

NWX-HHS-AOA-1

Moderator: Robert Groenendaal
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4:17 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participant lines are in a listen-only mode. After today's presentation you will have the opportunity to ask questions by the phone and you can do so by pressing Star 1. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections to this you may disconnect at this time. And now I will turn the call over to your host for today Mr. Rob Groenendaal. Sir you may begin.

Robert Groenendaal: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Good afternoon. This is Rob Groenendaal. I'm pleased to discuss with you the Assistive Technology Alternative Financing Program funding opportunity announcement that was published just last week Wednesday, April 6. And, you know, many of you received an email indicating the information for you to call in. And I understand there's all about 22 folks who have dialed in so that's great.

At the end of this conference call there will be an opportunity for questions. Actually I'd like to open it up with just a couple questions before we get in because I did receive some questions. One the first question, you know, can we apply for more than one grant or are we limited to only one grant? The answer is yes. Applicants can apply for more than one. The second question is

the AFP funding opportunity open to existing and new AFPs? And the answer is yes.

So I suspect that we will have more questions at the end of this presentation about the funding opportunity announcement that I just mentioned. So starting with - at the top I'd like to let folks know that the due date for applications is June 6, 2016 that would be 11:59 PM on that date. Folks should know that when you are able to access the information that it needs to be submitted in grants.gov. Cannot emphasize more that try - that you should try to submit your application at least three days prior to this deadline.

It will be helpful if applicants proposed applicants can send a letter of intent to via email to me. The email address is robertgroenendaal@acl.hhs.gov. R-O-B-E-R-T.G-R-O-E-N-E-N-D-A-A-L@acl.hhs.gov. You know, clearly this is the informational conference call and so the funding opportunity number is HHS-2016-ACL-CIP-ATTS-0164. So in terms of this funding opportunity the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 public law 114-53 in December authorized the Department of Health and Human Services ACL to fund one year grant awards to support AT Alternative Financing Programs that assist individuals with disabilities of any age to obtain financial assistance for AT devices and services.

While applicants are not restricted to disability organizations the act specifies that state agencies and community based disability organizations that are directed by an operator for individuals with disabilities shall be eligible to compete. So for this FOA applicants must establish or expand one or more of the following type of alternative financing programs, a low interest loan fund, an interest buy down program, a revolving loan fund, a loan guarantee or insurance program or another mechanism that will be approved by Secretary of HHS.

So the AFPs must be designed to allow people with disabilities of all ages and their family members, guardians, advocates, authorized representatives to purchase assistive technology devices and services. To be considered for funding an applicant must identify the type of AFPs to be supported by the grant and submit assurances. Now these assurances are very similar to the priority under the AT Act of 1998 when these were awarded under the Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration.

There should be an assurance in the application specifying the permanent separate account whereby all funds will be deposited in a permanent separate account and identified and accounted for separately from any other funds. You know, it goes without saying that the funds will be administered with the same judgment, and care, and prudence, and discretion that intelligence that an individual would exercise in the management of such financial affairs within that state insurance company of that state.

The permanence of the program there should be an assurance that the AFP will continue on a permanent basis. Another assurance to address consumer choice and control there should be information in the application describing the manner in which the AFP will expand and emphasize consumer choice and control. The supplement not supplant provision where funds made available through the grant to support the AFP will be used to supplement and not supplant other federal, state and local public funds extended to provide the alternative financing mechanism in your proposal. Use and control of funds incorporates the permanent separate account where it is the priority of the AFP that is available solely to support that AFP.

Administrative policies and procedures these procedures will be submitted by successful applicants before the end of the 12 month project period. What's

important about the procedures are of course that individuals with disabilities will be able to apply for a full array of financing to purchase AT devices and services, a procedure to ensure consumer choice and consumer control oversight of the program, as well as the sustainability plan for the program. And there would be information on the percentage of funds expected to be used for the operating expenses and loan capital for the Alternative Financing Program.

