



Administration for Community Living

Administration on Disabilities

Office of Disability Services Innovation

National Augmentative and Alternative Communication Peer Support Network

Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACL-AOD-DNSA-0023



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Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your [SAM.gov](#) and [Grants.gov](#) registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registrations are active and up to date.

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

You must have an active Grants.gov registration. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well.

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Apply by the application due date

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, July 22, 2026.



To help you find what you need, this NOFO uses internal links. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.



Step 1:

Review the Opportunity

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Basic information

Administration for Community Living (ACL)

Administration on Disabilities

Office of Disability Services Innovation

Strengthen and expand a national peer support network that promotes the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication for people with speech-related disabilities.

Summary

This initiative will strengthen and expand a national peer support network for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). It will address the unmet needs of an estimated 5 million individuals in the U.S. with speech-related disabilities who cannot rely solely on speech for communication.

This funding opportunity will build on past work to create a peer-led network that empowers AAC users, promotes leadership, and provides resources to improve outcomes such as self-determination, economic security, and community engagement. By the end of the project, individuals with speech-related disabilities should have a first-of-its-kind modern resource, built for how people connect today, that makes it easy for them to use or gain access to AAC.

Funding details

Type: Cooperative agreement

Expected total program funding over the performance period: \$2,325,000.00

Expected total program funding per budget period: \$775,000.00

Total expected awards: One

Funding range per applicant per budget period: \$775,000.00

We plan to fund awards in three 12-month budget periods for three periods of performance from September 30, 2026, to September 29, 2029.



Have questions?

See [Contacts and Support](#).

Key facts

Opportunity name:

National Augmentative and Alternative Communication Peer Support Network

Opportunity number:

HHS-2026-ACL-AOD-0023

Federal assistance listing:

Cost sharing: None

NOFO version: Original

Key dates

Application submission deadline:

July 22, 2026

Optional notice of intent deadline:

20 days after publication

Expected award date:

September 30, 2026

Expected project start date:

September 30, 2026

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Only these types of organizations may apply:

- Domestic public or private nonprofit entities.
- State and local governments.
- Indian tribal governments and organizations (American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native American).
- Faith-based organizations.
- Community-based organizations.
- Hospitals.
- Institutions of higher education

Disqualifying factors

We will review your application to make sure it meets these responsiveness requirements.

We won't consider an application that:

- Is submitted after the [deadline](#).
- Is from an individual, including a sole proprietorship, or a foreign entity.
- Is received in paper format that didn't have a previously approved exemption from ACL.
- Exceeds the 25-page limit for the project narrative.
- Requests a budget of more than \$775,000 per budget period.

Application limits

If you submit the same application more than once under this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), we will only acknowledge the last on-time submission.

Cost sharing

This program has no cost-sharing requirement, meaning you do not need to contribute to the costs of this project.

If you choose to include cost-sharing funds, we won't consider it during review. If you receive an award, we will include your voluntary commitment in the award.

Post-award requirements

Before you apply, make sure you understand the requirements that come with an award.

See [Step 6: Learn What Happens After Award](#) for information on regulations that apply, reporting, and more.

Statutory authority

Subtitle E, Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Projects of National Significance.

Program description

Purpose and need

The Administration on Disabilities (AoD) at the Administration for Community Living (ACL) is funding this project to expand and strengthen a national peer support network for people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The support network will provide access to a modern, easy-to-use resource that reflects how people connect today. Through this network, AAC users can build real connections, share experiences, exchange ideas and strategies, and support one another in overcoming barriers to AAC use. These connections are expected to help people become more independent, active, and engaged in their communities.

Background

AAC includes any tool or method that helps someone communicate when speech alone is not enough. These tools can include:

- Speech-generating devices.
- Alphabet boards.
- Handwriting.
- Gestures.
- Facial expressions.
- Eye-gaze systems.
- Vocalizations.
- Brain-computer interfaces.

People may need AAC for many reasons. Some are born with conditions that affect communication, while others may experience changes later in life because of a stroke, injury, illness, or other events. For an estimated 5 million people in the United States, AAC is essential.

Communication is a basic human right. AAC helps people participate in their communities, build relationships, stay safe, and live more independent, self-directed lives. However, many people still do not have access to AAC or are denied it. Without AAC, people may become isolated, depend heavily on others, and face increased risks to their safety and well-being.

In 2024, AoD funded a project to explore whether peer support could help more people access and use AAC. The project showed that peer support helps people build trust, form friendships, strengthen their identity as AAC users, and increase both independence and

interdependence. The project also brought together a national group of about 100 AAC users, showing a strong need for connection and community.

In 2025, AoD funded another one-year project to begin building a long-term, sustainable national AAC peer support network. This work is guided by a disability-led leadership coalition of 16 individuals, including 9 AAC users, who are helping shape this first-of-its-kind national resource.

Goals and expected outcomes

The main goal of this project is to create a sustainable national AAC peer support network designed by and for people with speech-related disabilities. The network will help people access and use AAC in ways that match their personal needs and preferences.

By providing funding to grow and sustain this network, AoD ultimately seeks to achieve the following:

- Greater self-determination, leadership skills, and confidence among people with speech-related disabilities.
- Ongoing mentorship among AAC users.
- More people using AAC that fits their preferences and needs.
- Greater economic mobility and security among AAC users.
- Improved safety and long-term security for AAC users, free from harm and exploitation.

