

NWX HHS AOA 1 (US)

**Moderator: Kevin Foley
May 20, 2015
1:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen only mode. During the question and answer session, please press Star and 1 on your touchtone phone.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I will turn the meeting over to Mr. Kevin Foley. Sir you may go ahead.

Kevin Foley: Thank you very much (Mia). I want to welcome you all to this teleconference to discuss the funding opportunity announcement for the FY 2015 Lifespan Respite Care Program Grants to States opportunity.

The purpose of this call is to provide interested applicants with some background information on the program, walk the announcement itself and highlight particular things you should pay attention to, as well as answer any outstanding questions that you may have.

As (Mia) mentioned, this conference call is being recorded. And a printed copy of today's transcript, along with the audio recording including the questions and answers at the end of the call, will be available on ACL's Website within a week or so.

My name is Kevin Foley, and I'm an Aging Services Program Specialist here at ACL. I'm the Program Officer for the Aging and Disability Resource Center and No Wrong Door grant opportunities, as well as the Administrator of the Veteran Directed Home Community-Based Services Program here at the Administration for Community Living.

In addition, I have the privilege and responsibility for implementing the Lifespan Respite Program. My responsibility is to ensure that grantees work within the requirements of the act and the funding announcement for the life of each project.

I'll be here go to person for all programmatic issues relating to each project. Supported by (Christine Ramirez), Grant Specialist from ACL's Office of Grants Management. (Christine) will be handling the business functions between ACL and the grantees, or the grantee rather that is selected. You may interact with (Christine) on questions about budget reporting, drawing down funds, et cetera.

So this call is scheduled to go for about an hour. Hopefully we won't need that much time. I do want to take this opportunity to go over the program announcement and hopefully clear up any lingering questions.

I'll spend the next couple minutes providing an overview of the Lifespan Respite Program, followed by reviewing key dates that you will need to be aware of preparing your application.

And then finally I'll go through the announcement highlight key points as necessary. Following that, we'll open the line for Q and A.

Just some quick background. As many of you know, Congress passed the Lifespan Respite Act in 2006, and since 2009 has appropriated funds in the amount of about 2.5 million per year.

To date, ACL has funded a total of 31 states; I'm sorry 32 states and the District of Columbia to develop lifespan respite programs. We also funded TA activities in FY 2009 and 2012 and will be funding again this year.

ACL has also funded several grantees with integration and sustainability grants to continue their work to develop fully integrated sustainable systems.

In addition, ACL has funded several states with expansion funds to begin providing services and testing the service delivery systems that they had developed through grants like this one.

This year, ACL has released this new state program announcement. And again, this call will be focusing on that announcement. We anticipate funding one state through this particular opportunity.

And for those of you who are new to the concept of lifespan respite, I can provide just a brief overview of the act and the philosophy of lifespan respite. In a nutshell, the purpose of the Lifespan Respite Care Act is to expand and enhance respite services, improve coordination and improve respite access and quality.

Lifespan respite care programs look at the service of respite for caregivers and works to make it more accessible, available and a higher quality regardless of the age of the caregiver or care recipient.

This is a competitive grant opportunity that requires states to establish a state and local coordinated lifespan respite care system to serve families regardless of age or special needs.

To provide new planned and emergency respite services, to train and recruit respite workers and volunteers and assist caregivers in gaining access to respite care services. Additionally, the lifespan respite program can fill gaps in respite services where they exist.

Those eligible would include family members, foster peer or other adults providing unpaid care to adults who require care to meet basic needs or prevent injury and to children who require care beyond that required by children generally to meet basic needs.

The act is unique in that it addresses caregiver and respite needs across the age and disability categories, without preference to a particular group. In fact, congressional intent requires that states ensure that respite is made available and accessible regardless of age or disability of the care recipient. You can find that under the US House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Congress in 2006.

So just a very brief overview of the act. Before working on your application I encourage you, and for those who will be completing an application on your behalf, to read the full language of the act.

Likewise, as you can clean your stakeholder groups to discuss the application and program development, it would be a great idea to ensure that each of them reads the act as well. That way everybody's on the same page.

Now the act is relatively short and very straightforward. By reading the act you will also see much of the link which that repeated the program announcement itself.

I provided a direct link to the act and the accompanying committee report. I believe it's on Page 7 of the program announcement. We're going to jump into the key dates. I just want to touch on a few dates associated with this funding opportunity.

So as I mentioned, today we'll have a printed transcript posted on ACL's Website next to the location where the funding opportunity itself is linked to, as well as the audio recording will be included there, which will include the Q and A that we'll have at the end of the call.

