



EQUITABLE TRANSITION MODELS (ETM) DEMONSTRATION GRANTS PROJECT FOA-ODEP-23-12 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Released October 10, 2023

Purpose of the FAQ Document

On September 18, 2023, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) hosted a prospective applicant webinar for the funding opportunity announcement (FOA) *Equitable Transition Models (ETM) Demonstration Grants Project*, FOA-ODEP-23-12. Webinar participants asked the questions below, for which there is also a response provided. A link to the recording is available under the related documents section of the FOA listing on Grants.gov. Also included are some FAQs received via email from prospective applicants.

Amendment One to the Funding Opportunity Announcement

Amendment One to the FOA was mentioned during the webinar, and subsequently published September 20, 2023. The amendment clarifies eligibility requirements. The Amendment One document is located under the related documents tab of the FOA posting on Grants.gov.

Questions on the ETM Grant Program

1) WHAT IS THE TIMELINE OF THE FOA?

Applications must be submitted to the Grants.gov portal no later than 11:59pm EST Tuesday, October 31, 2023. The Department of Labor (DOL) anticipates an award announcement in February 2024, with a period of performance start upon award issuance.

2) THE FOA STATES THAT PROJECT ACTIVITIES START NOVEMBER 17, 2023. IF THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS IN FEBRUARY, WILL PRE-AWARD COSTS BE ALLOWED?

No, pre-award costs will not be allowed. DOL now anticipates a February award date. The period of performance start date will coincide with the date of award issuance.

3) WHAT IS THE ACTUAL INTENT OF THESE AWARDS, TO HAVE STATE AGENCIES SERVE AS PASS-THROUGHS AND HAVE NON-PROFITS BE ABLE TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS AS BENEFICIARIES OF SUB-AWARDS OR TO HAVE STATES INTEGRALLY INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM DELIVERY?

Please see Amendment One to the FOA, which fully addresses eligibility requirements, as well as the required state-level and local partnerships.

Please note that the Executive Summary of the FOA states, “The primary goals of the ETM Demonstration Grants are to improve the employment outcomes of multiply marginalized people with disabilities, specifically youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD), as well as to increase states’ capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved Y&YAD and their families.” Therefore, it is essential that the states be integrally part of the work production and the convener and lead organization for these projects.

3A) IF A FLOW-THROUGH IS NOT ALLOWED, IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH OF THE BUDGET CAN BE ALLOCATED TO OTHER PARTNERS VIA SUBAWARD?

The FOA does not specify required allocations for partners.

Grant Project Design

4) WILL THERE BE REQUIRED TRAVEL TO ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCES? CAN YOU CLARIFY WHAT TRAVEL IS REQUIRED? WE DON'T SEE ANY SPECIFIC TRAVEL THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED LISTED IN THE FOA OTHER THAN INCLUDING A TRAVEL BUDGET.

The FOA does not require travel for specific events. Selected awardees would receive advanced notification of any opportunities for collaboration relative to FOA activities, to accommodate planning and budget requirements.

5) DOES THE PROJECT DIRECTOR HAVE TO BE SOMEONE AT THE SUBMITTING ORGANIZATION OR CAN IT BE SOMEONE FROM ONE OF THE OTHER PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS?

The FOA does not contain a requirement that the project director be affiliated with the lead applicant (a state government or a Federally recognized tribe). However, the Executive Summary of the FOA states, “The primary goals of the ETM Demonstration Grants are to improve the employment outcomes of multiply marginalized people with disabilities, specifically youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD), as well as to increase states’ capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved Y&YAD and their families.” Therefore, it is essential that the states be integrally part of the work production and the convener and lead organization for these projects. The

project director must be someone qualified to lead the entire consortium. Applicants should make clear how the cross systems coordination improves the state's capacity to provide services to Y&YAD.

6) WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INTERVENTION AND CONTROL GROUPS AS MENTIONED ON PAGE 15 OF THE FOA?