Initial success measures include:

- More individuals who use or need AAC participating in the project.*
- More families, friends, providers, healthcare professionals, educators, and non-disability entities participating in the project.*
- More resources created and shared to improve AAC knowledge.*
- Growth of AAC users in project leadership roles.
- Growth in AAC peer support groups.*
- New funding sources for growing the AAC peer support network.
- More engagement with hard-to-reach individuals who are not connected.*
- Improved knowledge of and access to helpful resources among participants.

Success measures by the end of the project include:

- AAC peer support groups meeting their goals.
- At least 75% of participants reporting positive personal, education, and/or employment outcomes.*

- At least 50% of participants reporting increased AAC use.*
- Fewer barriers to joining peer support groups.*
- Participants reporting at least a 50% increase in capacity to support AAC users after receiving training and resources.*
- A sustainable, modern AAC peer support network built around contemporary ways people connect today.

Key activities

Lead and support the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition

You will create and manage a national leadership coalition that includes mostly people with speech-related disabilities, along with family members, supporters, disability organizations, and community partners. You will:

- Bring together AAC users from across the country and support them by organizing regular opportunities to connect, share experiences, and work together, while making sure communication is accessible and everyone can participate.
- Include families of AAC users, service providers, educators, healthcare professionals, and community organizations.
- Engage non-disability partners, such as businesses or community groups, to broaden participation.

You will ensure that:

- AAC users lead or co-lead the work.
- Everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.
- People can participate in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

You will also guide the coalition through clear decision-making processes, including:

- Creating and carrying out an action plan with goals and milestones.
- Testing, improving, and expanding the network over time.
- Developing and sharing resources.
- Staying focused on meeting the project's objectives.

Build and maintain a sustainable National AAC Peer Support Network

You will work with the leadership coalition to maintain and grow a national network of AAC peer support groups and mentors. This includes the following activities.

Create and expand a national directory

You will:

- Build a directory of AAC peer support groups, mentors, and related initiatives.
- Develop quality standards to ensure groups are meeting expectations before they are listed.
- Identify what AAC users need to successfully connect with peer support.
- Spot gaps in existing support and help start or grow new AAC peer groups.
- Provide training and technical assistance to peer groups and mentors to improve capacity and support growth of peer groups.

Maintain the National AAC Peer Support Hub

You will maintain a trusted hub designed by and for AAC users. The hub will:

- Check peer support groups and mentors to make sure they meet the requirements to take part in the program.
- Make it easier for people to find and connect with peer support groups and mentors that fit their needs, by giving clear information and simple ways to connect with them.
- Provide communication tools that are accessible for all AAC users so people can work together, share ideas, and take part in group activities.
- Offer up-to-date resources and create interactive spaces where AAC users, families, and providers can learn, ask questions, and support each other.
- Share evidence-based and promising AAC resources that are easy to understand and use.

Help people apply knowledge in practical ways

You will support AAC users, families, and providers by helping turn information into action. You will:

- Create an AAC Peer Support Toolkit that includes easy-to-understand resources, tips for taking part in peer support, and simple tools people can use to check how they're doing and what they might want to improve.
- Find or create reliable AAC resources for AAC users, families, and providers, such as guides, checklists, videos, and other helpful materials.
- Work with federal partners like the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) and State Assistive Technology Programs to share information and make sure the project uses current research and best practices.
- Figure out what training people need and create training that builds practical AAC skills, with clear examples and useful tips people can use in real situations.

Make resources available to as many people as possible

You will conduct strong outreach and share information widely so that people across the country, including those who are hard to reach, can connect to AAC support. You will:

- Build a network of outreach partners by working with existing AoD programs and forming new partnerships.
- Each year, focus outreach on at least one hard-to-reach population, such as people in rural areas, people involved in the justice system, or people living in institutions.
- Use modern tools and strategies, including the national hub, to reach broad audiences.
- Track whether your outreach is working and adjust your approach as needed.
- Create user-friendly materials in multiple formats, including plain-language resources and videos.
- Develop a clear marketing and dissemination plan focused on reaching people who are not typically served.
- Host an online or hybrid conference twice a year to engage and inform the groups involved in or affected by the project.

Definitions

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): Any tool or method that helps someone communicate when speech alone is not enough. This can include gestures, facial expressions, eye gaze, alphabet boards, speech-generating devices, or newer technologies like brain-computer interfaces.

Health care and allied health professionals: Medical and therapy professionals such as doctors, nurses, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and other practitioners who diagnose or support speech-related disabilities.

Interdependence: A way of living where people with speech-related disabilities both receive support from others and contribute to their community, rather than being fully dependent or fully on their own.

Non-disability entities: Businesses, community groups, and other organizations that are not focused on disability services but can still help promote inclusion and accessibility for AAC users.

Peer support: Support offered by people who share similar lived experiences. In this project, it means AAC users helping each other by sharing emotional support, information, and practical strategies to build skills, confidence, and independence.

People with speech-related disabilities: People of any age who have conditions, such as cognitive, physical, neurological, or psychological impairments that make it hard to communicate using speech.

Providers: People or organizations that deliver services to AAC users. This includes direct support professionals, home- and community-based service (HCBS) providers, behavioral health specialists, and employment support staff.

School-based professionals: Teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, administrators, and other school staff who work with AAC users in educational settings.

Self-determination: Having the ability and support to make your own choices, control your services and supports, participate in your community, and use the resources you need, including financial support, to build leadership skills and advocate for yourself and others.