Next we have letters of intent, which are due on June 1, 2015. So I would encourage you to consider completing one. But even if you don't ultimately submit application, submitting a letter of intent does not make you to actually completing an application.

Letters of intent are a great planning tool really for me to use in structuring the grant's review in that whole process. So knowing ahead of time approximately how many applications are coming in. That will help me to determine the number of grant reviewers I'll need, as well as how to structure the review process.

Letters can be faxed or emailed to be. The fax number is 202-357-3469. And my email is Kevin, K-E-V-I-N dot Foley, F-O-L-E-Y at ACL.HHS.gov. And of course email is preferred, but fax is fine as well. If you want to just notify me that it's going to the fax machine, you can just shoot me a quick email to mention that.

So the application that is 11:59 pm on July 13. So applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov, www.grants.gov. The due date is non-negotiable. And applications received after this date will not be considered for funding. Now I'll talk a little bit later about some of the specific application submitting instructions.

So the projected start date for this project is actually September 1, 2015. And this is the target date that we're shooting for. And we're going to strive to make sure we get there. And that's why we provide ourselves and you guys quite a bit of time to make sure we hit that start date.

So those are really the key dates to keep in mind as you begin your work. I'll talk a little bit later about the actual grant submission process. And you want to begin preparing for that as well - that well in advance of when you actually push the button to submit your application.

But first we'll jump to some of the overview of the program announcement. Okay so I'm going to walk you just page by page and try and call attention to some of the issues that I believe to be the greatest importance. If I don't answer your question during this time, we can move to that during the Q and A period at the end of the call.

So first and foremost, please be aware that this particular announcement is only applicable to states who have never before received a grant under the lifespan respite program. Therefore, applications will only be accepted from those states who have not received funds before.

As we jump into the funding opportunity announcement, Page 1 has the due date for both the letters of intent and the application - the application itself.

There is also an executive summary that provides a brief overview of the opportunity and who is eligible to apply.

Page 2 starts the actual description of the funding opportunity. I tried to provide enough background and history so that applicants understand the intent and purpose of the funding opportunity, as well as the context in which they might be working to get funded.

Page 3 at the very bottom has a link to the actual Lifespan Respite Act. If you have not read this act, I previously again encourage you to do so. It's short, very straightforward but very informative. You'll see that by reading the law that much of the - what's in the law is in some way laid out throughout this announcement.

Page 4 near the bottom begins the section that outlines the required uses of funds. These requirements are taken directly from statute. So please be sure you address them in your applications.

And please be sure you design your programs that all required activities and services are going to be delivered. The act is not specific with respect to how much of each service is provided. So it will be up to each state or applicant to determine the appropriate service mix.

Page 5 lays out additional required elements that must be in your applications. Again, these are mainly drawn from statute but reflect the priorities of the administrator here at ACL.

Let's see, Page 6 near the bottom, I can't stress this enough. You'll see in block letters there, important. And you'll hear me repeat this a couple of times. But your application package must include a copy of the MOU between

eligible state agency, which I'll get to in a minute, and the statewide respite coalition organization.

The act requires that the application included a memorandum of agreement or understanding regarding the joint responsibility for the eligible agency's program between that agency and the public or private nonprofit statewide respite coalition organization.

I would encourage you to write the memorandum so as to allow flexibility to all parties as the project unfolds. For example, if use spell out specific roles or responsibilities to all parties within the MOU, you're going to want to include a clause allowing modifications by any of the parties I think within the agreement or memorandum of understanding.

So if your state does not have a formal respite coalition, an organization in the state that provides or coordinates respite could also be used. If you do not include the MOU with your application, the application will be rejected and not reviewed. So again, that's a critical importance and we get into the bottom of Page 6.

Moving on, Pages 7 and 8 also lay out additional required optional or encouraged activities. So please be sure your application address the activities described here.

The sections pertaining to products, info sharing and collaboration with technical assistance efforts were expanded someone in the past few years. And we're continuing to expect this of all successful applicants.

But most importantly, we've added an additional requirement to the reporting and project evaluation section on Page 7. I can note at the end of the second

paragraph in this section that when you're doing your required semi-annual reports, you'll be required to report specifically on the progress made or not made for each of the work plan goals, objectives and tasks throughout the life of the grant.

This is really in response to ACL's need to develop a more rigorous reporting of progress on the work plan and the attainment of certain milestones because of the forward funded nature of these particular grants.

On Page 8 near the top, we have a section called grants and subcontracts. This is one of those optional elements. Now some of you may decide that you need a sub-grantee or a subcontract to carry out the required or the optional activity. This is permissible.

