

MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program

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MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook

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1.0 Purpose

This Manual Section sets out the policies for the Peace Corps Small Grants Program. Implementing procedures are set forth in the attached handbooks.

2.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. §§ 2501(a) and 2509 (a)(1), (4) of the Peace Corps Act

3.0 Policy

3.1 Peace Corps Small Grants Program

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program, funded by external sources, is a mechanism that enables Posts to better support and enhance the Peace Corps approach to development with the goal of developing and implementing sustainable grassroots projects that build capacity in communities where Volunteers serve. The Peace Corps Small Grants Program is managed by offices at Peace Corps Headquarters, and includes Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), Small Project Assistance (SPA), and the Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST).

3.2 Small Grants Program Requirements

3.2.1 Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects support and enhance the capacity of Volunteers to more effectively execute the goals of the Peace Corps. To create strong and lasting community-initiated projects in line with the Peace Corps approach to development, a Peace Corps Small Grants Program project must:

- (a) be community initiated and directed;
- (b) meet a determined community need;
- (c) include capacity building components and/or promote sustainability;
- (d) include indicators of success through monitoring, reporting, and evaluation;
- (e) incorporate cross-sector programming priorities (CSPPs) where feasible;
- (f) support a stand-alone activity with defined start and end dates that establishes concrete goals and objectives. Multiple standalone activities may not be aggregated into a single Peace Corps Small Grants Program project application;
- (g) be scheduled for completion within one year and have all final reports, receipts, and photos submitted to Post at least one month before the Volunteer's close of service (COS) date;
- (h) not exceed U.S. \$10,000 in funding from the Peace Corps Small Grants Program, except as authorized by the appropriate Regional Director and the Director of the respective grant program office;
- (i) include a community contribution of at least 25 percent of the total estimated Peace Corps Small Grants Program project cost; and
- (j) not discriminate against or for any individuals in the implementation of the project, such as by withholding, adversely impacting, or denying equitable access to the benefits provided

through the project on the basis of any factor not expressly stated in the grant. This includes, for example, any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran's status. Nothing in this provision is intended to limit the ability of the individual receiving the grant to target project activities toward the assistance needs of certain populations as defined in the grant.

3.2.2 Funding for Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects may only be awarded or granted to a Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps Small Grants Program project funding may not be awarded or granted to any other entity or individual.

3.3 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Projects that Require Special Consideration

- (a) **Scholarship Projects** – Scholarship projects must include a plan demonstrating long-term administration and sustainability following the conclusion of project funding and departing of the Volunteer. A Volunteer may assist in developing a selection process and committee; however, the Volunteer may not participate in the selection or award process.
- (b) **Training and Skill-Building Camps and Clubs** – A Volunteer may provide training and skill-building in a camp-like setting; however, Post staff will refer Volunteers to the appropriate materials and guidance to use while planning and implementing such a project.
- (c) **President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) Program** – VAST grants are funded by PEPFAR, administered by the Peace Corps' Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH), and are only available in select Peace Corps countries that are PEPFAR funded. Projects/activities to be funded must play a role in reducing the vulnerabilities to HIV infection, mitigating the impacts of the HIV epidemic on those infected and affected, and/or referring those individuals to appropriate prevention, treatment, care, and support services. See the *MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook* for additional guidance.
- (d) **Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (SPA and other applicable United States Agency for International Development (USAID) agreements)** – In accordance with the Peace Corps' agreements with USAID (SPA and other applicable USAID programs), Peace Corps Volunteers are required to complete an environmental checklist for certain Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects. See the *MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook* for additional guidance.
- (e) **Requirements for Water Provision** – The Peace Corps Small Grants Program fully supports Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects that fit into one of the categories as follows:
 - (1) WASH trainings;
 - (2) hand-washing projects (not including the rehabilitation/creation of a water access point(s));

- (3) behavior change activities;
- (4) materials development;
- (5) community-led sanitation;
- (6) community organization; and
- (7) latrine construction.

