in evaluations. First, several possible techniques for engaging in informal, internal evaluation are described that can be used to enhance program learning. The techniques described do not require significant resources but can still be used effectively to enhance program performance over time. Second, if posts have the resources available, this section briefly describes the planning and design of full-scale, independent performance evaluations of grant programs at post.

## A.  Informal Evaluation Techniques

### 1.  Final Report Review and Analysis
For each approved project, the Volunteer is required to submit a Peace Corps Small Grant Final Report. These reports are an excellent source of information regarding the outcome of small grant projects, the challenges that Volunteers face in implementing projects, and possible solutions to resolve such problems. The small grants coordinator should ensure that appropriate staff are able to review the reports in the PCGO system (or documents may be export to word or pdf to facilitate sharing). At a minimum, this should include the APCDs/program managers and program assistants/specialists of the sector(s) that the Volunteer works in and that the project falls within. Programming staff should review the reports so that they can identify programmatic best practices for small grants within their sectors.

In addition to distributing reports to post staff for review, two of the questions in the final report may provide more general feedback and learning that could help post to better support Volunteers in designing and implementing projects. Specifically, the final report asks the volunteer:

- What unexpected events (positive or negative) did you encounter during the project? Based on your experiences, do you have any recommendations for others implementing a similar project?
- What were major lessons learned during this project?

Posts are encouraged to review and analyze the responses to these questions to identify trends and major lessons learned. For example, once a year the small grants coordinator (or possibly a PCVL) can collect the responses to these two questions in a spreadsheet, review them all together, and identify trends and recurring obstacles that Volunteers have faced. The analysis should be presented for discussion at a small grants committee meeting, and key findings can then be shared with Volunteers in the volunteer handbook or in other tailored communications to assist Volunteers in designing or implementing their projects. Posts can also utilize the "Reports" function in the PCGO database to compile summary data on all projects, and each program (funding source) utilized or implemented in country. Lastly, post staff can contact Peace Corps headquarters to request additional data on SPA, PCPP, VAST, ECPA, GEF, or FTF if necessary.

## 2.    Volunteer Debriefs
Beyond reviewing and analyzing final reports, posts can also systematically collect feedback from Volunteers about the grant process itself. Such feedback can be very helpful in designing and clarifying processes and support systems for Volunteers.

One way to do this is to require a 15-minute debrief with the small grants coordinator upon submission of a Volunteer's final report. During the debrief, the grant coordinator should use a standard questionnaire to collect the Volunteer's opinions and ideas. Volunteer responses should be written down and collected in the comments section of the PCGO database so that they can be reviewed and analyzed with the responses from other Volunteers to enable the identification of best practices and common challenges. Trends identified from such Volunteer feedback should be shared with the small grants committee on a regular basis (and at least annually) and shared with Peace Corps/headquarters. While this is an additional evaluation step, it can lead to a comprehensive review of program processes and effectiveness.

## 3.    Internally Managed Evaluation of Sample Sites
Posts can also carry out more systematic evaluations of a sample of projects that were completed in past years to assess sustainability and longer-term project impact. By utilizing a program evaluation questionnaire, posts can identify evidence of a project's sustainability. In the past, posts have done this using PCVLs or local staff. However, posts should bear in mind potential bias that an evaluation completed by PC staff or constituents may introduce.

An example from the field can be found in Albania's self-evaluation of the SPA program in 2010.

## B.    Funded Evaluation

Where resources are available, posts are encouraged to conduct an independent, country-level evaluation of the impact or performance of one or more grant programs. Such an evaluation can provide insight into project outcomes and sustainability over a longer period of time (e.g., four to five years), and is useful in identifying trends and major areas of accomplishment. In addition, an independent evaluation limits bias that may be introduced in informal evaluations carried out by the Peace Corps itself. An independent evaluation is also an effective tool for demonstrating project impact to in-country partners, including the host government, funding partners (such as USAID), and other key stakeholders.

Costs will vary significantly from country to country, and will depend largely on the number of projects included in the evaluation sample and the geographic size of the sampled area. Based on past experience, posts should plan on budgeting at least $20,000–$30,000 for an evaluation with a sample of 30–40 projects. Because of the costs, such evaluations are typically feasible only when funded by partners external to the Peace Corps, such as USAID (through SPA) or PEPFAR.

Peace Corps headquarters can provide post assistance with setting up a data-entry interface in which the research firm can enter evaluation data. Posts that are interested in carrying out in-country evaluations should contact support staff for assistance in planning and preparing for an in-country evaluation. Depending upon resource availability, the Peace Corps may be able to provide a staff person from the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) to train the in-country research firm.

# APPENDICES

# Appendix 1:      Volunteer Fundraising Do's and Don'ts

## Introduction

Peace Corps Volunteers are creative and resourceful; through social media and the increasing availability of the internet, they are becoming more locally and internationally connected than ever before. Due to these advances in technology it is not uncommon for Volunteers and their communities to discover local or international funding sources that may directly support work in their communities. However, Peace Corps Volunteers are bound to policies and guidelines that ensure all their work is accounted for and transparent. This document provides Peace Corps Volunteers with a snapshot of the necessary information for accessing external funds in the most appropriate way. For more in-depth information about working with host communities to implement small funded development projects, please visit www.peacecorps.gov/smallgrants.

## Overview and Philosophy

The Peace Corps' approach to development promotes the dignity of a people and their ability to improve their own lives. The focus of a Peace Corps Volunteers' work is on the **development of the capacity of people,** not things. Volunteers help their communities identify and prioritize what they would like to change, and to use their own strengths and learn new skills to achieve that change.