A number of states, or sorry, a number of states have done this in their existing projects. However, the state agency, the applicant, must demonstrate an active role in the program development implementation, as well as the management.

So do not propose a project that simply passes funds onto another entity. We will not fund pass-through projects. If you do decide to subcontract specific activities, be sure to clearly describe the process for this and how you as the grantee will continue to be in the lead role.

Also be sure to describe the role of the project director and the role and makeup of the stakeholder group. Stakeholder involvement and partnerships are discussed more fully in the next section on this page.

I think we've seen that in states where lifespan respite activities and programs are successful, there is also a strong collaboration among all relevant stakeholders. Please be sure to address this in your application.

Finally in this section, we would like to encourage you to budget resources to attend the National Respite Conference. This will provide you with an excellent opportunity for training and networking and to meet fellow grantees.

So as you can see at the bottom of Page 8 it begins - and onto Page 9, it begins the award information. You'll see here that we plan to fund only one grant under this opportunity at a maximum of \$200,000 for a 36 month project period. This means that you will receive your grant award upfront for a three-year project. Please keep this in mind as you develop work plans and budgets for a 36 month period.

Our rationale for a 36 month project length was to give states who are not as far along in their development of lifespan respite programs or who may not have begun the work necessary to bring relevant stakeholders together the adequate time and resources to plan and implement programs. And to supplement respite services where necessary, as well as to have enough time to do this work well. And again, building the last thing in sustainable infrastructure.

For those states that are further along, you can use the 36 month project period to fine-tune your programs, increasing your reach trying to approach this to meeting respite needs and fill gaps more effectively, et cetera.

Since awarding the first round of states seeing the benefit of these three-year project periods for, you know, planning and ramping up with grant activities, projects. Now we've used a similar funding strategy for the Aging Disability

Resource Center grants, some of the initial ones there as well as Alzheimer's grants here out of ACL. It's proven to be a successful approach.

Now moving on to Page 9, near the top there points out that not all applications received will be funded. We're making funding decisions based on the outcomes of the application review process just for this opportunity. And it's expected that this is going to be a highly competitive opportunity. And we'll only recommend the strongest application for funding.

During the course of application review, it's possible that we may come back to an applicant to negotiate the size of your actual award, keeping in mind that we can never award more than you ask for. We can, however, award less than you request based on the scope of work you propose relative to the funds that are requested and the funds that are available.

Here we have the estimated total funding and \$200,000. So I would encourage applicants to focus in on that amount, as well as develop a project which meets that funding amount level.

So while these are cooperative agreements, ACL anticipates active collaboration with each grantee throughout the life of the project. As the project get underway we'll devise a communication system to keep you updated from the federal perspective. And likewise, we can use the right use regularly scheduled conference calls for technical assistance, updates and general programmatic discussions.

ACL will work with each of the grantees to develop and finalize your work plan. Your work plans will be completed within 45 days of award.

Now in the middle of this section here on 9 talks about eligibility. So please be sure you read and understand these requirements, especially who is eligible to apply.

I'm going to talk a bit more later about screening applications against what's called responsiveness criteria. And we do that before sending them on to review panels. And this is the first thing that will be looked at in your application, whether or not the applicant meets the eligibility requirements as specified in statute.

Applicant agencies must be the state unit on aging, the state's Medicaid agency or another state agency identified by the governor to administer the lifespan respite program.

No other entities are eligible to apply. So if you are listening on the call now and you are not from a state agency, you may not be eligible to apply. If that is the case, you should contact and work with the eligible entity in your state to encourage them to submit an application.

Additionally, the eligible agency must be an aging and disability resource center and must work in collaboration with a public or private nonprofit statewide respite care coalition or organization. In this case, if there isn't a formal respite care coalition, in place a respite organization working in the state on behalf of the entire state would suffice.

Note the final set of eligibility criteria is that the eligible state agency must demonstrate an ability to work with other state and community based agencies, must have an understanding of respite care and family caregiver issues across all age groups, disabilities and conditions and must have the

capacity to ensure meaningful involvement of family members, caregivers and care recipients.

Now there are questions as to the ADRC requirements. States are required by statute to have such an entity. The ADRC definition of the program announcement is drawn directly from the lifespan act itself. If you are concerned about whether your state has an ADRC, look at the definition and determine whether there is an entity in your state that meets the criteria outlined in the act.

The act defines an aging disability resource and an entity administering a program established by the state as part of the state's system of long-term care to provide a coordinated system for providing comprehensive information on the public and private long-term care programs, options and resources, personal counseling to assist individuals in assessing their existing or anticipated long-term care needs and developing and maintaining a plan for long-term care design to meet their specific needs and circumstances.

