

Pre Application Teleconference and Q & A:

FY 2014 Lifespan Respite Care Program

Grants to New States

FOA Number: HHS-2014-ACL-AOA-LR-0077

Moderator: Greg Link

April 17, 2014

2:00 PM, Eastern

Greg Link: I want to welcome everyone to this teleconference to discuss the funding opportunity announcement for the 2014 lifespan respite program, Grants to New States. The purpose of this call is to provide interested applicants with some background on the program.

I'm going to walk through the program announcement itself and highlight some particular things that I think you all should be paying attention to and then at the very end of the call I will open up the line so that you call can ask any questions that you might have.

As was just mentioned, this call is being recorded and it's my intention to have a printed transcript of the call including the Q&A at the end posted to the ACL Website along with this funding announcement by probably Tuesday or Wednesday of next week at the latest.

My name is Greg Link and I'm the Aging Program Specialist here at the Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging. I'm the Program Officer for the National Family Caregiver Support Program and the Lifespan Respite Care Program. I'm also the agency's lead on LGBT aging issues as well.

My responsibility within the context of the Lifespan Respite Program is to make sure that grantees are working within the requirements of the law and the funding announcement that you'll be responding to and I'm going to be your go-to person for all things that are programmatic in nature.

We'll have about an hour or so. I'm probably going to spend the first 30 minutes talking to you about the program and going through the funding announcement and then after that I'll be able to answer some questions for you.

By way of background, as many of you know Congress passed the Lifespan Respite Act of 2006 and since 2009 when appropriations began, has appropriated approximately \$2.5 million per year. That amount has gone down a little bit over recent years but we're still working with around \$2.4 million (give or take) in total appropriations for this program.

To date ACL has funded a total of 31 states and the District of Columbia with at least one grant to begin building lifespan respite programs. We have also funded technical assistance activities since 2009 and we have also funded other states over the past couple of years with what we've called integration and sustainability grants.

We have done some expansion grants in a couple of previous years to focus on developing service provision capabilities in the states. This year ACL has released two funding announcements for the lifespan respite program.

This funding announcement is strictly for new states who have never had a grant before. We also have a funding opportunity announcement out which is entitled Building Long-Term Sustainability in State Lifespan Respite Programs and that is open to states who have been previously funded and who wish to propose projects that build on and expand and really look towards sustaining the work that they've begun.

This call today is only about the grants to new states and that's the only topic we'll be discussing today. With this program announcement, ACL anticipates funding up to three new states to begin programs under this Act.

That's likely the ceiling for how many states we will fund with this Announcement. In past years we've funded only one new state so it is a highly competitive opportunity and we will be looking at all the applications for both the grants to new states as well as the long-term sustainability grants in making funding decisions for who gets funded this year.

For those of you who are new to the concept of lifespan respite, let me just spend a couple of seconds talking about that because I think it's important to have a grounding in the philosophy and the intent of the law. In a nutshell the purpose of the Lifespan Respite Act is to expand and enhance respite services, improve coordination and improve respite access and quality.

Lifespan respite programs in general look at the service of respite for caregivers and works to make it more accessible, more available and of higher

quality regardless of the age of the caregiver or the care recipient so this is a lifespan program and it looks as I said at across all ages and all disabilities.

This is a competitive grant opportunity that requires states to establish state and local lifespan respite systems to serve families regardless of age or special need. You're also expected to provide planned and emergency respite services, train and recruit workers and volunteers and then assist caregivers in gaining access to respite services.

There are eligibility criteria to receive services which include family members, foster parents and other adults providing unpaid care to adults who require care to meet basic needs or prevent injury and to children who require care beyond what is required by children to meet general basic needs.

The Act is unique in that it addresses the caregiver and respite needs across the age and disability spectrum without indicating preference for one particular group or another. In fact Congressional intent requires that states ensure that respite is made more available and accessible regardless of the age or the disability of the care recipient.

That's just a very brief overview of the Act. In the funding announcement on Page 4, I have included a link to the actual Lifespan Respite Act itself. It's very short. I think it's only about 9 or 10 pages.

I would encourage you and the folks you'll be collaborating with to write your applications to read through the Act and to understand its intent and what it's looking for.

You'll also see that a lot of the language in this funding announcement especially in the required activities which I'll get to in a little bit are lifted

directly from the Act so you have a very good starting point by reading the Act itself.

First of all, turning to the program announcement itself, hopefully all of you have a copy there with you and you can kind of follow along because I want to point out specific things within the funding announcement and draw your attention to specific things just to make sure that you're aware of what is in there so that you don't miss anything as you're preparing your applications.