Data collection, data will be collected and reported as requested by ACL. And there's also the credit building activities that AFP will incorporate credit building activities into its programs including financial education and information about other possible funding sources. So I mentioned that the statutory authority is the Consolidated Appropriation Act, the award information, the estimated total funding is slightly more than \$1,990,000. It is expected that three awards will be issued by ACL.

The award ceiling is \$700,000. The award floor is \$100,000. Therefore the average projected award amount is approximately \$663,000 almost \$664,000. And the length of the project period is a 12 month project and budget period that would be submitted in the proposal. And the AFP would be expected to continue the project and operate it in perpetuity through the sustainability plan.

I talked about the eligible applicants. There is no cost sharing or matching for this competition. There are also no competitive preference points for the competition. Please be sure that when you're looking at the application screening criteria that obviously when you submit the application electronically via grants.gov at www.grants.gov all applications must be submitted electronically. The project narrative must be on 8.5 x 11. It must be in a format that is 8.5 x 11 with 1 inch margins on both sides and the standard

font size of not less than 11. The preference for font is Times New Roman or Aerial. The project narrative must not exceed 24 pages.

So what's important to the application of course is that all applicants must have a DUNS number. If you're not familiar with this you can go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> W-E-B-F-O-R-M\ . And make sure that you're registered with the system for award management which is SAM, www.sam.gov and maintain an active SAM registration until the allocation process is complete. So HHS does require that all entities that plan to apply for funds of course be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application, maintain an active SAM registration and provide its DUNS number in each application. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling a dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line. And that telephone number is 1-866-705-5711.

I mentioned previously that the due date for the letter of intent is April 28, 2016. This is not required of applicants however it is requested in terms of trying to understand the review panel for this competition. For the project narrative there are sections that you may have noticed the summary or abstract, problem statement, goals, objectives, proposed intervention, special target populations and organizations, outcomes, project management, evaluation, dissemination organizational capacity.

Like to flip to the section on the submission date and times once again just to make sure that everyone is clear about this. The funding opportunity announcement the deadline for this is June 6, 2016. Applications must be submitted electronically by 11:59 PM June 6, 2016. If you experience any issues in your application in submitting your application through grants.gov any problems please contact the grants.gov support desk toll-free at 1-800-

518-4726. Please also obtain a grant.gov support desk case number and keep it - keep a record of it.

As I mentioned earlier it is obviously better for everyone if you try to submit the application at least a few days prior to the June 6 deadline before midnight. ACL will not consider your application for further review if you fail to fully register to submit your application to grants.gov before the application deadline or if a technical problem either you experienced is not related to the grants.gov system.

So for the review criteria the AFP applications are scored by assigning a maximum of 100 points across selection criteria. In this criteria there's sections A through H. Section A is proposed intervention, Section B is special target populations in organizations, Section C problem statement, Section D project personnel, Section E organizational capacity, Section F project management, Section G project evaluation and Section H budget. For section A, Proposed Intervention, there is a maximum of 40 points.

And the priority that will be screened by the reviewer's essentially is looking at the application that is clearly and adequately responding to the priority area as described in the program announcement. The reviewers will look for a high quality plan for project implementation. Of course the approach to the priority established for this program announcement not only the assurances but making sure that not only that you have all the assurances but that you adequately address the assurances described in the program announcement in your proposal, the addressing hopefully and successfully the needs of the target population or other identified needs in your proposal, the likelihood that the AFP will build capacity to provide, improve or expand services that address the needs of the target population in your proposal, the extent to which the AFP will establish linkages with other appropriate agencies., the

encouragement of consumer involvement and addressing that procedure ensure consumer choice and consumer controlled oversight of the program, the development of and/or promising - the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that the AFP plan to build on or alternatives to existing strategies and hopefully incorporating credit building activities as I mentioned including financial education and information about other possible funding sources.