And finally, consumer access to the range of publically supported long-term care programs for which consumers may be eligible by starting at a convenient point of entry for these type programs.

You want to be sure that you have an entity in your state that's part of the state's long-term care system and provide those three things I just highlighted -- information, counseling and access.

So based on the act's definition and description of an ADRC, you should be able to determine if your state has such an entity and describe how that entity will work in your project.

Make sure you write to the definitions, or sorry, the definition and functions of an ACRC as it is in the act. And make sure the reviews have a full appreciation for how your state meets the criteria for an ADRC and how that entity will be involved in the administration of a lifespan respite program on a statewide basis.

Again on Page 9 of the announcement has another import issue just I wanted to raise with you, which is match. By statue, cost sharing or matching is at a 25% cash or in-kind level. And Congress has not permitted waivers to this match requirement.

As with most other federal grants, match must be from non-federal sources. Match - cash match comes from non-federal funds such as cash contributions from individuals or from organizations.

And in-kind contributions are non-federal, third-party, non-cash contributions made directly to the grant project and include things like donated time, real or non-expendable property and goods and services.

Be sure your match is based on the project's total cost, not the amount you request from the feds. This essentially requires you to develop your project work plan and budget first before determining how much to request from the feds. Detailed instructions for calculating match are in Attachment A of the announcement.

Earlier I alluded to responsiveness and screening criteria. On Page 10, please be sure your applications address the responsiveness and screening criteria outlined here.

We will be screening each application internally to ensure that both screening and responsiveness criteria are addressed before giving the applications to reviewers.

Failure of an application to comply with either the responsiveness or screen technical criteria will result in that application's elimination from further review or consideration for funding.

So the responsiveness criteria on Page 10 includes the following factors. If the applicant and eligible state agency has outlined in Section 3, Part 1 of this program announcement. Those examples (were stated) on aging, Medicaid agency or another state agency.

Two, has an MOU between the eligible state agency and the respite coalition organization that included with the application. And three finally, does the applicant propose to do the work themselves? Meaning you are not proposing to pass the funds through to another agency to actually do the work.

If all those conditions have been met, excuse me, if all those conditions have not been met, your application will not be reviewed. So be sure to incorporate these elements in your application.

The application screening criteria are more technical in nature and include such things as, you know, did the application arrive on time? Are the margins correct? Is the narrative within the page link limit of 20 pages? Did the applicant use the correct font size of no smaller than I believe it's 11? Now again, if your application misses on any of these technical criteria, your application will not be reviewed.

And Pages 10 and 11 really provide guidance on where to get the application package. And included there is my contact information. Please remember that your applications must be submitted electronically through grants.gov.

This page also includes some helpful information should you require assistance with using grants.gov, including a toll free number to call if you have any issues or problems.

So the program announcement gives specific instructions and all steps you need to follow to be sure you're properly registered on grants.gov and that you have your DUNS number.

From time to time there have been issues with grants.gov with respect to it locking up or freezing during submission. Should this occur, please use the toll free number to call them for assistance. The ACL's grants office is not able to assist with grants.gov issues because it's not necessarily our website.

So while I'm on the subject of grants.gov, let me add just a couple more things. So again, if you're not already registered with grants.gov, you should start now. It may take a few days or potentially a week, you know, to get completely registered. And you don't want to be trying to do that at the same time as you're submitting your grant.

If you're already registered with grants.gov, please make sure your passwords have not expired. They need to be renewed I believe annually. Again, we're just trying to eliminate any potential challenges that would happen at the time of your submission process.

So and remember that only certain authorized users can submit applications on your grants.gov. It's important to make sure you know who in our agency can act - in your agency can actually submit your application.

So in speaking with our grants specialist here at ACL, I was informed that for some applicants, this process may be different than in years past. And she recommended that everyone, you know, make sure they read these pages carefully.

She highlighted specifically that with other funding opportunities, several applicants who were submitting proposals ran into trouble when they discovered that they were not the designated authorized organization representative or AOR for their agency.

So please use the grants.gov website to confirm who your agency's assigned AOR is. And there's also an abundance of additional resources on these pages, as well as on the grants.gov website. And on the site there it's listed under the applicants tab at the top of the page.

So the last thing on Page 12, you get some additional information on obtaining a DUNS number and registering at the central contractor registry. Please make sure to start these processes again early because it can take some days.

So starting on Page 12 and moving on to Page 13, again gives you the due date for the letter of intent. As I mentioned before, this is optional but very much appreciated. Having a letter from you really gives me an idea of how many applications I'm going to be getting, and therefore how many reviewers I'll need to plan for.