On Page 1 the first thing I want to draw your attention to are some of the key dates associated with this funding announcement. Obviously there's today's teleconference which is April the 17th. The next critical date to be aware of is when the letters of intent are due and that's April the 25th of 2014.

I want to encourage you to send in a letter of intent only because I use those as a planning tool. It doesn't lock you into applying for a grant but, based on the numbers of letters of intent that I get, I can then plan on recruiting an appropriate number of grant reviewers.

The letters of intent really just give me a heads-up as to how many applications I can possibly be expecting and I always plan for having the most applications and then ultimately some states will send the letter and then decide against applying and that's perfectly fine.

Letters of intent can be faxed or e-mailed. E-mailed is really preferred. It can be simply, you know, a very quick e-mail that says "hey Greg, we're going to apply." That's really all I need to know, but if your state requires something a bit more formal, that's absolutely fine as well.

If you're going to fax your letters, my number is 202-357-3549 and then my e-mail is greg.link@acl.hhs.gov. The application deadline is June the 5th at 11:59 pm. Applications must be submitted electronically by that date or they will not be considered for funding.

I'll go through some of the screening and responsiveness criteria associated with this funding announcement in just a minute. Now I want to take just a few minutes and walk through the program announcement page by page and hopefully you'll be able to move along with me in the funding announcement.

I want to try to call your attention to those issues that I believe are really important, things to look at in the funding announcement to be aware of and if I don't answer your questions that you may have during this portion then hopefully I'll be able to do that at the end.

First and foremost, please be aware that this particular announcement is only applicable to states who have never received a grant under the lifespan respite program before.

Therefore applications will only be accepted from those states that have not received funds before and that's spelled out fairly clearly in the eligibility section a few pages back.

Page 2 of the funding announcement actually begins the funding opportunity description and I've tried to provide enough background and history where I talk about about the purpose of the Act, what the Administration for Community Living is looking for, what we're hoping that we will be able to accomplish as a result of these grants.

I've tried to lay that out in the first section of the funding opportunity description. I've tried to give a little bit of a background on who caregivers are, what do we mean by respite services. The Lifespan Respite Act contains a good definition of respite. That's the definition that we have been working off of.

Page 4 near the bottom begins the section that talks about the required activities and recommended approaches. These requirements are taken directly from the statute and so please be assured that you address those required services and then if you want to - the optional services that the Act outlines may also be included as part of your project.

Please be sure that you design your programs so that all of the required activities and services are delivered. The Act is not specific with respect to how much of each service is to be provided or if there's supposed to be a focus of one versus the other.

It's up to each state to determine what your service mix and what your approach will be for carrying out the requirements of the Act so that's at the bottom of Page 4.

Continuing through Page 5, under the additional application elements I've laid out some additional requirements that must be in your application. These are drawn mainly from the statute but they also reflect the priorities of the administrator for ACL.

The law requires that your applications demonstrate an understanding of the population that you're going to be serving, how the programs that you design will help to help families navigate a respite care system in the state, how you plan to serve all ages and all disability populations from the very beginning.

There's no phasing-in of population groups or age groups or disabilities in this program. It's everything from the get-go and so that's very important to be aware of. On Page 6, I want to draw your attention to this and I can't stress this enough and you'll hear me repeat this a couple of times.

Your application package must include an MOU between the eligible state agency and I'll get to who's eligible in just a moment and the statewide respite coalition or organization.

The Lifespan Respite Act requires that the applications for these funds include the MOU regarding the joint responsibility of the eligible agency's program between that agency that's applying and the respite coalition or organization in the state.

I would encourage you to write the MOU between the two entities that allows for enough flexibility for all parties to it to maybe make some modifications over the life course of the grant.

We've seen with previous grantees is that, the coalition and the ADRC and maybe the eligible agency that's actually submitting the application come together and they develop a project and an idea and they submit their proposals and they have their MOU that says the respite organization or coalition and the lead agency will each do X, Y and Z.

But then halfway through the grant they say "oh, you know, we maybe need to shift that a little bit." Leave yourself enough flexibility to allow yourself to do that relatively easily.

I think it makes projects flow much more smoothly in the long run. I've already received a question on this from a couple of states that asked about the coalition and whether or not the coalition has to have a not-for-profit status or have by-laws or anything like that.

My response to that is, and I will tell you from experience, that the coalitions in all of the states who have had grants up to this point have all been very, very different. A number of coalitions have legislative mandates that have created them, and so it's a much more formal structure.