The proposal of the AFP and should be designed to build statewide capacity, sustain the program and yield results that will extend beyond the period of federal financial assistance so that – those are the criteria within A, the proposed intervention. For the special target populations and organizations, the maximum point is 15. And the reviewers will be looking that the proposed AFP reflect up to date knowledge from research and effective practice, the likely impact of the services to be provided by the application and the intended recipients of those services, the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of the project services and the extent to which the proposal identifies specific gaps or weaknesses in services.

In Area C problem statement the maximum point value is ten points. Reviewers will be looking at the services that will be provided by the proposed AFP. And are those appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of the application, the extent to which the services of the proposal are focused on those with the greatest needs. And the needs the magnitude of the need of the services identified in the proposed AFP that will be carried out by your application. Indeed the maximum point value for project personnel is five points. And the time commitments of the project director as well as other key project personnel are the appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed AFP, the qualifications including the relevant training and experience of the AFP project director and

other key project personnel. For organizational capacity in E the maximum point value is ten points. Reviewers will be looking at the adequacy of support from the applicant organization for carrying out the Alternative Financing Program as well as the relevance and demonstrate commitment of each partner in the proposed project for the implementation and success of the AFP.

The budget the extent to which the budget is sufficient to support the proposed project as well as the supplement not supplant provision identified in the assurances making sure that the program will not supplant other public funds expended to provide alternative financing mechanisms coordinate with other appropriate community, state and federal resources. The use of efficient strategies included the use of technology as appropriate and the leveraging of non-project resources will be examined by the reviewers in the services that will be provided in the proposed application.

For F project management the maximum point value is five points. Reviewers will be looking at the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives proposed in the Alternative Financing Program on time and within budget and are they clearly defined responsibilities of the management team, the adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high quality products and services from the proposed Alternative Financing Program and the diversity of perspectives in the project management team.

For G project evaluation, this section that reviewers will examine the extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed Alternative Financing Program, the evaluation will be viewed in terms of the effectiveness of the project implementation strategies, and the extent to which the evaluation will provide performance

feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes and continuous improvement in the operation of the AFP.

For the budget the reviewers will look at the extent to which the FY 2016 budget is justified and the reasonableness of the resources requested for the administration of the application to carry out those services of the AFP. The extent to which the proposed AFP addresses the assurances to establish a permanent separate account, permanence of the program, use and control of funds and develop a sustainability plan for program administration.

The last point in budget is the extent to which the time commitment of the proposed director and other key staff is sufficient to assure the establishment or abstention of the AFP. So that is the review criteria. And I want to make note that in the FOA ACL indicates that an independent review panel of at least three individuals will evaluate applications that pass the responsiveness and screening criteria. The reviewers are experts in the field and are drawn from academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, state and local government and federal government agencies. At this point I'd actually like to open up for questions and answers at this time if we could do that.

Coordinator: Certainly. If you would like to ask a question please press Star then 1 on your phone keypad. Please unmute your phone and record your name when prompted. If at any time while you're in the question queue and your question has been answered you may remove your request by pressing Star 2. Once again that is Star 1 if you have a question at this time. Once again please press Star 1 if you have a question. And we do have a couple questions coming in, one moment sir. (Melissa Snyder), your line is open.

(Melissa Snyder): Okay, thank you. I have a question. We had submitted a proposal in 2014. And I was noticing that the assurance about indirect cost is not required for

this application. And on Page 19 of the application there's a paragraph about indirect charges. Can you just kind of explain what's different about that for this application?

Robert Groenendaal: Yes. Yes can you hear me okay? Hopefully you can. With respect to the removal of the indirect cost from the assurances, you know, within HHS it was determined that this would be included in the sustainability plan of the policies and procedures. So it's actually contained where the sustainability plan must include the percent of the grant award that is used annually for program administration and this excludes funds used for the loan activity. And it also states that for each 12 months budget period grantees must recalculate the percent of the portion of the grant award that is used annually for program administration related to the Alternative Financing Program. So this is where indirect costs are addressed in this funding opportunity announcement. It is slightly different as you have noted from the competition that was conducted in FY 2014 at the Department of Education RSA. Does this answer your question?

