

Clarification and Guidance for Volunteer Labor and Expense in RCO Funded Projects

Summary

Grant recipients may use volunteer labor to accomplish the work in the scope of an RCO grant. Some volunteers work for a few hours or a day; others may work as part of a "crew" for several weeks or an entire season. The value of volunteer/donated labor is allowable non-reimbursable match. And the direct cost of recruiting, facilitating/coordinating, supervising and training volunteers or volunteer activity is an allowable cost. This document provides guidance for what is allowable.

Volunteer Time/Donated Labor

Volunteer or donated labor may be valued at the current hourly rate as published by RCO, or as allowed by RCO policy.

A volunteer may not be paid or reimbursed for their time worked or for their performance. If someone receives financial reimbursement for their time or performance, even if less than the donated labor rate(s) established or allowed by RCO, they may not be counted as a volunteer. Further, a sponsor may not claim the difference between the value of the labor and the payment as "donated" labor value (except for corrections labor as described in Manual 8, Reimbursements).

Any paid crew leaders or other workers may not be counted as volunteers. Similarly, if a stipend paid to any workers includes compensation for time worked or performance, they may not be counted as volunteers, however, the expense of such wages or compensation paid would be an eligible cost.

Individuals are still considered volunteers if they receive a meal and lodging allowance.

Note that some volunteer participants in some youth crew organizations may receive an AmeriCorps or other educational award upon completion of their service. This is not considered "payment" for time worked, so they may still be counted as volunteers.

Volunteer Expense

Concept: Volunteers are not free; there is a cost involved when using volunteers to work on projects.

When using volunteers, sponsors will most often need to recruit, provide basic equipment and tools, and provide some level of training and supervision. Additionally, an organization working with volunteers may need to provide transportation; specialized clothing, equipment and tools; food, clothing and/or housing. These are all eligible costs.

These costs are sometimes incurred internally by a sponsor (e.g., volunteer coordinator, purchase of tools), and sometimes contracted out (e.g., with an organization such as NW Youth Corps or Student Conservation Association).

Sometimes a stipend or living allowance is provided to a volunteer to cover the costs of food and/or lodging (most commonly for those volunteers working on a crew for one or more weeks). This cost is eligible if within [state per diem rates](#).

All of the above costs are eligible for reimbursement in an RCO grant.

Upon request for expanded back-up documentation, sponsors that contract out for volunteer crews must provide a copy of their contract to RCO.

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