I think in one state the governor actually appoints members to the respite coalition in the state. In other states the respite coalition is much more of an informal gathering or grouping of individuals whether it's providers or funding streams or consumers and hopefully it's a mixture of all of that who more informally come together around the notion of respite and form a coalition.

Some coalitions are freestanding - not-for-profits. Others are parts of other larger not-for-profits. There's any number of ways to do that and it's up to the state to determine what the makeup and the organizational structure of the coalition looks like.

Keep in mind though, the MOU between the applicant agency and the respite coalition or organization in the state must be in the application. If it's not there, the application will be rejected and it won't be reviewed so that must be part of the application package.

Pages 7 through 8 of the funding announcement, lays out additional encouraged activities. We're looking at making sure that grantees at the very top of Page 7 focus on some measure of sustainability for their project, what

will your approach for keeping this project going beyond the federal funding be?

There is a link to the ARCH Website that provides some tools for you all to look at to consider incorporating into projects that will help you build sustainability. There's a section that talks about products.

A lot of the grantees over the years have developed some really innovative tools, program development guides, state plans, data tracking if they're serving caregivers with respite services, etc.

We would hope that as part of your project that if you develop products and resources specific to your program that you would share those broadly with your fellow grantees as a way to keep things moving forward so that other states don't have to reinvent the wheel.

You'll have access to materials and resources that other grantees have developed. The other section I wanted to call your attention to is the semiannual reporting in the middle of Page 7.

All discretionary grantees of ACL are required to submit semiannual reports. That'll be a term and condition of your notice of award. We have a standard very basic template that we use for all discretionary grantees.

Currently we are working with our Office of Evaluation and our technical assistance resource center to identify a potential new reporting framework and structure that we may put in place midstream in a grant and so this is here to let you know that it's likely or possible that, if you're awarded a grant this year, midway through your grant we may be expecting you to use a different reporting format.

I would provide the technical assistance that you would need to understand that. It would just be a report that is specific to the unique needs and outcomes associated with this particular program and help us better manage and track the results that we're getting from these grants. So just be aware of that in the middle of Page 7.

I also want to call your attention on Page 8 to the grants and subcontracts section. This is one of those optional things that some states do and some don't. As a grantee you may decide that you want to subcontract or subgrant some of the activities that you propose and that's fine. The law gives permission to do that.

What you need to be able to do though in your applications, if you're going to subcontract a particular task out or you're going to make subgrants or mini-grants, you know, for carrying out parts of what you hope to do statewide, it's important for you to talk about how you're going to maintain control over those activities.

How are you going to monitor what's happening? How are you going to solicit, subcontracts or mini-grants? All of that should be laid out and it's explained here so you need to describe clearly your process for subcontracting or subgranting specific activities and then how you're going to monitor and track those activities over the course of your grant.

If you do choose to do any kind of subcontracts or subgrants, it is important to note that as the lead agency you must maintain control over the entire project. We are not permitting pass-through of grant funds.

If you get the grant then you give the entire chunk to another agency to administer, the lead agency must demonstrate an active involvement and oversight over the entire project for the life of the grant.

Page 8 of the funding announcement at the very bottom begins the award information. As I had mentioned earlier, we plan to fund up to approximately three new grants to states at a maximum of \$200,000 each for the entirety of a 36-month project.

So that means we're forward-funding these at \$200,000 for a 36-month project. What this means is you receive the grant, and you have access to the grant award up front. So keep this in mind as you develop your budgets and work plans for a 36-month project.

Our rationale for 36-month project lengths was to give new grantees who maybe are not as far along in delivering the lifespan respite concept and philosophy enough time to actually begin to lay the groundwork and the infrastructure that they need for these programs to be successful and sustainable.

For states who might be further along but who have never had one of these federal grants, 36 months is a good length of time for you to make enhancements to what you already have, fine-tune processes and procedures that you have in place and really help to make the infrastructure in your state even more robust than it might already be.

We use forward funding in a number of areas here. We have funded our ADRCs this way in the past. We have also funded our Alzheimer's Disease supportive services grants in this way too and it really helps to provide some stability for a project knowing that you have three years to do the work.

Page 9 near the top, I just want to point out that it's very likely that not all applications that we receive for either opportunity whether it's the new states or the long-term sustainability grants, will be funded.

Every year since we have been implementing this program there have been states who have applied but have been denied and it's simply the nature. This is a highly-competitive opportunity. There are very small amounts of money available and so we fund only the strongest applications each year.

Page 9 near the middle begins the eligibility section and it talks about who the eligible entities are. For this grant - for grants to new states - is any state that has not previously had a federally-funded lifespan respite grant. It also talks about who the eligible state agencies are and the law is very specific about who can apply.