No additional documentation or requirements beyond the grant application are necessary for these types of Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects. All other water-related projects must meet additional requirement(s) to obtain Peace Corps Small Grants Program funding. These additional requirements are further outlined in *MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*. At a minimum, a Water Quality Assurance Plan (WQAP) must be developed with community input; a template WQAP can be found in *MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*.

- (f) **Medical Supplies** – A Volunteer must work with Peace Corps staff and local health professionals during the design and development of a sustainable and effective project involving the purchase of medical supplies. Trained local health professionals are the only individuals permitted to administer any authorized medical supplies purchased with Peace Corps Small Grant Program funding. The limitations on medical supply purchases are listed within *MS 720 Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*.

4.0 Budget and Costs

Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects' costs must be reasonable, related to the goals and objectives of the project and consistent with the project budget. Peace Corps Small Grants Program project budget must cover all costs of the project. The project budget must include all Peace Corps Small Grants Program funding, the community contribution, and any contributions from third parties.

4.1 Community Contribution

The community contribution of 25 percent may include cash or in-kind donations of labor or supplies, or a combination thereof. Contributions from local or other in-country sources, such as local organizations, local businesses, or government ministries, may also be considered as part of the community contribution. However, a contribution from an international organization is not considered to be part of the community contribution, but instead must be counted as a third-party contribution.

4.2 Limitations on Peace Corps Small Grants Program Project Budgets

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program project budgets must not include the following:

- (a) the purchase of land, structures, and other major capital assets;

- (b) loan funds;
- (c) “sub-grants” and “umbrella grants” (i.e., re-granting or distribution of Peace Corps Small Grants Program Funds to other Volunteers or another entity)
- (d) contingency/undefined funds;
- (e) multiple Peace Corps Small Grants Program funding sources;
- (f) alcoholic beverages;
- (g) recurring costs over three months;
- (h) the purchase of motor vehicles including, but not limited to, cars, motorcycles, and/or tractors;
- (i) non-organic pesticides, insecticides, or rodenticides; and
- (j) international travel for a Volunteer(s) except when accompanied by a community counterpart (s) or local participants per Section 4.3.

4.3 Costs that Require Country Director Approval

Certain costs require approval by the Country Director (CD) before they may be included in a Peace Corps Small Grants Program project budget. These costs include, but are not limited to: modest giveaways, prizes, and ceremonial expenses, Volunteer costs, and international travel for local project participants, and international travel for a Volunteer(s) accompanied by a community partner(s).

4.4 Authorization for Expenditures

Volunteers may not commit Peace Corps funding until the funds are disbursed by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO).

5.0 Lost, Stolen, Misused or Unaccounted for Funds

5.1 Reporting of Lost, Stolen, Misused or Unaccounted for Funds

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to report any lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted Peace Corps Small Grants Program funds to the appropriate Small Grants Coordinator, determined by the project’s funding source, or another member of Peace Corps staff. Post staff must expeditiously report any lost, stolen, misused, or unaccounted Peace Corps Small Grants Program funds to the appropriate Small Grants Coordinator, determined by the project’s funding source. The Small Grants Coordinator must report this information to the Office of Inspector General in accordance with MS 861 *Office of Inspector General* and the appropriate point of contact at Peace Corps Headquarters for the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

5.2 Volunteer Liability Upon Receipt of Funds

The Volunteer entrusted with grant funds is responsible for all Peace Corps Small Grants Program funds transferred into their account and is liable for any such funds not accounted for appropriately at the completion of the Peace Corps Small Grants Program project. See MS 720 *Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Office of Gifts and Grants Management

The Office of Gifts and Grants Management (GGM) administers and manages the Peace Corps Small Grants Program in coordination with relevant Headquarters offices.

6.2 Office of the Chief Financial Officer

OCFO is responsible for supporting all Peace Corps Small Grants Program financial management and maintaining financial systems related to the Peace Corps Small Grants Program.