Even with this philosophy, however, it is understood that sometimes funding is necessary in order to make ideas realities. As a Volunteer, it is essential that the deeper, longer-lasting effects of external funding be incorporated into project planning. Even if a Volunteer does not wish to formalize a project through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program, Volunteers should consider sustainability and capacity building as core tenets of their work. Additionally, the process of identifying and applying to funding for initiatives is a valuable learning process for communities and counterparts. Volunteers are encouraged to *assist* their communities in applying for funding, in order to familiarize their counterparts with the process and build their capacity.

Though Volunteers may work with their counterparts to identify and obtain external funds for their communities, <u>Volunteers may never directly apply for, accept or manage the external funds themselves</u>. However, the Peace Corps does provide an option for funding of small projects through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

## Agency Policy on External Funds

It is Peace Corps' policy that Volunteers are prohibited from accepting gifts, both monetary and in-kind, on behalf of the Peace Corps. Volunteers may only directly accept and manage funds through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program, currently made up of six funding sources (SPA, PCPP, VAST, FTF, ECPA and GEF).

These programs exist in order to facilitate the appropriate channeling of funds into a Volunteer's community through small grant projects that require community engagement, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation and strong project design and management. To learn more about the programs available at post and to apply, Volunteers should contact their Small Grants Coordinator.

## What Volunteers Need To Know

- Any funds needed for initiatives at a Volunteer's site must be accessed either through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program or given directly to the community. Volunteers cannot accept funds from external sources or fundraising campaigns (Kickstarter, GoFundMe, etc.) but rather, should work with their communities to build their capacity for proposal writing; money management; project implementation and reporting by working with their community organizations to help *them* directly receive funding.

- Occasionally, external organizations may reach out to Volunteers or posts directly to encourage them to apply for funds. These organizations should be directed to the Office of Gifts and Grants Management immediately (donate@peacecorps.gov). GGM will then clarify the policy with the organization and lay out the most appropriate way to move forward.

- For any grants/funding related questions, Volunteers should contact their post's small grant coordinator or APCD.

# Appendix 2:     Financial Management and Capacity Building Assessment Tool

How does the community organization/group plan and manage its finances and budget? (Circle ONE relevant box for each question)

Before completing this tool, ask yourself:
1. Have you and/or your community counterpart received Project Design and Management (PDM) training?
2. Has the community organization/group received any project management/budgeting/basic accounting training (either from the Peace Corps or another organization)?

| Question | | Capacity Score | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Finances | *Does your organization keep written accounting of income and expenses that can be presented on demand?* | No accounts kept | Records kept of money received and spent, but difficult to know how much money is held at any one time | Accounts kept up-to-date and balances and statements are prepared at the end of the year | Balances and statements prepared quarterly. At year end, presented to external stakeholders for review and possible approval |
| Bank Account | *Does your community organization/group have a bank account to hold its funds?* | No bank account, all funds managed in cash | Someone's personal account used for any funds | Bank account registered in org's name, which requires authorized check signatories | Manual record of all payments (cashbook) is kept and compared with all bank statements |
| Financial Control | *Who is responsible for approving expenditure and issuing cash?* | One person | Two people | Two people with oversight from another person | Two or more people with oversight from several people |
| Budget and cash flow planning | *Does your organization prepare, monitor, and review a budget?* | Budgets are prepared for every funding proposal but not used for anything else | Budgets are set to decide how much to spend on all project and organization costs to ensure there is money for future plans | Budgets are presented annually for approval to a board or representative group of members | Every six months budgets are compared to money already spent and planned cash flows |
| Reporting requirement | *Do you provide accurate financial reports on time to donors?* | No experience of having to submit donor reports | Reports are submitted but always late and with incomplete information | Some reports get submitted on time but are often incomplete or get queried by the donor | Reports always submitted on time and always meet all donor requirements |
| Profit | *What increase in profit have you had over the last year?* | None | Up to 10% | 10–20% | More than 20% |

| Score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Section | | | | | | | |
| Explanation/Comments | | | | | | | |

Adapted from USAID, FHI360, World Vision. (2012).  Integrating Very Poor Producers into Value Chains Field Guide p. 127

# Appendix 3:    Estimating the Value of In-Kind Contributions

Many grant programs include community contribution requirements. Such requirements are put in place for several reasons: They help to ensure that the community is directly invested in the project and will continue to take ownership of the project throughout its life. They limit the risk of a community becoming dependent on outside funding to purchase materials or services that the community already has or can obtain with its own resources. Finally, encouraging a community to identify resources within its reach recognizes the assets a community already possesses and can build upon to support further development.

For these reasons, it is important that community contribution requirements are taken seriously. However, many of the organizations that Peace Corps Volunteers work with do not have the ability to make their contributions in cash. To ensure that cash-poor communities are not excluded from receiving grants, contributions may, in some cases, be provided as in-kind goods or services. In-kind contributions may include labor, meeting or conference space, transportation, food, lodging, materials, supplies, or any number of other costs.

Where in-kind contributions are allowed, it is important that contributed goods or services are carefully and reasonably valued so that the grant recipient's level of commitment and investment can be accurately gauged. Volunteers should work with their community counterparts to determine the value of in-kind services, as well as seek guidance and input from post staff—in particular, host country national staff who are familiar with local costs. The following four guidelines will help Volunteers determine a reasonable value for in-kind contributions:

1. **In-kind contributions should only be counted if they are reasonably necessary to meet the objectives of a project.**
   - *Example 1*: Manual labor for digging a hole and laying cement is a valid in-kind contribution for a latrine-building project.
   - *Example 2*: A television set should not be counted as an in-kind contribution for a latrine-building project.