As outlined on page 14 of the FOA, DOL will be evaluating the efficacy of various program designs through information garnered by a third-party evaluator, which may involve random assignment of eligible participants into either a treatment group or a control group. This type of experimental design provides the most rigorous and widely accepted evidence of interventional effectiveness, from which DOL will be able to determine which are the most effective designs to take to scale across larger parts of the country.

The intervention group will be the sample of participants to receive enhanced services, while the control group will receive the same workforce services previously assigned by the system involved in the project. That is, the control group can receive usual workforce services and will not be prevented from accessing any usual workforce services, but they will not have access to the enhanced services and coordination that will be provided through ETM programming to those individuals who are in the treatment group.

7) WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, ARE ELEMENTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY REQUIRED BY THIS NEW AWARD?

Program Design General Requirements are on page 5 of the FOA. Required Program Services and Optional Program Elements are on pages 5-7 of the FOA.

Eligible Lead Applicants and Partnerships

8) IS IT ALLOWABLE FOR A STATE AGENCY TO LEAD ON THE SUBMISSION, BUT TO FLOW-THRU TO AN IHE AND HAVE THEM TAKE ON FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES?

No. Please see page 9 of the FOA, Responsibilities of Lead Applicant, which states:

The Lead Applicant selected as the awardee must have overall programmatic, fiscal, and administrative responsibility for the cooperative agreement. Award recipients will serve as DOL's counterpart in the cooperative agreement. The recipient must be the organization specified in Section 8 of the SF-424 Application Form. Additionally, the recipient must be:

- 1. The primary point of contact with DOL that receives and responds to all inquiries or communications under this FOA and with any sub-grantees;*
- 2. The entity with authority to draw down funds;*
- 3. The entity responsible for submitting to DOL all work products under the cooperative agreement, including all related technical and financial reports, regardless of which partnership member performed the work;*
- 4. The entity that may request or agree to a revision or amendment of the cooperative agreement;*

5. *The entity with overall responsibility for carrying out programmatic functions, including collecting required project data, of the cooperative agreement, as well as the stewardship of all expenditures under the cooperative agreement;*
6. *The entity responsible for coordinating and fully cooperating with the independent evaluator and ETM TA Provider; and*
7. *The entity responsible for working with DOL to close out the cooperative agreement.*

9) TO CONFIRM, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION CANNOT SERVE AS A LEAD APPLICANT, CORRECT? NON-PROFITS CAN ONLY SERVE AS EITHER STATE OR LOCAL PARTNERS?

Non-profit organizations may not serve as Lead Applicant. Non-profit organizations with expertise in serving the proposed project's youth target population(s), as well as non-profit or community-based organizations with expertise in the transition activities for Y&YAD representing underserved communities, may be a partner in the ETM Leadership Group. See Amendment One to this FOA.

10) CAN UNIVERSITIES APPLY AS THE LEAD APPLICANT?

No. See Amendment One to this FOA. Eligible Lead Applicants include state governments and Federally recognized tribes. Universities may partner with the Lead Applicant.

11) IF A FORMER SUCCESSFUL DEI RECIPIENT APPLIES, WILL IT BE WELL POSITIONED IN THE COMPETITION?

All ETM applications will be scored only on the extent to which they meet the requirements outlined in the FOA. DEI status is not a rated criterion.

Performance Outcomes

12) MUST WE SET TARGETS AND TRACK PARTICIPANTS?

Yes. Applicants must identify the proposed geographic service area, which may be statewide or a collection of counties in which awarded applicants will serve program participants. Applicants must submit proposed participant numbers within the application; however, the final participant target will be constructed in partnership with the evaluator.

13) PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT PARTICIPANT LEVEL DATA REQUIREMENTS.