Support system: The people involved in an AAC user's life, such as family members, friends, service providers, and educators, who help support communication and participation in daily activities.

Toolkit: A collection of resources, guides, and tools that help AAC users and their supporters understand AAC systems, participate more fully, and evaluate how well peer support is working.

Cooperative agreement terms

Cooperative agreements require substantial ACL project involvement after an award is made. There are specific roles for both you and ACL.

Your responsibilities

- Collaborate with ACL on any in-scope modifications and start the work plan within 45 days of receiving the award.
- Implement the proposed grant activities.
- Set measurable targets and evaluate the impact of project activities.
- Share information with ACL and partner organizations.
- Work with your ACL project officer to evaluate your performance results, which you will report semiannually.
- Submit resumes of potential key staff hires.
- Work with the ACL program officer to maintain and grow the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition.
- Work with the ACL program officer to manage the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition decision-making processes.

- Work with the ACL program officer to make sure the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition takes responsibility for maintaining and growing the sustainable national network.
- Collaborate with the ACL project officer to develop a dissemination plan.

Our responsibilities

- Perform day-to-day federal responsibilities of managing a grant initiative.
- Conduct monthly conference calls to ensure you are meeting your goals and objectives.
- Work cooperatively with you to clarify programmatic and budgetary issues.
- Share information with you about other federally sponsored projects.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance on required performance measurements.
- Provide technical advice on your work products to ensure they are accurate, objective, unbiased, and of high professional quality.
- Attend and participate in major project events, as appropriate.
- Make the final determination of the composition and members of the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition.
- Ensure that project activities, including resources developed and disseminated, are accessible to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Managing disagreements

If disagreements arise, they will be addressed through collaborative discussions between you and the ACL program officer. If resolution cannot be reached, the matter will be escalated to the ACL grants management officer and program leadership for final determination.

Funding policies and limitations

Changes in HHS regulations

As of October 1, 2025, HHS adopted [2 CFR 200](#), with some exceptions included in [2 CFR 300](#). These regulations replace those in 45 CFR 75.

Policies

All activities proposed in your application and budget narrative must align with applicable law, including but not limited to statutes, executive orders, federal regulations, and applicable judicial holdings. Accordingly, discretionary awards shall not be used to fund, promote, encourage, subsidize, or facilitate: racial preferences or other forms of racial discrimination by the recipient, including activities where race or intentional proxies for

race will be used as a selection criterion for employment or program participation; denial by the recipient of the sex binary in humans, or the belief that sex is a chosen or mutable characteristic; illegal immigration; or any other initiatives that compromise public safety. If an application does not align, the application will not receive funding to the extent permitted by law and applicable court orders.

- We will only make awards if this program receives funding. If Congress appropriates funds for this purpose, we will move forward with the review and award process.
- Support beyond the first budget period will depend on:
 - Appropriation of funds.
 - Satisfactory progress in meeting your project's objectives.
 - A decision that continued funding is in the government's best interest.
- If we receive more funding for this program, we will consider:
 - Funding more applicants.
 - Extending the period of performance.
 - Awarding supplemental funding.
- You may not use funds from this NOFO for any diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEI and DEIA) activities. This includes:
 - DEI- or DEIA-related research.
 - Activities that discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or other protected traits.
- Under this NOFO, you can't continue existing projects without expansion or new and innovative approaches.
- Meals are allowed only in limited circumstances linked to program activities, like during travel or when approved in advance by ACL. See Allowable Costs and Activities, Exhibit 4: Selected Items of Cost, Meals in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#).
- There are restrictions on certain telecommunications and video surveillance equipment. See [2 CFR 200.216](#) to make sure this does not apply to any proposed equipment in your application.

Unallowable costs

- Construction or major rehabilitation of buildings.
- Basic research, such as scientific or medical experiments.
- For guidance on other types of costs that we restrict or do not allow, see General Provisions for Selected Items of Costs of the Uniform Guidance, [2 CFR 200.420](#).

Subawards

As the prime recipient, you must maintain a substantive role in the project. This means that you conduct funded activities and provide services necessary and integral to completing the project.

Monitoring your subrecipient's activities alone as described in [2 CFR 200.332](#) is not a substantive role.

We do not fund awards where your role is primarily a conduit for passing funds to other organizations unless that arrangement is authorized by statute.

All subrecipients must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

Subrecipients must meet the [eligibility requirements](#) of this NOFO.

Salary rate limitation

The salary rate limitation in the current appropriations act applies to this program. You may not use awarded funds to pay a salary at a higher rate than the rate for Executive Level II.

For the Executive Level II salary, please see [the Office of Personnel Management information on executive and senior level employee pay](#).

The salary limitation reflects a person's base salary (including any portion of the salary that is paid with indirect costs). It does not include fringe benefits or any income the person is allowed to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization.

This salary limitation also applies to subawards, contracts, and subcontracts under an ACL grant or cooperative agreement.

Program income

If you earn any money from your award-supported project activities (known as program income), you must use it for the purposes and under the conditions of the award. Find more about program income at [2 CFR 200.307](#).



Step 2:

Get Ready to Apply

In this step

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Find the application package

The application package has all the forms you need to apply. You can search for it at [Grants.gov](#) using opportunity number HHS-2026-ACL-AOD-DNSA-0023. Then select the Package tab.

We recommend that you select the **Subscribe button** from the View Grant Opportunity page for this NOFO to get updates.

