

NYS Department of State
Office for New Americans
Immigrant Resource Program
RFA #23-ONA-10

The responses to questions included herein are official responses by the Department of State (DOS) to questions submitted by potential proposers and are hereby incorporated into the Request for Applications RFA # 23-ONA-10 issued on July 12, 2023. In the event of any conflict between the Request for Applications and these responses, the requirements or information contained in these responses will prevail.

Section VI, Required Activities, Sub-section 1. ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator, first paragraph is amended to read:

“Each grantee will hire or repurpose one (1) full time equivalent (FTE) staff to serve as the “ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator(s)” for their service region. More than one (1) staff person can be employed to equal the one (1) FTE staff position. Resource coordinators from multiple agencies can be utilized, including through subcontracting; staffing must still equal one (1) FTE.”

Section VI, Required Activities, Sub-section 5. Host Information Session Days, third paragraph is amended to read:

“Prior to each Information Session Day, the Immigrant Resource Coordinator (s) will engage the Immigrant Helping Hands volunteers in planning and outreach. This will include soliciting specific topics and presenters that volunteers feel would be useful to feature during the Information Sessions Days. The Immigrant Resource Coordinator(s) must submit a request for workshop approval to ONA for any presentations or workshops that will be provided at each Information Session Day. The request for workshop approval must be submitted to ONA at least 2 weeks in advance of the Information Session Day. ONA will review the request and provide approval within one week.”

The list in Section VII, Eligible Costs (Direct costs can include:) is hereby amended to add the following:

“13. Costs to conduct background checks on volunteers associated with this grant (Immigrant Helping Hands volunteers).

14. Equipment to be used by volunteers, such as a laptop, phone or tablet, for dedicated program purposes including presentations, outreach, or other activities outlined in this document are allowed. The equipment must be retained by the agency and all shared costs must be appropriately allocated.”

Questions and Answers

Q1. How should I apply?

A1. Please refer to Section IV.b. of the RFA for additional information on application submission. The RFA can be found at <https://dos.ny.gov/immigrant-resource-program-rfa-23-ona-10>.

Q2.

- I would like to submit a question in regards to the new ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator RFA. As recipients of many ONA grants, and as an organization with a long history of extensive immigrant services, [our organization] is excited to see this new grant opportunity and we look forward to the impact it will make in our communities!

Our question is: will this new ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator grant replace the ONA Immigrant Community Navigator grant, and the Navigator grant will no longer be renewed?

As [our organization] is a current recipient of the ONA Immigrant Community Navigator grant, this will impact our programming going forward.

We noticed in the Introduction (Point I. of the grant), the grant "builds upon the current ONA Immigrant Community Navigator program" and is "expanding upon the successes of the ONA Navigator model to provide even more..." services, which may indicate that this new grant will expand and replace the current Navigator program.

Your response to the question will be helpful because, if this grant is to replace the Navigator program, we will plan accordingly and write into the RFA how our current Navigator will be repurposed for this new Immigrant Resource Coordinator position.

- Will this program be replacing the current ONA Navigator program?

A2. Yes, this program will replace the current Navigator grants when those contracts end.

Q3. Just wanted to confirm if Church organizations are considered non profit under this funding program.

Churches (including integrated auxiliaries and conventions or associations of churches) that meet the requirements of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code are automatically considered tax exempt and are not required to apply for and obtain recognition of exempt status from the IRS.

A3. Yes

Q4. Can a proposal include multiple resource coordinators at multiple agencies (via subcontracting) combining workload to form 1 FTE?

A4. Yes, the proposal can include multiple resource coordinators at different agencies, including through subcontracting, as long as the staffing equals 1 FTE.

Q5.

- **How many hours or how extensive of a workload is expected of the “Helping Hands” volunteers? What would their term of service be?**
- **Is there a minimum amount of time per month that volunteers are expected to serve?**

A5. There is no minimum requirement for the number of hours the volunteers must provide under this grant. The only requirement is that at least five volunteers be recruited and retained throughout the contract year. However, the work plan includes some specific deliverables such as meeting once per month with the Immigrant Resource Coordinator and providing feedback on the monthly Information Sessions. While there is no minimum requirement, the grantee will be expected to meet the deliverables in the work plan, utilizing the volunteers as detailed.

Q6. Can the “Helping Hands” volunteers be part-time staff or paid contractors or are we expected to ask underprivileged members of the community for free labor?