(Melissa Snyder): Yes. But if I could follow-up so is there a maximum or a recommended percentage? And where it says indirect charges may only be requested if the applicant has a current and direct cost rate agreement approved or the applicant is a state or local government agency. What does that mean exactly?

Robert Groenendaal: So for the approval of an indirect cost rate agreement an entity or agency would receive that from an agency such as Health and Human Services. There are other entities that we work with where they're cognizant agency might be the Department of Education. Therefore in order to submit an indirect cost rate in the budget there must be an approval of such an inter-cost rate agreement by HHS or another cognizant agency. The - in addition to your question the 10% indirect cost rate ceiling was part of the FY 2014 priority

that was published in the Federal Register as a notice of file final priority when it was (unintelligible) as the Department of Education. This went back to the Title III of the Assisted Technology Act of 1998.

HHS looked upon this 10% indirect cost rate ceiling as needing an authority for publishing it. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 as I mentioned does not contain this information this requirement for this funding opportunity. In terms of the submission of the proposals for this competition I would venture to say that those proposals that mirror the assurances for the previous competitions in this respect meaning that they focus on limiting the indirect costs in order to maximize the sustainability plan of the proposal would probably be viewed as advantageous and looked upon favorably.

(Melissa Snyder): Okay, thank you.

Robert Groenendaal: You're welcome.

(Carol Piree): This is (Carol Piree). I'm in queue. May I go ahead?

Robert Groenendaal: Yes please.

(Carol Piree): I would like to expand on the question that was just previously asked. If we are to get an approval for an indirect charge is there a format and/or a contact person that we would be directed to in order to get a form to submit for indirect – we're going to submit indirect charges?

Robert Groenendaal: Yes. And this will be information that will be made available in an FAQ section frequently asked questions section. So we'll be able to provide that information following the call.

(Carol Piree): Okay, thank you. And then my second call or my second question here it relates to supplement versus supplant. We reached an appropriation from the state legislature to assist in the area of funding assisted technology however it is not specific to the loan program. We would be using, you know, funds from that project along with funds from this appropriation but they would not be supplementing it or supplanting it they would be supplementing it. So I just wanted to make sure that we should include that, you know, our discussion of sustainability and that this is a rather large sum of money. And it was dedicated to the purchase of assistive technology however it is not specific to the loan program it's its own separate entity. So...

Robert Groenendaal: Yes, so with respect to your second question in terms of additional or other possible funding sources, you know, that is fine that can be used to leverage resources for the sustainability of your program. It's just that the supplement not supplant vision cannot go the other way in terms of the funding for this, funding opportunity announcement. These funds must be placed in a permanent separate account and only be used for individuals with disabilities or older Americans primary individuals with disabilities, you know, where we transitioned to the Department of Ed to Health and Human Services. And there has been a little bit more of an emphasis on serving additional targeted populations.

But the permanent separate account would be used for cash loans, purchase assisted technology, devices and services. So - and by leveraging the program if other sources are used to augment what you're doing as long as the focus of this proposal and this project is on the purchase of AT devices for individuals who acquire needed AT devices and services.

(Carol Piree): Perfect. Thank you.

Robert Groenendaal: You're welcome. Does that conclude the question and answer portion?

Coordinator: Sir we have one more question in queue. One moment please.

Robert Groenendaal: Okay.

Coordinator: Excuse me, Mr. (Rubble), your line is open.

(Jack Rubble): Okay, very good. Hey, this is (Jack Rubble). Rob I just wanted to talk about one thing in terms of your last comment about focusing on the provision of AT devices. You know, we do have a match savings program an IDA program. And the - you also talked about the permanence of the program. And it seems to me that there's the potential for conflict there because if we can use the funds for the provision of AT devices for a number of ways if it's only loans that's one thing if it's for loans or matched savings programs eventually those funds being used for a matched savings program would be used up. But that would be counter to the notion of permanency unless there is some sort of I don't know unless we promised to raise money elsewhere I guess is the way we could get around it but do you have a comment on that?