You can also find materials at [Applying for Grants on ACL's website](#).

If you can't use Grants.gov to download application materials or have other technical difficulties, including issues with application submission, [contact Grants.gov](#) for assistance.

Get registered

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov to apply. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today.

To register:

- Go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and select Get Started. From the same page, you can also select the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register.
- You must agree to the [financial assistance general certifications and representations \[PDF\]](#) specifically. Those for contracts are different.

When you register, you will also receive your required Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

Once you register:

- You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.
- If your organization has multiple UEIs, use the one associated with your physical location.

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Need help? See [Contacts and Support](#).



Step 3:

Build Your Application

In this step

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Application checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need to apply. You will find the forms in Grants.gov.

Narratives

Item	Grants.gov form	Page limit
☐ Project narrative	Use the Project Narrative Attachment form.	25 pages
☐ Budget narrative	Use the Budget Narrative Attachment form.	None

Attachments

Insert each in a single Other Attachments Form.

Item	Page limit
☐ Indirect cost agreement	None
☐ Commitment letters	None
☐ Proof of nonprofit status	None
☐ Resumes and job descriptions	None

Other required forms

Use each required form in Grants.gov.

Item	Page limit
☐ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	None
☐ Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	None
☐ Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	None
☐ Key Contacts form	None
☐ Grants.gov Lobbying Form (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	None
☐ Project/Performance Site Location form	None

Application contents and format

This section includes guidance on each component found in the application checklist.

Application page limit: None

Submit your information in English and express whole number budget figures using U.S. dollars.

Required format

Required format for project and budget narratives.

Font: Times New Roman or Arial

Format: PDF

Size: 11-point font

Footnotes and text in graphics may be 10-point.

Spacing for project narrative main content: Double-spaced

Spacing for budget narrative: As needed

Spacing for project summary, tables, footnotes: Single-spaced

Margins: 1-inch

Include page numbers.

Project narrative

Page limit: 25

The project narrative is the most important part of the application. We use it as the primary basis to decide whether your project meets the statutory requirements and to review its merit. The project narrative should give a clear and concise description of your project.

Be sure to cite all your sources. Merit reviewers may lower your score if you do not.

Also study the merit review criteria under each section to make sure you answer all questions and cover all topics reviewers will look at.

Project summary

Provide a brief project summary of no more than 265 words. Write it for the general public. You will need to include:

- **Goals:** Broad overall purpose, like a mission statement that says what you want to do and where you want to be.
- **Objectives:** Narrow, specific, and clear steps toward the goals. These are the “hows” to achieve the goals.
- **Overall approach:** General overview of what you will do.
- **Outcomes:** These are the measurable results of a project. Include expected changes among those served, such as clients, systems, organizations, and communities. These should tie directly to your goals and those of this funding.
- **Products:** The materials and other deliverables you expect to generate through the project.
- **Duration:** The anticipated start and end dates of the period of performance.

Project relevance and current need

Problem statement

When discussing the need for a national AAC peer support network for people with speech-related disabilities, include:

- Information from research, data, and input from people who use AAC, their families, and others who support them.
- Your understanding of the challenges people with speech-related disabilities face, including the barriers that prevent them from getting or using AAC. Explain how these barriers affect their daily lives and outcomes.
- How people with speech-related disabilities would benefit if their needs were better met and if they had improved access to AAC and peer support.

Goals and objectives

Make sure your goals and objectives are specific, realistic, and measurable, and directly address the needs you described.

- Clearly explain the purpose of your project, making sure the purpose is based on the needs you identified in the problem statement.
- Show how your goals and objectives are consistent with the stated purpose of the project.

- Describe how your approach aligns with the ACL Priority of preserving independence, promoting economic mobility, and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Describe the impact the project will have on individuals if you meet your goals, such as improvements in access, independence, participation, or other meaningful outcomes.

Table: Scoring criteria

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
A problem statement that: • Describes why a national AAC peer support network is needed for people with speech-related disabilities, using information from research, data, and feedback from AAC users, their families, and others who support them. • Shows a clear understanding of the challenges people with speech-related disabilities face, including the barriers that make it hard to get or use AAC, and how these challenges affect their daily lives and outcomes. • Demonstrates an understanding of the unique needs of people with speech-related disabilities. • Explains how people with speech-related disabilities would benefit if their needs, including improved access to AAC and peer support, were better met.	10 points
Goals and objectives that: • Are specific, realistic, and measurable, and that directly respond to the needs described in the problem statement. • Clearly explain the purpose of the project and show that the purpose is based on the needs identified in the problem statement. • Show how the goals and objectives match the stated purpose of the project and logically follow from it. • Describe how your approach aligns with the ACL Priority of preserving independence, promoting economic mobility, and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. • Describe how the project's goals will have a direct impact on individuals, such as improving access to AAC, increasing independence, supporting participation, or achieving other meaningful outcomes.	10 points

Approach

Leading and supporting the leadership coalition

In your approach, describe how you will create, manage, and support the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition throughout the project. Your description should include:

- How you will build and maintain the leadership coalition, including:
 - Bringing together members who have speech-related disabilities and represent different ages, support needs, and AAC experiences from across the U.S. and its territories.
 - Ensuring a majority of members use AAC.
 - Including families of AAC users.
 - Including people who support AAC users, such as friends, Centers for Independent Living, service providers, educators, healthcare professionals, and community organizations.
 - Engaging community and business partners that are not disability-specific but can support inclusion.
- How you will ensure the coalition is user-led, including how AAC users will lead or co-lead project activities.
- How you will define roles and responsibilities, and how you will support meaningful participation from all members.
- How you will compensate coalition members adequately.
- How the coalition will make decisions, including the clear and transparent processes you will use for:
 - Creating, carrying out, and reviewing an action plan with milestones.
 - Testing, improving, and expanding the network over time.
 - Developing and sharing resources.
 - Staying focused on achieving project goals.