2. **The value of in-kind contributions should be estimated at the price the organization would have to pay to purchase the specific good or service being contributed.**
   - *Example 1*: Manual labor should be valued based on the daily rate of a day laborer in the community times the number of days labor is provided.
   - *Example 2*: Although provision of meeting space might be a valid in-kind contribution for a project, a small meeting room in an office should not be valued at the price it would cost to rent a large conference room in a fancy hotel down the street.

3. **When valuing in-kind goods or services, estimates must take into account the state of repair or quality of the contributed item (in other words, a used item should not be valued at the price the item would cost if it were new).**

4. **In-kind contributions should be actual contributions that will be provided during the life of the funded project itself; they should not include speculative future contributions that will be made in the future after the project has been completed.**

## Appendix 4: Project Cost Approval Request

**PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM**

**Project Cost Approval Request**

**PROJECT #** _____ _____ _____ - _____
Grant Type      FY      Country Code      Grant #

**Date:** _____

**Country:** _____

**PCV Name:** _____

**Project Amount**: _____

**Please check all costs for which a country director approval is required. Written justification and total sum in U.S. dollars must be provided for each:**

☐     Motor Vehicles/Other Conveyances        ☐     Volunteer Costs

☐     Giveaways, Prizes, Celebrations          ☐     Other:_____

☐     International Travel

**Justification for Cost(s):**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**This project meets all other relevant Small Grants Program requirements and has been reviewed and approved by the small grants committee:**

☐     Yes          ☐     No

*This request follows the guidance and procedures set forth in the Small Grants Staff Handbook issued March, 2015.*

_____      _____
*Peace Corps Country Director Signature*                    *Date*

# Appendix 5: Project in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request

## PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

### Projects in Excess of $10,000 Approval Request

*This request must be completed by the Volunteer and small grants coordinator and submitted along with the project application to the post's small grants committee for consideration and approval. Once approved and signed by the country director, the small grants coordinator shall submit the full application package (application, signature forms, and $10,000 request) to Peace Corps headquarters final approval. (See Peace Corps Small Grants Staff/Volunteer Handbook for more information.)*

**PROJECT #** _____  _____  _____ - _____

Grant Type        FY        Country Code        Grant #

**Date:**               **Country:**

**PCV Name:**

**Project Title/Number:**

**Requested Project Amount**:

## Section 1: Peace Corps Volunteer/Community:

| Considerations | Responses |
|---|---|
| Can this project be scaled down, or divided into separate stand-alone projects under $10,000? If not, explain why. | |
| What is your experience in independently managing large amounts of funds? | |
| What is the community groups' experience in managing funds? What is the largest grant they have worked with before? | |
| As a Volunteer, have you received Project Design and Management training? | |
| Are you aware that Volunteers are liable for any lost, stolen, misused or unaccounted for funds if found negligent? Describe your plan to ensure funds are secure and well-managed. | |

## Section 2: Small Grants Coordinator:

| Program | Considerations | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| SPA VAST ECPA FTF GEF | How much funding will remain in this program element for other grants? | |
| | Will adequate funds remain to meet demand from other Volunteers? | |

| PCPP | What is the fundraising plan? How will the Volunteer ensure the fundraising goal is reached leaving enough time for project implementation? | |
|---|---|---|
| | Is there a back-up plan in place in the event the project does not reach its funding goal? | |
| ALL Funding Sources | How will post staff ensure that this project will:<br> - Be implemented on-time<br> - Remain on-budget<br> - Include all necessary documentation<br>What procedures will be put in place to ensure this project is successfully implemented? | |

**Submission Signature:**

*I have read and understood the considerations as described on page 19 of the Small Grants Handbook for Volunteers and ensure that this project meets basic Small Grants Program requirements and confirm that this project cannot be broken into separate stand-alone projects less than $10,000.*

_____          _____

*Volunteer Signature*                                                                *Date*

*I confirm that I have reviewed this project and determined that there is either funding available or the Volunteer has a sufficient fundraising plan to fund at project exceeding $10,000.*

_____          _____

*Grant Coordinator Signature*                                                        *Date*

**Approval Signatures:**
**This project meets all other relevant Small Grants Program requirements and has been reviewed and approved by the small grants committee:**

☐     Yes                    ☐     No

*This request follows the guidance and procedures set forth in the Small Grants Staff Handbook issued March, 2015. Post approves this project as it is designed and recommends its final approval by staff at Peace Corps headquarters.*

_____          _____

*Peace Corps Country Director Signature*                              *Date*

**Peace Corps/headquarters Approval:**
**This project is approved to exceed the $10,000 limit:**

_____          _____

*Peace Corps Regional Director Signature*                            *Date*

_____          _____

*Peace Corps Small Grants Leader Signature*                        *Date*

# Appendix 6: Well Project Requirements for Feed the Future

**USAID requires water quality testing for all well projects**. If Feed the Future (FTF) funding is accessed for well projects, all of these requirements apply:

**The well must**
- Be covered and locked, if possible
- Well water must be tested and treated for contaminants including fecal and total coliforms, nitrates, nitrites, and heavy metals including arsenic
- Be clearly labeled with signs explaining that the water is for agricultural purposes and not for human consumption, e.g. "Not potable, for irrigation only"
- Be cemented all the way down to the water level (except in special cases when this is not possible and the project is exempted from this requirement by the director)