It's the state agency that administers the Older Americans Act which is the state unit on aging or it could be the state's Medicaid agency or it can be another state government entity or state government agency that the governor designates to tap to say go ahead and apply for these funds.

If you're not the state unit and you're not the Medicaid agency, we have seen a number of states where it's the state's DD agency, the state's aging and persons with disabilities agency apply but you would want to have something from the governor saying, X agency is directed to apply for this and include that with your application.

Page 9 near the bottom talks about the cost-sharing and match requirements. There is a match requirement for this project. It's a 25% match of cash, non-

federal cash or in-kind and Congress has not given permission in the statute for us to waive or reduce the match requirement.

As with most other federal grants, match must be from non-federal sources, you know, cash match can come from non-federal funds such as cash contributions or other state sources of funding that you may want to put up, you know, to match these activities.

Please be sure that your match is based on the project's total cost and not the amount that you request from the federal government. This essentially requires you to develop your project work plan and budget first before determining how much you're going to request from us.

There are detailed instructions in the funding announcement for how to calculate and compute the match requirement. That it's all contained in here and there are some tools for you and some formulas that you can follow.

Page 10, I want to call your attention to Item Number 3. It's the responsiveness and screening criteria. Please, please, please really pay attention to this.

Your applications when you submit them will go through two screenings. The first one will be the application screening criteria and that's where we look at was it submitted on time? Are the fonts and margins and the page lengths for the narrative correct, you know and you know, the work plan, the letters of commitment and the (vitae) of project personnel are not counted as part of the narrative.

So, is your application submitted on time, you know, are the margins the right thing and all of that? If your application fails to meet any of those criteria, it will be rejected and it won't be reviewed.

Then it moves on to the responsiveness criteria and this is more where we look at is the agency that has applied, are they eligible based on the description of an eligible agency in Section 3 of the funding announcement?

And have you included the MOU between the eligible state agency and the statewide respite coalition or organization. Then the third criteria is that you have not proposed pass-through funding or conduit funding for another agency to lead the project.

If any one of those is not met, the application will be rejected and it will not be reviewed so please pay very, very close attention to that and I can't stress enough the importance of having that MOU included in your application package.

Page 10 at the very bottom all the way through Page 12 of the funding announcement provides guidance on getting the application package, making sure that you as the applicant agency is setup with the central contractor registry, that you have your grants.gov passwords and access and all of that and that you have your DUNS number.

I can tell you right now it is not too soon to make sure that you have all of that in place. If you're not sure that you have a DUNS number please, follow the instructions here for either obtaining one or verifying one or updating one. The same thing with your grants.gov passwords and user ID.

Often times the state agency will have only one or two people who can submit something via grants.gov. Make sure you either know who that person is or you get somebody who will be associated with this program registered on grants.gov and start it now because it can sometimes take several weeks to do that.

Also if you have grants.gov issues, you can't logon, it's freezing up or whatever, do not call me or ACL. The grants.gov is not an ACL system and I do not have access to it. I cannot provide you with technical assistance.

We have included phone numbers in here and links where you can go for information and technical assistance in any of the matters associated with grants.gov, DUNS and all of that so please make sure that you start on this sooner rather than later.

It will save you a ton of headache when it comes time to actually submitting and hopefully those of you who are writing applications will be able to have things to a place so you can submit your application a day or two before the deadline. That would be absolutely ideal because if for some reason your application were to get rejected for some technical reason and I'm going to talk about one common technical reason in just a second, you want to have time to go back through the resubmission process.

One of the things that we found last year and I think it was the year before also that caused applications to be rejected from grants.gov was when you submitted the application which may contain multiple attachments, let's say you have a separate attachment for your work plan and for your budget narrative and all of that, that's all fine.

But we have found that when those attachments were named and included in those names the document names, characters like the dollar sign or the ampersand or asterisks or something like this, that the presence of those characters in the name of the document caused the entire application to be rejected.

I would advise you when you're naming your documents that you plan to upload as part of your application, use letters and numbers and don't put any weird character symbols in there. It could cause the application to be rejected so I just say that as a word of caution.

On Page 13 begins a description of what's expected in the project narrative. Please pay attention to that. In the problem statement section and in the proposed intervention, there's a bulleted list in both of those sections of items that you need to include.

I lifted these directly from the Lifespan Respite Act. If you look at the Act and you look at these, you'll see that I've basically lifted them verbatim from the Act. Please be sure that you include that information in your project narrative.

Pages 16, 17 and 18 talk a little bit about the work plan that you are to develop in your applications. Please be sure that the work plan that you develop covers all three years of your project. The same thing with your budget narrative.