Page 13 begins the section that provides critical information on structuring your project narrative. The narrative is really the heart of your application. This is where you get to tell your story and lay out your project.

This is your opportunity to tell reviewers what you will do as the primary means in which the application - I mean it's the primary means in which applications are scored and how scores are based. So remember you only have 20 pages in which to do this. So planning carefully in your writing is key.

We will be using outside review panels to review and score each application. And the narrative is your only opportunity to fully describe your project and to respond to all the elements of the program announcement.

I want to call your attention to the bullets or the section entitled program, I'm sorry, problem statement and proposed intervention on Page 14 of the project narrative instructions.

These bullets describe elements that must be included in your narrative. They're taken directly from the lifespan act itself. And the law requires applicants to address each one of these elements in their application.

As we move along, Page 16 talks a bit about how to structure a work plan. You're going to want to refer to the template that's been provided in the application package and use it to structure your work plan. And remember that you must include a work plan that covers all three years of your project.

Now as we move further along in the funding opportunity, on Pages 17 and 18, you'll see that they explain other required elements of the application. And draw your attention to templates that are included as attachments in the application.

You have templates for the work plan, as I mentioned, as well as for the budget narrative and many others that are available as downloads either from grants.gov or from the ACL funding opportunity section of the website.

At this point I want to mention something that's important for applicants. It has to do with the forward funding nature of these particular announcements. For ACLs to fund grants in this manner required us to get an approval for a deviation from standard grant management policy and procedures, which are typically three-year projects and one-year budget periods - sorry, individual one-year budget periods.

Fully funding these applications up front is a departure from the standard grants management practices. It's not a wrong or a bad policy, but just a deviation nonetheless.

And the department expects that there will be additional monitoring done by ACL. To help us with this, please be sure that the work plans in your proposal clearly show what you accomplished each year of the project. And that those tasks can be easily tracked to your budgets.

We're being required to monitor more closely your progress on each task not proposed in each year in order to ensure that the funds are being expended properly. Your notice of award may reflect some additional monitoring requirement language as we begin to work with you on that.

So the last pages, Pages 18 through 22 lay out the exact criteria against which your applications will be scored. Now it's very clear here and I think in other words, the scoring forms that are used by your reviewers will ask them to actually look for each of these listed elements in your application.

My suggestion would be to really make sure your application answers each of the questions included under each of the five sections of this application review section. So keep in mind that these are the only criteria against which reviewers will be scoring your application.

Page 22 gives you an overview of the review process, some of what I had just mentioned. And that's what will take place really after you submit your applications.

Each application that passes the initial screen, as I mentioned earlier, will be reviewed by a panel of three experts in the field. The recommendations will be included in the final award decisions.

They will use scoring forms that contain each of the questions in each of the five sections. After the application deadline, our grants office will compile each application. And within three days they're available to the reviewers.

Reviewers will have about two weeks to conduct their reviews. So in general, we anticipate conducting the review panels several weeks after. And then again, making sure that we've identified who the successful applicant has been and that notifications are able to be sent out well ahead of the start date of September 1.

But along with other key dates, as we talked earlier, you should have a pretty good idea of what will be happening based on what's been presented today.

The remaining pages within the funding opportunity announcement, you know, Page 23 moving forward contains kind of routine administrative

information, supporting requirements and expectations, as well as the performance report requirements and so on.

So really this concludes my portion of the call. So I'd like to take an opportunity to open the lines up for questions here if there's anything that's on your guy's mind and see if I can help you work through that.

So I'll open it up for a couple questions. (Mia) could you see if there's anyone that has a question?

Coordinator: Thank you. Yes. If you'd like to ask a question, please press star then 1 on your touchtone phone. You'll be prompted to record your name. Please be sure to record - un-mute your phone and record your name clearly.

Again, star then 1 with any questions. One moment while we wait for the first one. Again, if you have any questions, please press star then 1 and record your name. And sir I'm not showing any questions at this time.

Kevin Foley: All right. Well I think we can give it maybe one more minute (Mia). And then if there's no more questions coming in, I think we can probably close the call.

Coordinator: Again, if you have any questions, press star then 1 on your touchtone phone.

Kevin Foley: And while people are just thinking if they had any questions, I'll just remind everyone that a recording, the audio recording of today's call will be posted on the ACL website over the next week. In addition, they'll be a copy of the transcript from this afternoon's call.

Coordinator: No questions holding sir.

Kevin Foley: Okay (Mia), well I think we're all set then. Thank you everyone for your time listening in on the call today. And I look forward to seeing your applications. Have a great afternoon.

Coordinator: Thank you. That concludes today's conference. You may disconnect at this time. Thank you.

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