Building and maintaining a sustainable National AAC Peer Support Network

Your approach should also explain how you will build, maintain, and strengthen a national network of AAC peer support groups and mentors.

National directory of AAC peer support groups and mentors

Describe how you will:

- Set standards to decide which groups should be included.
- Identify what AAC users need in order to connect with peer support.

- Spot gaps in available support, especially for hard-to-reach groups.
- Find existing peer support groups to include in the directory.
- Start or grow new peer support groups to fill the gaps.
- Provide training and technical assistance to peer support groups and mentors.

National AAC Peer Support Network Hub

Explain how you will create and maintain a hub that:

- Helps AAC users easily find and connect with peer support groups and mentors.
- Supports peer groups and mentors in sharing information and collaborating.
- Provides updated resources and interactive forums for families, providers, and others.
- Shares clear, evidence-based AAC resources that are accessible and easy to use.

Helping people apply knowledge in practical ways

Describe how you will help AAC users, families, and providers turn information into practical action. Your approach should include:

- Developing an AAC peer support toolkit.
- Creating or identifying evidence-based and promising resources.
- Partnering with related federal programs, such as the RERC and State Assistive Technology programs.
- Providing targeted training based on identified needs.
- Hosting a national online or hybrid conference every two years.

Outreach and collaboration

Describe how you will reach and engage a wide range of people and organizations. Include:

- How you will identify key groups and individuals to get involved in the project.
- How you will tailor outreach strategies to the needs of each group.

Making resources available to as many people as possible

Explain how you will ensure broad access to information and resources. Your approach should include:

- Creating resources in multiple formats (such as plain-language materials and videos).
- Working with AoD grantees to identify organizations, facilities, and partners that can help spread information.
- Developing a marketing and dissemination plan focused on reaching hard-to-reach populations.

- Building partnerships through both existing AoD programs and new collaborators.
- Targeting outreach each year to at least one hard-to-reach group (such as rural communities, people in institutional settings, or people involved in the justice system).
- Using modern tools, and the national hub, to expand reach.
- Regularly monitoring and adjusting your outreach strategies to maximize impact.

Project management

- Delineate the roles and responsibilities of project staff, consultants, and partner organizations.
- Describe how they will contribute to achieving the project's objectives and outcomes.
- Clearly specify who will have day-to-day responsibility for leading the project, monitoring progress, preparing reports, and communicating with partners and ACL.

Work plan

You must provide a work plan for your project. The work plan connects your period of performance outcomes, strategies and activities, and measures. It provides more detail on how you will measure outcomes and processes.

To create your work plan:

- Use the [Project Work Plan Sample Template](#) on our website.
- Include the project's overall goal, expected outcomes, key objectives, and the major action steps needed to achieve them.
- For each major action step, include start and end dates and the lead responsible person.

Table: Scoring criteria

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
An overall approach that: • Clearly explains a strong, realistic, and complete plan for achieving the project's goals and objectives. • Effectively addresses the stated problem and meets the purpose of the funding opportunity.	7 points
For the AAC Peer Support Leadership Coalition: • A plan for building and sustaining a coalition that includes: ◦ Mostly people with speech-related disabilities who use AAC, representing different ages, backgrounds, and experiences from across the U.S. and its territories.	7 points

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
◦ Families of people who use or could benefit from AAC, representing different ages, types of support needs, and settings. ◦ Others who support or interact with AAC users, such as friends, Centers for Independent Living, service providers, teachers, healthcare professionals, and community groups. ◦ Organizations that are not disability-focused, such as businesses and community groups. • An approach for supporting the coalition so it is led by AAC users and includes clear roles and responsibilities that allow for real, meaningful participation. • Mechanisms to compensate coalition members adequately. • The process the coalition will use for making decisions to: ◦ Create, carry out, and review an action plan with milestones to strengthen the AAC peer support network. ◦ Implement, test, improve, and expand the network over time. ◦ Develop and share resources. ◦ Stay focused on meeting the project's goals efficiently and effectively.	
A solid, doable, and complete approach for growing a directory for the national AAC peer support network, including: • Setting up quality checks to decide which peer support groups, mentors, and related activities meet the standards to be part of the national AAC peer support network. • Figuring out what people with speech-related disabilities need in order to connect with peer support groups, mentors, or activities that match their preferences and needs. • Identifying gaps in available peer support, including groups or individuals who are hard to reach, to understand what support people with speech-related disabilities need to use AAC successfully. • Finding existing peer support groups, mentors, and related activities that should be included in a national AAC peer support network directory. • Starting and expanding AAC peer support groups and related activities to address identified gaps, using tools such as mini-grants or other strategies. • Providing training and technical assistance to AAC peer support groups and mentors on topics like how to use resources to build the network's capacity.	6 points
A solid, doable, and complete approach for creating a trusted, reliable national AAC peer support hub with a wide range of resources, including by: • Building tools that help people with speech-related disabilities easily find and connect with peer support groups, mentors, and activities that have been reviewed and meet their needs and preferences.	6 points