A6. No, the volunteer position cannot be a paid staff position or a paid contractor. There will be opportunities for volunteers to gain free training and leadership skills under this grant and through the ONA Civic Leadership Program.

Q7. Are there requirements as to how initial and ongoing volunteer training is to be provided? (onsite, remote, hybrid)

A7. No, there are no requirements.

Q8. Must all volunteers be bilingual?

A8. No, however, the goal of this program is to “recruit volunteers who reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of the immigrants in the service area.”

Q9. Could you be more specific regarding the office's expectations for sign language and Braille? Here on Long Island, it would be fairly easy to find ASL interpreters and Braille services in the English language. However, many of our immigrants are from a Spanish language background. Those who

have a hearing impairment would be more likely to use sign language from their country of origin rather than ASL. It's very difficult to find an interpreter of Mexican or Central American sign language. How would we be expected to respond to a situation like this? The same is true for users of Braille. Spanish language Braille differs from English language Braille. Is it enough to have accessible services in English only or would we be expected to find services in Spanish?

A9. The goal is to provide accessible information and services; however, ONA can also facilitate technical support to identify sign language interpretation services and Braille in other languages as needed.

Q10. Is the ONA civic leadership training program free?

A10. Yes

Q11. How can we enforce or what expectations are there to enforce volunteer attendance at all 12 monthly meetings?

A11. Providers may provide certificates of volunteer hours and completion as well as letters of recognition for volunteer service. In addition, successful volunteers can participate in the ONA Civic Leadership Program and other trainings.

Q12. What timeframe can ONA provide approval for information session days? (For example, will approval be provided or denied within one week of a request?)

A12. Requests for workshop approval must be submitted to ONA at least 2 weeks in advance of the Information Session Day, and ONA will review and provide its approval within one week.

Q13. Will the survey template provided by ONA for participant surveys already be translated?

A13. ONA will provide translations of participant survey templates as needed.

Q14. Are volunteer incentives allowed in the budget? Can we reimburse them for phone use, provide a laptop/Chromebook for their use?

A14. Volunteer incentives are not allowed. Purchase of equipment to be used by volunteers, such as a laptop for dedicated program purposes including presentations, outreach, etc. is allowed, however, the equipment must be retained by the agency and all shared costs must be appropriately allocated.

Q15. Are volunteer background checks an eligible cost?

A15. Yes, volunteer background checks are an eligible cost.

Q16. If we currently have a grant for Immigration Resource officer, would we still be allowed to apply for this grant?

A16. This is a new ONA program and grant opportunity. Any eligible organization may apply.

Q17. If we apply and get awarded, would we then have 2 Immigration Resource Coordinators?

A17. This grant funds 1 FTE Immigrant Resource Coordinator under the new ONA Immigrant Resource Program. Any staff currently funded under other ONA programs would be considered separate from this grant.

Q18. Will this position take place of the current position, when the grant we have runs out?

A18. This program will replace the current Navigator grants when those contracts end. However, this program does not replace the current ONA North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator Program.

Q19. The RFA does not indicate a contract start date – is there an anticipated contract start date?

A19. Grant contracts are anticipated to start early 2024.

Q20. The RFA mentions that the group of client volunteers recruited for this program should be referred to as the Immigrant Helping Hands volunteers. As an organization that works closely with the immigrant community, we are very sensitive to the idea that language is key to empowerment, inclusion, diversity, and equity. We feel that the terminology of “Helping Hands” is not aligned with these goals and values and we would like to respectfully request permission to use different language to refer to the client volunteers when we describe their collective role(s) in our proposal.

A20. Thank you for this thoughtful feedback. The term “Helping Hands” is not a requirement for the proposal or program implementation. Applicants may use a different name for the volunteers.

Q21. Is it allowable in the budget to provide a stipend, in the form of a gift card, to client volunteers for the purpose of covering expenses incurred through their volunteer work under this grant?

A21. No stipends or gift cards are allowed, however, there will be opportunities for volunteers to gain free training and leadership skills under this grant and through the ONA Civic Leadership Program.

Q23. Is it allowable in the budget to purchase items that would be used by the volunteers in their outreach work to identify them as volunteers of the organization and program? This might include things like T-shirts and/or baseball caps to be worn during outreach events/activities.

A23. Yes, this is allowed, as long as it is unique to this program. All such items must include the ONA logo and ONA Hotline.