**As part of the project planning, you should**
- Inform the Peace Corps country director and program manager that you are planning a well project
- Calculate estimated yield and extraction rates for the well (contact USAID or the SPA program manager for additional information on how to calculate extraction rates)
- Identify a qualified individual who will serve as "technical adviser" for the project. Explain in the project proposal how this individual will help to ensure the project is technically sound. You can contact the Peace Corps Volunteer leader for help finding a technical adviser
- Consider maintenance costs that will be required to keep the well-functioning safely. Together with a water users' association, build a mechanism for paying future maintenance costs into the project design (e.g., usage fees or set aside a portion of the profits in case of a garden project)
- Include the initial water quality test costs in the small grant; however, ensure the community has plans and resources to conduct periodic water quality testing during the lifetime of the well
- Review potential problems listed in the ENCAP Visual Field Guide: Water Supply document when placing the well and consult the Global Environmental Management Support website for further best practices for water supply projects. Consider these issues in the environmental review section of the project proposal.

**Well location**
- For siting wells it is important to locate the well at the highest point on the property
- Avoid positioning down slope from potential sources of contamination, including surface water flows and flooding conditions
- Locate the well in an accessible site for maintenance
- Define a sanitary protective area around the wellhead that is kept in its natural state

**Potential contaminants**
- Yield and quality of water supply will depend on soil type (which determines filtering capability and transmissivity)

- Coarse gravel, limestone, and disintegrated rock can allow contaminants to travel quickly with little opportunity for natural purification
- Distance to nearest point of potential contamination is site/aquifer specific (Refer to EGSSAA water and sanitation)

**As part of the project implementation, you should**
- Conduct an effective training with the community on sustainable use and maintenance of wells. The training should also outline the health and safety risks of drinking potentially contaminated water and the volunteer should discuss the problems outlined in the ENCAP Visual Field Guide: Water Supply document
- Test the well for fecal and total coliforms, nitrates, nitrites, and heavy metals including arsenic and arrange for periodic follow-up testing (the community should commit to this and it should be explained in the proposal under "community contribution")
- Volunteers should include the cost of water quality testing in the project budget; this cost may be excluded from the total for the 25 percent community contribution calculation.

# Appendix 7:    Logic Model

**A Logic Model** is a visual representation showing the sequence of related events (e.g., inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact) that connect the need for a planned activity or set of activities with the desired outcomes and results.
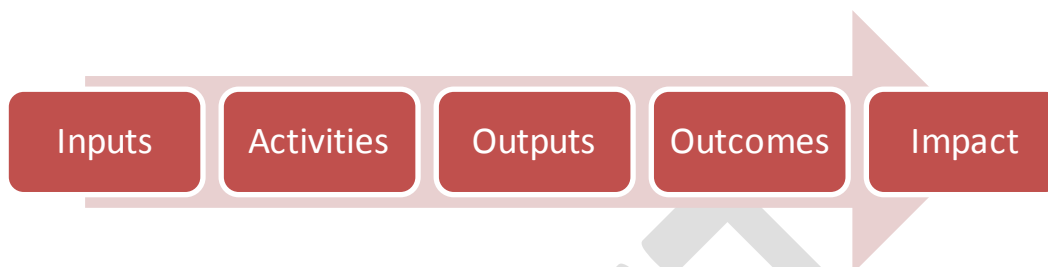


- **Inputs:**
  - **Definition:** *Resources used during project activities to produce outputs*
  - **Question:** What do you put in?
  - **Example:** People, space, materials, knowledge, skills

- **Activities:**
  - **Definition:** *A task or group of tasks undertaken to achieve a specified result*
  - **Question:** What are you doing?
  - **Example:** Teaching good hygiene practices, teaching how to make soap, teaching how to make a hand-washing station for the home

- **Outputs:**
  - **Definition:** *The direct result of the activities of a project. Outputs may be goods, infrastructure, services or people reached by services.*
  - **Questions:** Who came? How many came? What was developed?
  - **Example:** 8 women, 14 girls under 15, 10 boys under 15 attended. 8 hand-washing stations were produced, 25 bars of soap were made

- **Outcomes:**
  - **Definition:** *Changes in specific knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or conditions that result from project activities*
  - **Questions:** What changed? Of the number who participated, how many showed change?
  - **Example** A month later, six women were using the hygiene practices they learned in their homes.

- **Impact:**
  - **Definition:** *The long-term, cumulative effect of an intervention or interventions (e.g., the long-term results stemming from participants' activities over the life of a project).*
  - **Questions:** What is the long-term effect?

Example: Community members, especially children under 5, are not contracting hygiene- and sanitation-related illnesses (like chronic diarrhea) as often as they once did; community members are able to work more consistently and students are performing more effectively in school because they aren't out sick as often.

# Appendix 8: Guidance for Determining Participants vs. Beneficiaries

Volunteers and their communities are required to record on the small grants application and final report the number of people in their community who participate in and benefit from the project. It can be difficult to distinguish participants from beneficiaries and to make an accurate determination of how many people belong in each category. This document provides guidance on how to accurately determine the number of participants and the number of beneficiaries for each project and how to avoid double counting.