Robert Groenendaal: Yes, I do have a comment on that. And in fact, you know, you referenced the assurances including the permanent separate account. You know, clearly the intent of this is to have the funds, you know, placed in a permanent separate account so they can be provided to individual disabilities to acquire assistive technology.

The permanence of the program, you know, goes as far as the sustainability plan within the procedures the policies and procedures of your program. Now I do want to point out in relation to your question the credit building activities of for - that are also part of the assurances in this program announcement, you

know, will talk about including financial education and information about other possible funding sources.

And so for AFPs, you know, the goal clearly is for the acquisition through state financing activities to - so that individuals with disabilities can obtain needed assistive technology to be successful in their communities, successful in employment successful in education. And so, you know, when you address your - when you include in your narrative section addressing of course the assurances is very important but, you know, in terms of the mechanisms that you are using, you know, certainly establishing or expanding a low interest loan fund and other ways of assisting individuals to acquire technology.

(Jack Rubble): Okay. So the other ways would be consistent with the matched savings program. I guess I was getting to the perpetuity notion of this because as - if you use those other ways such as matched savings and IDA programs the potential for perpetuity diminishes.

Robert Groenendaal: Yes. I would say the potential for perpetuity diminishes when, you know, we're focusing on these programs where, you know, low income individuals and, you know, there is also, you know, risk of - with - that is established within the separate account. But, you know, prudence and judgment with the program, you know, obviously is important. You know, it's the permanence of the program until the - all of the funds have been used for the purpose of the proposal. So it's the permanence of the program obviously perpetuity of the program which that language is not actually perpetuity used in this funding opportunity announcement but, you know, the idea of course is that the program would hopefully sustain itself so that at least beyond the one year initial project period and it would be available for individuals with disabilities to utilize for meeting their goals.

(Jack Rubble): So okay. So I get your point. We are to give assurances about the perpetuity of the program not necessarily the perpetuity of these funds?

Robert Groenendaal: Right.

(Jack Rubble): Yes, okay. Thanks.

Robert Groenendaal: You're welcome.

Coordinator: We do have one more question from (Dave Mathis). Your line is open.

(Dave Mathis): Yes, Rob can you hear me?

Robert Groenendaal: Yes. I can hear you (Dave).

(Dave Mathis): Okay. Yes I had a question it's kind of connected to the previous one. Could an existing program that is sustaining apply for a smaller grant just to provide the credibility and financial education piece?

Robert Groenendaal: I think that's a very good question Dave. And in terms of, you know, your proposal, you know, it really will come down to the reviewers. I do, you know, there's existing and new AFPs are eligible to of course apply for this funding opportunity announcement. And, you know, addressing that issue is certainly, you know, one that would be reviewed by the panel.

(Dave Mathis): Okay. And related to that could a - could you do a multistate application to do that or is it just one application per state? Do you know what I'm saying?

Robert Groenendaal: I do know what you're saying. In the FY 2014 priority that was issued by the Department of Education RSA in the notice of proposed priority

comments did address that issue. And it was determined that multistate applications could be - were eligible.

(Dave Mathis): Okay, thanks.

Robert Groenendaal: You're welcome.

Coordinator: And at this time sir I know - I show no further questions in queue.

Robert Groenendaal: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity. And I am looking forward to the submission of applications. Folks have about I would say a week left than two months a week less than 60 days. So hopefully we have - we will generate some interest for this competition. And that's about all I've got. So I think that if there are follow-up questions, you know, that I can be emailed directly. There is also an FAQ that ACL intends to post as well as a recording of this conference call. Thank you very much again for your time. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

Coordinator: Thank you for your participation on today's conference call. At this time all parties may disconnect.

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