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
- Offering through the Hub: - Ways for AAC peer support groups and mentors to share information about themselves and the activities they provide. - Resources and spaces where families, providers, and others can connect, share experiences, and get support for using AAC. - Access to reliable, evidence-based, and promising AAC resources created by the project or other trusted sources.	
A solid, doable, and complete approach for making knowledge useful, such as through promising practices and evidence-based practices: - Creating an AAC Peer Support Toolkit that includes: - Resources about AAC and peer support. - Guidelines to help AAC users participate more fully in peer support activities (like meetings or discussions). - Self-assessment tools for AAC users to check how well peer support is working for them. - Identifying and developing evidence-based and promising resources: - For people with speech-related disabilities and their families to better understand AAC and the value of peer support. - For providers (such as direct support staff, HCBS providers, health professionals, employment specialists, and school staff) to help them support AAC users more effectively and include peer support in their work. - Working with federal partners, such as the NIDILRR RRTC and State Assistive Technology Programs, to turn knowledge into action. - Carrying out a strong dissemination plan that uses the national AAC peer support network, along with other effective methods, to widely share trusted resources, raise awareness, and build public support for AAC use. - Offering targeted training for AAC users, families, and providers to promote use of the evidence-based and promising resources. - Hosting an online or hybrid conference twice a year to engage and inform the groups involved in or affected by the project.	6 points
A solid, doable, and complete approach for conducting outreach and collaboration to raise awareness of AAC and increase participation in the national AAC peer support network by: Identifying key groups and individuals to engage, including people who use or need AAC in both rural and urban areas (including those with intellectual disabilities); their support networks (such as families, direct care workers, and school staff); and organizations that are not disability-focused (such as businesses and community groups).	6 points

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
Creating tailored outreach strategies for each group to involve them in meaningful ways in the national AAC peer support network, supporting long-term participation and broad community involvement.	
A solid, doable, and complete approach for making resources available to as many people as possible by: - Creating a variety of resources and tools that are useful for AAC users and people who could benefit from AAC, including plain-language materials and videos that explain how AAC works and why it is helpful. - Working with AoD grantees, such as Developmental Disabilities Councils, Centers for Independent Living, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Protection and Advocacy Systems, and other partners who serve or interact with AAC users, to develop state-by-state lists of facilities, organizations, and providers where potential AAC users can be reached. - Developing a strong marketing and dissemination plan to reach the widest possible audience, including people who are harder to reach, such as students in K–12 schools, people in rural areas, and individuals living in institutions or who are incarcerated. - Sharing the project’s results and findings with audiences who may be interested, including those who may wish to replicate the project. - Disseminating information promptly. - Presenting results in formats that are easy for different audiences to understand.	6 points
A complete and well-organized work plan using the Project Work Plan Sample Template with: - A clear statement of the project’s overall goal, expected outcomes, and key objectives. - Major action steps that logically support each objective and outcome. - Specific, realistic start and end dates for each major action step. - Identification of the lead person responsible for each action step, showing clear accountability. - Sufficient detail to demonstrate how the work plan connects the project’s outcomes, strategies, activities, and measures over the full project period.	6 points

Project impact

When discussing the impact of the project, include the following.

Outcomes

- The specific outcomes the project will achieve, ensuring they are consistent with the [outcomes listed in the program description](#).
- Reasons why these outcomes are important and how they support the purpose of the funding opportunity.
- How the outcomes connect to the project's main activities and how each activity will help achieve them.
- Outcomes that are realistic and achievable within the project period.
- Ways that the outcomes contribute to longer-term improvements for AAC users, families, providers, and the broader peer support network.
- How the outcomes reflect meaningful, concrete changes, rather than general statements, which show the project's impact.

Evaluation

The evaluation plan should include:

- A clear, practical procedures for monitoring and evaluating the project, including how you will plan, implement, and report on activities.
- A detailed and feasible plan for collecting data that measures expected outcomes, with measures that align with the program's purpose and accurately show progress.
- The ways you will report performance and evaluation findings and how you will use the results to demonstrate outcomes and drive continuous improvement.
- The capacity to collect, track, manage, and report both process and outcome data, including data required for the evaluation plan.

Table: Scoring criteria

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
Outcomes that: • Are clearly stated, specific, and consistent with the outcomes listed in the program description. • Are clearly explained in terms of why they matter and how they support the purpose of the funding opportunity. • Are directly connected to the project's main activities, showing how each activity will help achieve the intended outcomes.	5 points

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
• Are realistic and achievable within the project period. • Demonstrate meaningful contributions to longer-term improvements for AAC users, families, providers, and the national AAC peer support network. • Reflect concrete, measurable changes rather than broad or vague statements, showing the project's expected impact.	
Evaluation plan that: • Clearly explains how the project will be monitored and evaluated, including how you will plan, carry out, and report on activities. • Presents clear, detailed, and realistic plans for measuring the project's expected results, with measures that match the purpose of the program and show progress. • Includes strong and effective evaluation methods. • Describes how you will report performance and evaluation findings and how you will use them to show results and improve the project over time. • Demonstrates the ability to collect, track, manage, and report the data needed to measure both activities and results. • Explains how data will guide the development and improvement of the national AAC peer support network. • Uses strong, practical methods for monitoring and evaluating project results. • Shows that the selected measures can demonstrate whether the project met its goals and whether the results can reasonably be linked to the project's work.	5 points

Capability and expertise

Organizational capability

Describe the capability and capacity of your organization, and any partner organizations that will play a major role in carrying out the project, by:

- Explaining your organization's ability to continue some or all project activities after federal funding ends.
- Providing evidence that your organization has the experience and expertise needed to successfully complete the proposed activities.
- Describing the qualifications, experience, and background of the project director(s), key staff, and any consultants, showing they are well-suited for their roles.
- Clearly describing the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of all project staff, including everyone needed to carry out the proposed approach.
- Identifying proposed partners, including subrecipients, and describe how they will help meet the program goals.