## I.    Characteristics of Participants vs. Beneficiaries:

Participants are those who are directly involved in the design and implementation of the project, including those who attend trainings or workshops.
- Participants are usually involved in the project during the project planning and/or implementation phases.
- Participants receive a transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a result of participation in project activities and might go on to teach what they learned during the project to other community members.

Beneficiaries receive an indirect benefit from the execution of the project, but are not involved in the planning or execution.
- Beneficiaries often profit from the execution of the project after the main period of project implementation has passed.
- Beneficiaries may receive a transfer of knowledge, skills, or abilities from participants who were trained during the main period of project implementation.

## II.    Who Should not be Counted as Participants or Beneficiaries?

- Community members who could potentially participate in or benefit from the project if they chose to but are not reasonably expected to do so.
- The entire population of a village, unless they all actually participate in or benefit from the project in a tangible, measurable way.
- Community members who receive a benefit from the project at an indefinite point in the future.

As a rule of thumb, PCVs and their communities can be reminded that they should not feel compelled to report high numbers, since they are not being judged on the number of people reached. A PCV might do excellent capacity-building work with just a few people! PCVs are simply expected to do their best to report on these figures **accurately.** The purpose of reporting these numbers is to have a clear idea of the number of people involved or benefiting from the project.

## III. Examples of Direct vs. Indirect Beneficiaries

1) A community works with their Volunteer to develop a teacher training project. The project is to be regional in scope, involving the travel of ESL teachers from 10 villages to the regional capital to take part in a three-day workshop. Following the training, the teachers will utilize new activities and teaching techniques that they learned at the training in their classrooms. There will be 10 teachers at the workshop and each teacher has three classes of approximately 60 students.

   For this project, the teachers are the participants and those they will teach after the training are the beneficiaries. Thus, the totals are as follows:

- 10 participants
- 1,800 beneficiaries

2) A youth group approaches a Volunteer asking him to help them raise funds for a community youth center. Together, they develop a project that includes building the center and planning a series of events to take place at the center that will focus on giving information about educational and work opportunities available to youth in the area. There are 15 youth in the group and there is an expected attendance at the events of an additional 70 youth. Following the planned events, it is expected that a portion of the youth in the community will make use of the new space for meetings and other events.

For this project, the participants are the 15 youth in the youth group and the 70 youth who will attend the initial informational sessions. The beneficiaries are those who will likely use the meeting space in a reasonable time frame following the project's implementation. Assuming there are about 800 youth in the town in general, but that not all of them will make use of the center, the beneficiaries could be determined by the Volunteer and the community making an informed guess of what portion of those youth would use the center. Thus, the totals are as follows:
- 85 participants
- 400 beneficiaries (assuming half of the village youth would make use of the space)

3) A Volunteer and her community work together to plan a project to educate the community about malaria prevention and treatment and distribute treated mosquito nets to every household in the community. During the project, 15 local volunteers will attend a training about malaria prevention and treatment and will then be responsible for holding a town meeting to educate citizens about the disease and distribute bed nets. Following this meeting, the volunteers will visit homes in the community of people who did not attend the town meeting to distribute nets and educate household members about malaria. A representative of the volunteers will also appear on a radio show in the regional capital to talk about the disease. The population of the town is 2,000. The expected number of listeners to the radio show is 6,000.

For this project, the participants are the 15 volunteers and the beneficiaries are the citizens of the town being educated about the disease and receiving bed nets as well as the listeners of the radio show. Thus, the totals are as follows:
- 15 participants
- 8,000 beneficiaries

4) A Volunteer works with the water committee of a town to plan a project to build a large-diameter well in a part of town where water is scarce. The population of the town is 5,000, but the Volunteer and the Water Committee estimate that only about 200 people will make regular use of the well.

The participants of this project are the members of the water committee and the beneficiaries are the citizens who will make regular use of the well. Thus, the totals are as follows:
- 8 participants (the water committee)
- 200 beneficiaries

## Appendix 9: Small Grants Committee Project Review Checklist

### PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

### Small Grants Committee Project Review Checklist

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Title** _____ | **Sector** _____ | **Community** _____ | |
| **PCV Name** _____ | **Group** _____ | **COS Date** _____ | |
| **Reviewer** _____ | **Review Date** _____ | **Funding Source** _____ | |
| **Grant Amount** _____ | **Community Contribution** _____ | **Total Project Cost** _____ | |

| Criteria | Excellent | Acceptable | Needs improve-ment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Available funding.** What funding source is requested in the grant: _____ If SPA/VAST/ECPA/GEF/FTF, does the project fall within a USAID program element in which funds are available? | | | |
| **Project Design and Management training received.** Has the Volunteer and/or community counterpart received PDM training? Is the project designed according to the Peace Corps' approach to development, and is the Volunteer and/or community counterpart equipped to implement the project? | | | |
| **Community initiated.** Is the project initiated and directed by the local community? Was there a participatory needs assessment? Does the project address a community priority? | | | |
| **Goals and objectives.** Does the project have clearly defined goal(s) and objective(s)? | | | |

| Criteria | Excellent | Acceptable | Needs improve-ment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Capacity building.** Does it have a capacity-building component? Does it build the skills of participants and project partners? | | | |
| **Action plan and timeline.** Does it provide a realistic and detailed action plan and timeline stating who is responsible for each aspect of the project? | | | |
| **Budget.** Does it include a complete, realistic, and reasonable budget that falls within grant program guidelines? Does the budget align with project activities? Does the budget include any unallowable costs? | | | |
| **Community contribution.** Does the project demonstrate significant community counterpart contributions? | | | |
| **Locally available resources.** Does it use locally available materials and technical resources insofar as possible? | | | |
| **Sustainability.** Will the community likely be able to sustain the project benefits into the future? Does it demonstrate community commitment and ability to cover recurring costs necessary to continue the project? | | | |
| **Monitoring.** Does it describe the process for monitoring the progress of the project? | | | |

