

CNCS Grant Writing Tips

Do:

- Thoroughly read the entire application instructions and all attachments sent by your program specialist.
- Ask your program specialist questions. They are there to give you answers!
- Give clear examples that are specific to your sponsoring organization or Senior Corps project.
- Proofread your entire application. Have someone else proofread it, and then proofread it again! Your Executive Director or Board Chair (authorized representative) should be one of your proofreaders.
- Submit your application free of grammar and spelling errors. Your writing should be professional and clear.
- Review your entire application every year for updates. For example, if you mention that your sponsoring organization has been the sponsor for 15 years, the number of years will need to be updated annually. It may be easier to instead state that your sponsor has been the sponsor for the project since 1995.
- Address every single section of the application narrative.
- If you use an acronym, be sure to write out what the acronym stands for the first time you use it. The one exception is RSVP. The words 'Retired and Senior Volunteer Program' are no longer used by CNCS so the program should exclusively be referred to as RSVP.
- Document the sources where you found information for your community need statements and any other statistics used in the application.
- Use Project STAR (800-548-3656 or star@jbsinternational.com) for assistance with your work plans. They are a valuable resource free to you! However, please know that your program specialist may not agree with all of the advice that Project STAR shares and you still may be asked to make a few changes.

Do Not:

- Do not explain CNCS, RSVP, FGP, or SCP. Everyone reviewing your application is a CNCS employee and has a very good idea of what these programs are. There is not much need for general program information.
- Do not write the application from the perspective of the project or project director. The sponsoring agency is submitting the application, therefore, it should be written from their perspective. Avoid statements like "our sponsor provides good support to the Senior Corps project". These statements suggest that the application is coming from an entity that is separate from the sponsor.
- Do not make your reviewer search for information. Your application should be written in a way that is very easy to follow. Each narrative section should be completely answered prior to moving on to the next narrative section. If it helps to separate each narrative section into distinct paragraphs, please do so.
- Do not wait until the last minute to begin working on your application. Plan to submit the completed application a few days early just in case you run into any problems, especially with eGrants. Do not submit a late application!
- Do not waste words. Your application should thoroughly address each question without adding a lot of unnecessary explanation.
- Do not include outdated information. Community need information in the work plans and other statistics should be from within the last 5 years.
- Do not use 'etc.' anywhere in your application. Instead, use sufficient detail to explain your point.
- Do not use bullet points anywhere in the application. Complete sentences and paragraphs should be used instead.