- Explain these partners' roles, responsibilities, and the commitments they have made to the project.
- Explaining how your organization will follow the approved project plan, properly manage federal funds, and document all costs to avoid questions from ACL about the way the project is spending the grant money.

Table: Scoring criteria

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
• A clear description of the organization's capability and capacity to carry out the project, including any partner organizations with major roles. • A convincing explanation of the organization's ability to sustain some or all project activities after federal funding ends. • Strong evidence that you have the experience and expertise needed to complete the proposed activities successfully. • Clear descriptions of the qualifications, experience, and suitability of the project director(s), key staff, and consultants for their assigned roles. • Detailed, well-defined roles, responsibilities, and time commitments for all project staff that are appropriate for successful implementation. • Clear information about proposed partners, including subrecipients, showing how they will contribute to project goals and their roles, responsibilities, and commitments. • A clear explanation of how the organization will follow the approved plan, properly manage federal funds, and document all costs to avoid questions from ACL about the way the project is spending the grant money.	10 points

Budget narrative

Page limit: None

The budget narrative supports the information you provide in [Standard Form-424A](#).

It includes added detail and justifies the costs you ask for. As you think about your budget, consider:

- If the costs are reasonable and consistent with your project's purpose and activities.
- The restrictions on spending funds. See [funding policies and limitations](#).

When you develop your budget narrative:

- We encourage you to use the [ACL Budget Narrative Sample Format \[PDF\]](#). This format shows the level of detail we are looking for in your application.
- Justify all the costs and show how you calculated them.
- You will need to create a budget narrative that shows all years combined along with separate, detailed budget narratives for each year.

Reviewers will assess your budget (SF-424A) and your budget narrative to score this section.

Table: Scoring criteria for budget and budget narrative

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant provides:	Point value
• A budget that is reasonable and feasible for each year of the project, including: ◦ Personnel costs that support proper management and timely completion of the project. ◦ Costs that ensure AAC users can fully participate in all parts of the project. ◦ Fair compensation for AAC users based on their roles. ◦ Costs for all other activities needed to meet the purpose of the project. • A budget and justification that are clear and easy to understand and explain why the requested amounts are appropriate.	10 points

Attachments

You will upload attachments in Grants.gov using the Other Attachments Form.

Indirect cost agreement

If you include indirect costs in your budget using an approved rate, include a copy of your current agreement approved by your [cognizant agency for indirect costs](#). If you use the *de minimis* rate, you do not need to submit this attachment.

Commitment letters

Include letters from any organization that will have a significant role in carrying out your project. The letter should explain their role and their commitment to the project.

Proof of nonprofit status

If your organization is a nonprofit, you need to attach proof. We will accept any of the following:

- A copy of a current tax exemption certificate from the IRS.
- A letter from your state's tax department, attorney general, or another state official saying that your group is a nonprofit and that none of your net earnings go to private shareholders or others.
- A certified copy of your certificate of incorporation. This document must show that your group is a nonprofit.
- Any of these documents for a parent organization. Also include a statement signed by an official of the parent group that your organization is a nonprofit affiliate.

Resumes and job descriptions

For key personnel, attach resumes for positions that are filled. For positions that aren't filled, attach the job descriptions with qualifications.

Other required forms

You will need to complete some other forms in Grants.gov. You can find them in the NOFO [application package](#) or review them and their instructions at [Grants.gov Forms](#).

Form	Submission requirement
☐ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	Yes
☐ Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	Yes
☐ Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	Yes
☐ Key Contacts form	Yes
☐ Grants.gov Lobbying Form (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	Yes
☐ Project/Performance Site Location form	No

Important: Public information

When filling out your SF-424 form, pay attention to Box 15: Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project.

We share what you put there with [USAspending](#). This is where the public goes to learn how the federal government spends their money.

Instead of just a title, insert a short description of your project and what it will do.

[See instructions and examples \[PDF\]](#).



Step 4:

Learn About Review and Award

In this step

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Application review

Initial review

We will review your application to make sure that it meets the responsiveness requirements listed in the [disqualification factors section](#). If your application does not meet these criteria, we will disqualify it and we will not move it to the merit review (scoring) phase.

We will not review any pages over the page limit.

Scoring process

A panel reviews all applications that pass the initial review. The members use the merit review scoring criteria in the project narrative and budget narrative sections of this NOFO. You can find the specific criteria in each section of the project narrative and in the budget narrative section.

Criteria summary

Heading	Points
☐ Project summary	0 points
☐ Project relevance and current need	20 points
☐ Approach	50 points
☐ Project Impact	10 points
☐ Capability and expertise	10 points
☐ Budget narrative	10 points

Risk review

Before making an award, we review the risk that you will mismanage federal funds or fail to complete the project objectives. We need to make sure you've handled any past federal awards well and demonstrated sound business practices.

We use [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) Responsibility/Qualification to check this history for all awards likely to be over \$250,000. We also check Exclusions.