Please carefully review Section III.C.6 (Evaluation Information) and Appendix B (Performance Metrics). Awardees will collect and store individual-level data on recruitment, enrollment, participant characteristics, employment and benefits, program participation, service provision, and participant outcomes to report to DOL as part of their performance metrics. DOL requires participant level data to be able to report on the number and characteristics of participants served, the types and frequency of services offered and received, and measurements of participant outcomes that the interventions intend to affect. In addition, DOL requires participant level data so that the independent evaluation can identify and track participants, identify eligible persons who did not receive the intervention, and

compare outcomes of the participants and the eligible persons who did not receive the intervention. Specifically:

- **Participant characteristics** include individual-level data on name, date of birth, Social Security Number, address, phone number, email, gender, race, ethnicity. Participant characteristics may also include individual-level data on socio-economic status, past service or benefit receipt, specific disability or health need, education level, employment history, housing status, and others.
- Types and frequency of **services offered and received** include, at a minimum, individual-level date of enrollment and services offered. Data on services offered and received may also include individual-level data describing types of service provision received, date of specific services, intensity of engagement with services, program costs, and other program participation details.
- **Participant outcomes** include individual-level data on outcomes that the intervention aims to affect. These may include employment status, earnings, benefits receipt, or others as specified in the program's logic model.

Please note that the collection, storage and sharing of personally identifiable information (PII) will need to adhere to conditions stipulated by the Privacy Act. DOL will determine other specific required programmatic data elements in collaboration with the awardees, the ETM evaluator, and the TA provider.

The receipt of standardized data from all awardees is important to ensure a high quality, rigorous evaluation. The independent evaluator will provide guidance and TA to assist awardees in developing their data collection processes and ensuring data quality. This may include guidance on data elements, and data collection plans, and systems alignment, among other topics. To facilitate the independent evaluation of the ETM Demonstration Grants, awardees must enter into separate data-sharing agreements with DOL and its evaluator. Awardees must demonstrate that they have or will have the legal authority to share these data with the funding agency. They must describe any limitations on using, protecting, disclosing, or sharing the data. Awardees will be required to submit timely extracts (copies) of:

- The programmatic data that awardees collect to satisfy their award requirements. See Section VI.C.2 and Appendix B for information on required programmatic data elements; and
- Employment and service-provision data (as determined by the evaluator) from existing state programs – such as vocational rehabilitation, WIOA Title I, II, and III programs and services, and federal benefits programs – on all youth participants in both the intervention and the control groups.

Review Process

14) WOULD YOU PLEASE CLARIFY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REQUESTED AND REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS?

Omission of a required attachment results in an application being disqualified. It will not move forward to merit review for award consideration.

Omission of a requested attachment does not result in disqualification; however, may lower the applicant's earned score. The FOA specifies on pages 27 and 28 the requested attachments that impact scoring.

15) CAN YOU CLARIFY INFORMATION ABOUT KEY PERSONNEL/STAFFING AND WHAT INFORMATION IS ALLOWED TO BE INCLUDED?

Information on key staff and personnel should be included to enable the government to assess the ability of the proposed project to carry out the organizational, administrative, and fiscal and other activities proposed. Please do not submit an individual's overall resume.

Applicants should identify all resources, personnel, and established and planned partnerships. Additionally, application should provide qualifications for key personnel. This information is described in Section IV.B.3.d and be submitted as one attachment to the Grants.gov application package and labeled "Key Personnel."

Applicants must include organizational charts and resumes of key personnel in the attachments. However, please omit personally identifying information such as phone numbers and addresses. For key personnel named in the application and dedicating greater than 20 percent effort on the project, applicants must provide documentation of all internal and external time commitments.

16) HOW MANY LETTERS OF COMMITMENT/MOUS DO WE HAVE TO PROVIDE WITH THE APPLICATION?

Please see FOA sections IV.B.3.d (pg 24) and IV.B.4.b (pg 28) of the FOA, which state that the applicant must show the commitment of at least one or more local area workforce entities and/or programmatic providers through a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), submitted in the application for funding.

Section III.A of the FOA also notes the same on page 10. Adding that this section also states, "Lead applicants applying for the ETM funding should have MOUs with each of their partners in their ETM leadership group within 60 days after the award of an ETM cooperative agreement."