Make sure that you have three budget years and then you have a fourth budget narrative that covers the entire lifespan of the project that it's a summary of what the three individual budget years contains.

We have provided templates for you for the work plan and for the budget narrative so use those. You can modify them a little bit to make them yours but we have provided all of those things for you should you need them.

On Page 18 at the bottom through Page through Page 22 at the top, I want you to pay really close attention to this as well. This is the exact criteria by which your applications will be reviewed and scored and if you'll notice, they're all yes/no questions.

What I would hope that everybody would do is, as you're preparing your applications for submission, to become familiar with what the reviewers will be looking for in your applications, in your narratives, in your budgets, in your work plans and everything and if you can answer yes to every one of these questions, if you can say when I'm submitting my application package I've answered yes to every one of these questions, you can feel fairly comfortable that you will have an application that is competitive.

I can't guarantee that it would win but it will be competitive because you will have included all of the questions. So please, take some time to go through that and look at what the reviewers will be looking at.

I'd also want to say that the up to 20 page project narrative that you write for this is your only chance to tell the reviewers what the project is, what you're going to do. It's the how you tell your story, it's how you convey the need that you have in your state to have this program so please take some care as you develop your narratives. Make sure that narrative conveys what the problems are, they convey your approaches, your outcomes that you anticipate, your objectives and all of that.

The reviewers will not come back to you during the review process and ask any clarifying questions nor will you be permitted to provide anything beyond what you submit in your application so it all has to be in the narrative and in the supporting documents that you send in with your application package.

Just a word about the review process. As you know the closing date for this announcement is June the 5th. Following June the 5th begins the review process. We have independent panels of outside reviewers who are not AOA folks or ACL or AOA staff.

It's other mostly non-federal people who have background expertise in these types of program review and score your applications and submit the scores and their recommendations for funding back to ACL.

That whole process will happen between June 5th and the end of June. During the month of July will occur the business review which is handled by our grants management office. There they will be looking at your budget and making sure that everything that you have proposed falls within HHS grant policy.

At that point they may come back to you with clarifying questions and things of that nature. We expect that review to occur during July and we're hoping to have notices of award out for an August 1 start date. That's ambitious. August 1 would be the soonest your project would start.

It's not inconceivable that your project could start September 1, but we try to give ourselves a couple of months to handle the review process because we have a number of grant programs being reviewed at the same time so with that I will end my remarks and I'd like to go ahead and open the call up for questions for anyone that's out there.

Live Question and Answer Period

Question: So I just wanted to clarify, my understanding is that as long as the lead agency is able to obtain a letter from the governor authorizing them to apply for this grant, then that agency would be eligible; is that correct?

Greg Link: Yes, as long as it's a state government agency. It has to be an agency of state government.

Greg Link: Okay. And let me clarify. An agency of state government so the only time you would have to do that is if it's not the state unit on aging that applies, they don't need to go to the governor.

If it's the state's Medicaid agency, they don't need to go to the governor. If it's any other state agency, the Act specifies that it has to be designated by the governor and probably the cleanest way to do that is with some type of a letter or what have you.

Coordinator: You may ask your question.

Question: Yes, hi Greg. I'm calling from X State. I have a question about the coalition or the respite organizations statewide and that you're saying we need an MOU as part of the grant. We do not have any such coalition so what would we do in that case?

Greg Link: Well, my suggestion if there is no statewide respite coalition or organization in the state that this might not be the best time to apply and that maybe [the state] may want to maybe spend some time and there are technical assistance

resources through ARCH national respite network that can actually help states think about how they develop a coalition and you know, convene the necessary stakeholders to make that happen.

Greg Link: So that would be my advice.

Question: Okay, so essentially what you're saying is we really need one in place.

Greg Link: Yes, right, because if you were to just submit an application - if [state] or whatever state agency - were to do that and there was nothing in there about the coalition and no MOU, the application would be rejected. So I don't want you to waste a lot of time and valuable energy.

Greg Link: Any other questions? Okay, keep in mind that I will try to have a transcript of this call posted to ACL's Website in the funding opportunities section and the transcript will be posted in the section where this funding announcement is and you'll see it clearly marked, you know, pre-application teleconference transcript.

If you wanted to revisit anything that I talked about, the transcript will be pretty much word for word. It can be sometimes painful to wade through but you'll at least be able to refer back to what was said or maybe if some of the questions that were asked on the call.

So if there are no other questions. Let's go ahead and end the call. I thank you all very much and I wish you good luck as your work on these applications. Have a great week. Take care.

END