6.3 Peace Corps Posts

- (a) The **Country Director (CD)** is responsible for the following:
- (1) establishing any Post-specific Peace Corps Small Grants Program requirements consistent with the requirements set forth in this manual section, and guidance set forth in MS 720 *Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*;
 - (2) establishing a Peace Corps Small Grants Committee at Post;
 - (3) reviewing and providing final approval, or rejection, for each Peace Corps Small Grants Program application;
 - (4) reviewing and certifying that all completion documentation is submitted and accurate;
 - (5) approving any Peace Corps Small Grants Program project costs that require CD approval and project changes; and
 - (6) designating a staff member to be the Post's Small Grants Coordinator(s).
- (b) The **Director of Management and Operations (DMO)** is responsible for the financial administration of the Peace Corps Small Grants Program funds. The DMO certifies that the Peace Corps Small Grants Program-funded costs are reasonable and in accordance with the goals and objectives of each project and the project budget. The DMO reviews all Peace Corps Small Grants Program project completion documentation, certifies that all receipts have been received, and ensures that fiscal accounting is accurate and final project balances are duly reconciled.

- (c) The **Director of Programming and Training (DPT)** is responsible for ensuring the proper small grants training of staff, small grants committee members, and Volunteers. This includes ensuring that all programming and training staff, as well as Volunteers, are familiar with this manual section and related guidance.
- (d) The **Cashier** is responsible for the collection of any remaining grant funds, when applicable, during Peace Corps Small Grants Program project closeout.
- (e) The **Small Grants Coordinator(s)** is responsible for the following:
 - (1) performing the day-to-day administration of Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects at Post;
 - (2) serving as the primary Peace Corps Small Grants Program point of contact at Post for Volunteers, other Post staff, and Peace Corps Headquarters;
 - (3) reviewing Peace Corps Small Grants Program project application and completion documentation; and
 - (4) verifying that all required documentation has been submitted and uploaded in Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG).
- (f) Each Post's **Small Grants Committee** is responsible for reviewing and providing an initial approval, or rejection, of all Peace Corps Small Grants Program applications.
- (g) The **Volunteer** is responsible for collaborating with community partners/organizations during each step of the grant's lifecycle. This collaboration includes identifying, developing, implementing, and completing Peace Corps Small Grants Program projects that meet local priorities. The Volunteer does the following:
 - (1) collaborates with their community on an application;
 - (2) maintains and submits accurate and comprehensive financial records and receipts;
 - (3) documents in-kind contributions; and
 - (4) submits completion documentation in VRG.
- (h) If a Volunteer is unable to complete the Peace Corps Small Grants Program project, the Volunteer may request a transfer of responsibility to another willing Volunteer with the CD's approval and administrative oversight by the Small Grants Coordinator. If a Volunteer is unable to transfer the Peace Corps Small Grants Program project to another Volunteer the project will be cancelled. If a Peace Corps Small Grants Program project is cancelled, a completion report for the work performed must be submitted and any unused grant funds must be returned.
- (i) Volunteers are prohibited from accepting gifts on behalf of the Peace Corps, pursuant to MS 721 Gifts and Fundraising Policy, and the conforming procedures. However, Volunteers are

permitted to promote approved Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) projects among their family and friends in accordance with Peace Corps guidance. Volunteers should refer any potential donor to the CD. The CD may work with GGM and OGC to determine whether the gift is appropriate and how best to accept the gift.

- (j) Peace Corps policy requires that the Volunteer who is in receipt of grant funds does not discriminate against or for any individuals in the implementation of the project, such as, but not limited to, by withholding, adversely impacting, or denying equitable access to the benefits provided through the project on the basis of any factor not expressly stated in the grant. This includes, for example, race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran's status. Otherwise, nothing in this provision is intended to limit the ability of the Volunteer, in consultation with their communities, to target project activities toward the needs of certain populations as defined in the grant.

7.0 Procedures – Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook

Procedures implementing this Manual Section are contained in MS 720 *Peace Corps Small Grants Program Handbook*. Revisions to the procedural Handbook must be approved by the Office of External Affairs, Office of Global Operations, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and the Office of the General Counsel.

8.0 Effective Date

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.