| Criteria | Excellent | Acceptable | Needs improve-ment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Evaluation.** Does it include specific indicators for tracking expected outcomes? | | | |
| **Disbursement of funds.** Has the Volunteer (in conjunction with the community) considered all viable options for funding disbursements? Has the Volunteer discussed with post to determine which method is most appropriate for the project? | | | |
| **Beneficiary and indicator numbers.** Are beneficiary and indicator numbers reasonable in light of the project activities and scope? | | | |
| **SPA environmental checklist.** For SPA projects only. Has the Volunteer filled out the required environmental checklist and considered all environmental factors surrounding the project? | | | |
| **Completion within one year.** Is it scheduled for completion within approximately one year of commencement and well before the Volunteer's COS date? | | | |
| **Comments.** | | | |

## Appendix 10:    Transfer of Responsibility Form

**PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM**
## Transfer of Responsibility

**PROJECT #** _____ _____ _____ - _____

| Grant Type | FY | Country Code | Grant # |

Original Volunteer Coordinator: _____    COS date: _____

New Volunteer Coordinator: _____    COS date: _____

**Volunteer Transfer Agreement**
We, respectively, the undersigned, _____, stationed in_____, and_____, stationed in _____, both Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs), hereby agree to the following:

1. The purposes and objectives of this small grants project shall be completed by the new PCV coordinator along with the community organization because the original PCV coordinator is no longer able to complete the approved project.
2. **If any small grant project funds have been spent,** the previous PCV project coordinator will submit a final report detailing any funds spent and an explanation of the current project status.
3. The original PCV has passed on to the new PCV the total amount of project funds remaining, purchase receipts, project logs, and all other information related to Small Grant funds already expended in his or her possession.
4. The new PCV is aware of reporting and other obligations related to the management of the project and will submit the Small Grants Final Report to the post's small grants coordinator upon completion of project activities and well in advance of COS.
5. The transfer of responsibility is undertaken willingly by the new PCV and the assumption of the responsibility for the project shall in no way hamper the regular duties of the new PCV project coordinator and that the site of the project is readily accessible to said PCV.

**Status of funds and expenditures to date**

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) Total Small Grant funds originally awarded (US$) | |
| (b) Expenditures to date, verified by receipts (US$) | |
| (c) Total grant funds remaining (US$) | |

*If the sum of line (b) and line (c) does not match the amount in line (a), please attach an explanation and justification for the discrepancy.*

**Consent and liability**

Is the new PCV accepting funds directly?      (Yes/No)

If the answer is **"**yes," a signed Peace Corps Volunteer consent and liability acceptance form must be attached to this document

This agreement shall be effective upon the approval of the Peace Corps country director.


_____                    _____
*Original Peace Corps Volunteer Signature*                                *Date*


_____                    _____
*New Peace Corps Volunteer Signature*                                      *Date*

**Approved by:**


_____                    _____
*Administrative Officer Signature*                                              *Date*
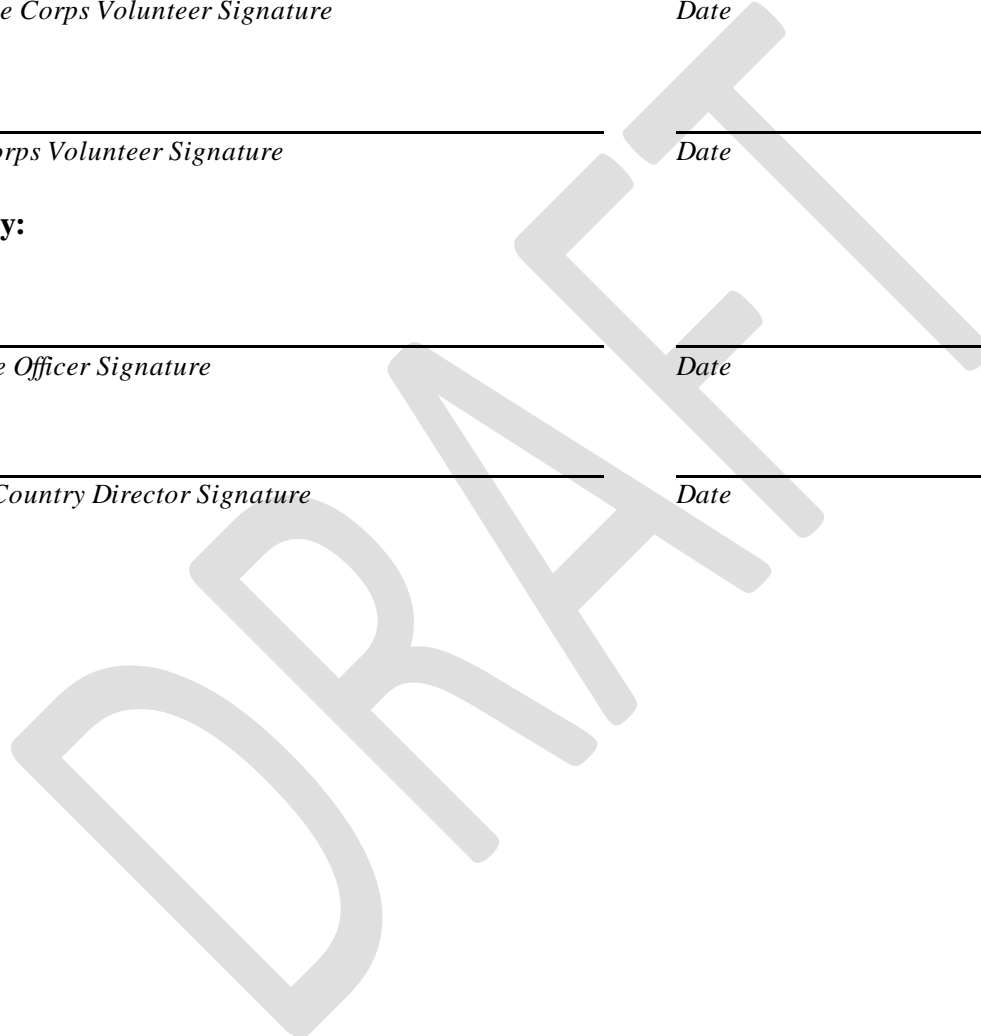