If we find a significant risk, we may choose not to fund your application or to place specific conditions on the award.

You can see more details about risk review at [2 CFR 200.206](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-200/subpart-200.206).

Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review results. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects, including project type and geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant. We may choose not to fund applicants with management or financial problems.
- Reasonableness of proposed costs to the expected results and the likelihood you will achieve those results.
- Available funding.

We may:

- Fund applications in whole or in part.
- Fund applications at a lower amount than requested.
- Decide not to allow a prime recipient to subaward if they may not be able to monitor and manage subrecipients properly.
- Choose to fund no applications under this funding opportunity.

The ACL administrator makes all final award decisions.

Funding priorities for alignment with agency priorities

Before we make final funding decisions, ACL leadership will review all potential awards.

They will check for:

- Adherence to applicable laws.
- Alignment to agency priorities (see [Administration for Community Living's \(ACL\) Mission, Vision & Strategic Priorities](#)).

To the extent allowed by law and court orders, we will give a funding priority to applications that align with agency priorities.

Your application may receive this preference if it demonstrates innovative alignment between expanding the use of AAC use and ACL priorities related to increasing awareness and connecting people with disabilities, including caregivers, to services and advancing economic security.

Merit review criteria also include factors related to ACL's priorities.

Award notices

If your application is successful, we will email a Notice of Award (NoA) to your authorized official. We will email you or write you a letter if your application is disqualified or unsuccessful.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you don't have permission to start work.

[See an example NoA on our website \[PDF\]](#).



Step 5:

Submit Your Application

In this step

Application submission and deadlines

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Application submission and deadlines

See [find the application package](#) and the [application checklist](#) to make sure you have everything you need.

Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements. See [get registered](#). You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.

Optional notice of intent

Due 20 days after publication.

We ask that you let us know if you plan to apply for this opportunity. We do this to plan for the number of expert reviewers we will need to evaluate applications. You do not have to submit a notice of intent to apply.

Please email the notice to katherine.cargill-willis@acl.hhs.gov.

In your email, include:

- The funding opportunity number and title.
- Your organization's name and address.
- A contact name, phone number, and email address.

Application

Deadline

Due on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

The grants management officer may extend an application due date based on emergency situations such as documented natural disasters or a verifiable widespread disruption of electric or mail service.

Submission method

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See [get registered](#).

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see the [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.

If you can't submit your application because of problems with Grants.gov, you will need verification for us to consider accepting your application. Call the [Federal Service Desk](#) before the application due time and record your tracking number. Save your tracking number and any error messages you receive.

See [Contacts and Support](#) if you need help.

Intergovernmental review

[Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#) does not apply to this NOFO. You do not need to take any action.



Step 6:

Learn What Happens After Award

In this step

Post-award requirements and administration 45

Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

There are important rules you need to know if you get an award. You must follow:

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award. You can find information at [Managing a Grant on our website](#). We incorporate this NOFO by reference.
- The rules listed in [2 CFR 200](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, effective October 1, 2025. These replace those in 45 CFR 75, with some exceptions in 2 CFR 300.
- The HHS [Grants Policy Statement \(GPS\)](#). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#), Appendix D: HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements.
- All anti-discrimination laws: By applying for or accepting federal funds from HHS, recipients certify compliance with all federal antidiscrimination laws and these requirements and that complying with those laws is a material condition of receiving federal funding streams. Recipients are responsible for ensuring subrecipients, contractors, and partners also comply.

Compliance and oversight

Recipients must demonstrate ongoing compliance with the [Administration for Community Living's \(ACL\) Mission, Vision & Strategic Priorities](#) through program design, implementation, performance reporting, fiscal management, and evaluation.

Failure to meaningfully align funded activities with applicable statutory authorities and agency priorities may result in corrective action, additional reporting requirements, enforcement actions, or other remedies consistent with 2 CFR Part 200 and the terms and conditions of the award.

Through alignment with these priorities, funded projects will help ensure that older adults and people with disabilities can live with dignity, independence, and full participation in the communities they call home.

Managing award changes

After award, either you or ACL may request changes. We manage these using the rules at 2 CFR 200 and 300, including [2 CFR 200.308](#) and [2 CFR 300.308](#).

Reporting

If your application is successful, you will have to submit financial and performance reports. To learn more about reporting, see [Managing a Grant, Funding Requirements on our website](#).

Financial and performance reports

The terms and conditions in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

FFATA and FSRs reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at the FFATA Subaward Reporting System for all subawards and subcontracts you issue for \$30,000 or more.
- Reporting executive compensation for both recipient and subaward organizations.



Contacts and Support

In this step

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Agency contacts

Program and eligibility

Katherine Cargill-Willis

Katherine.cargill-willis@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7322

Financial and budget

Tanielle Chandler

Tanielle.Chandler1@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7325

Review process and application status

Katherine Cargill-Willis

Katherine.cargill-willis@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7322

Help with systems

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. Hold on to your ticket number.

- Phone: 1-800-518-4726.
- Email: support@Grants.gov.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can:

- Call 866-606-8220.
- Live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

Reference websites

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\).](#)
- [Home Page | ACL Administration for Community Living.](#)
- [Applying for Grants | ACL Administration for Community Living.](#)
- [Application Tips | ACL Administration for Community Living.](#)
- [How to Apply for a Competitive Grant | ACL Administration for Community Living.](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\).](#)
- [United States Code \(U.S.C.\)](#)