_____                    _____
*Peace Corps Country Director Signature*                                  *Date*

# Appendix 11: Managing Grant Funds and Project Closeout

## PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM
## Tips for Managing Grant Funds and Project Closeout

### Managing Grant Funds

**DOs**
- Keep your funds only in your grant bank account (if applicable).Check all prices and availability of the products that you would like to buy prior to withdrawing grant funds.
- To the maximum extent possible, withdraw grant funds in small amounts—only enough for the purchases you will make today.
- Make all purchases for your project together with your local project partners.
- Keep copies of all receipts and submit with completion report.
- Together with your local project partner, record entries in PCGO under the final report "Budget" tab on the same day of the purchase.

**DON'Ts**
- DO NOT keep grant funds at home.
- DO NOT travel by yourself with large sums of money.

### Receipts

- You must collect and keep receipts for all purchases made with grant funds.
- Receipts should include the date, vendor name, items purchased (including quantity and unit price), and should bear the signature of the vendor or vendor stamp.
- If the vendor does not have a receipt, you should draft a receipt or purchase a receipt booklet to properly record the costs.

### Grant Closeout Procedure
1. Group the receipts in categories and subtotal them (i.e., transportation, logistics, stationary, etc.);
2. Use clear tape to tape your receipts to blank paper (regular-sized paper);
3. Number all of your receipts;
4. In PCGO, select the "Final Budget" under the "Budget" tab to list your expenses, using corresponding receipt numbers for easier cross-referencing;
5. Prepare the final report, using the appropriate template;
6. Submit your final report through PCGO;
7. Bring originals of the receipts to the small grants coordinator to verify the receipts against the final report, and check to make sure that everything is otherwise complete; and
8. If you have unspent funds, you must bring them to the cashier, who will issue a bill of collection and collect the remaining funds from you.

Please provide the small grants coordinator and your APCD with any feedback you have regarding your project and "lessons learned" that might help Volunteers in the future who are engaging in similar projects.

# Appendix 12: PCGO Small Grant Project Records Checklist

**PEACE CORPS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM**
**PCGO Small Grants Project Records Checklist**

**PROJECT #** _____ _____ _____ - _____

                              Grant Type         FY        Country Code      Grant #

Volunteer Name: _____      COS date: _____

Volunteer Site/Province: _____

Project Title: _____

Project Start Date: _____      Project End Date: _____

**Reminder: Post-level Peace Corps Small Grants files not currently in PCGO cannot be destroyed until further notice!**

| Document(s) | Submitted by: | Location within PCGO | Complete (Y/N) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signed Project Agreement Form | Volunteer/Post Staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| Project Cost Approval Request (if applicable) | Volunteer/Post Staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| Consent and liability form | Volunteer | Volunteer Documents | |
| Press authorization form | Volunteer | Volunteer Documents | |
| Community/local language narrative received (if applicable) | Volunteer | Volunteer Documents | |
| PCPP Authorization memo (if applicable) | HQ staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| PCPP Donor list (if applicable) | HQ staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| Project receipts/invoices | Volunteer/Post Staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| Project Transfer of Responsibility form (if applicable) | Post Staff | Volunteer Documents | |
| Significant/sensitive communication regarding the project (emails, review forms, etc.) | HQ/Post staff | Notes & Article | |
| Unused funds collected (if applicable) and copy of Bill of Collection | Post Staff | Notes & Article | |
| Project pictures/video, etc. | Volunteer | Volunteer Documents | |

**Please note: All documents saved in the "Volunteer Documents" section of PCGO and the database can be viewed by the Volunteer. Documents saved in the "Notes & Article" section of the database can be viewed only by PCGO database license holders.**

# OPATS Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation (MRE) System FY13 – FY15
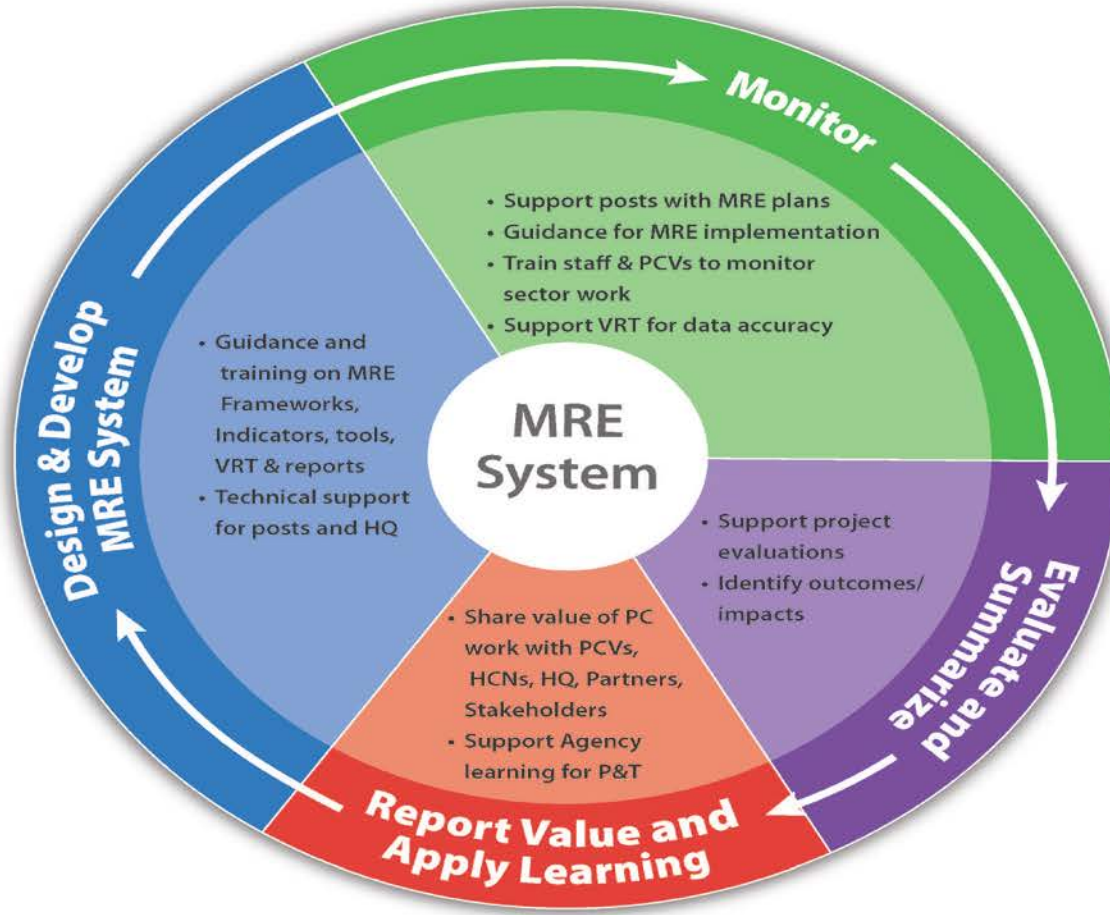


PROVIDE RIGOR AND SUPPORT

**STARTING POINT**

**From HQ:**
- Evaluation Framework
- Agency Strategic Plan
- 6 Defined Sectors

**From Posts:**
- Project Plans
- Project Frameworks
- Annual Status Reports

**RESULT**

PC demonstrates meeting goals 1, 2, & 3 with data that is:
- Reliable
- Valid
- Evidence-based

**Monitor**
- Support posts with MRE plans
- Guidance for MRE implementation
- Train staff & PCVs to monitor sector work
- Support VRT for data accuracy

**Design & Develop MRE System**
- Guidance and training on MRE Frameworks, Indicators, tools, VRT & reports
- Technical support for posts and HQ

**MRE System**

**Evaluate and Summarize**
- Support project evaluations
- Identify outcomes/ impacts

**Report Value and Apply Learning**
- Share value of PC work with PCVs, HCNs, HQ, Partners, Stakeholders
- Support Agency learning for P&T

Over →

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**Outline of Peace Corps Project Framework Design**

| Project | | |
|---|---|---|
| A discrete activity (or 'development intervention') implemented by a defined set of implementers and designed to achieve specific objectives within specified resources and implementation schedules. A set of projects make up the portfolio of a program. Related term: activity, intervention. | | |
| **Intended Results** | **Operational Plan and implementation** | **Measure of Change** |
| **Goal**<br>The higher-order objective to which a project, program, or policy is intended to contribute. | **Impact / Long Term Outcome**<br>A results or effect that is caused by or attributable to a project or program. Impact is often used to refer to higher level effects of a program that occur in the medium or long term, and can be intended or unintended and positive or negative. | **Impact Indicator**<br>Quantitative or qualitative variable or suite of variables that provides reliable means to measure whether a program's objectives contributed to higher level results. |
| **Objective**<br>A statement of the condition or state one expects to achieve. | **Intermediate term Outcome**<br>A results or effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, program or policy. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. Related terms: result, effect | **Objective Indicator**<br>Quantitative or qualitative variable or suite of variables that provides reliable means to measure whether a programs short term outcomes led to longer term objectives. |
| | **Short term Outcome**<br>A results or effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, program or policy. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. Related terms: result, effect | **Outcome Indicator**<br>Quantitative or qualitative variable or suite of variables that provides reliable means to measure whether a program led to certain short term outcomes. |
| | **Outputs**<br>The products, goods, and services which result from an intervention | **Output Indicator**<br>Quantitative or qualitative variable that provides reliable means to measure the degree to which the program created given outputs. |
| | **Activities**<br>A specific action or process undertaken over a specific period of time by an organization to convert resources to products or services to achieve results. Related term: Project. | |
| | **Inputs**<br>Resources provided for program implementation. Examples are money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc. | |