

Moderator: GREG LINK

May 4, 2023

3:00pm CT

NOTE: This transcript has been edited for readability and clarity only.

Coordinator: Welcome, and thank you for standing by. All lines have been placed in a listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session of today's call. Today's call is also being recorded. If anyone disagrees, you may disconnect at this time. It is now a pleasure to turn the call over to your host, Mr. Greg Link. Thank you, and you may begin.

Greg Link: Thank you so much. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this teleconference to review and discuss ACL's 2023 notice of funding opportunity entitled, strengthening aging services for minority populations through technical assistance, resource development, and program coordination.

The purpose of this call is to provide interested applicants with an overview of the funding announcement and provide an opportunity for you to ask questions and get clarification on anything that you would like prior to you starting to write your applications.

Please note that following this teleconference, it is unlikely that I or others here in my office will be able to answer individual questions of applicants as that could afford an unfair advantage to those entities not privy to the questions and answers. So, it is in your best interest to ask your questions today at the end of my overview.

As the operator mentioned, my name is Greg Link, and I'm the Director of

ACL's Director of the Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services. I'm joined also by Nicole Becerra, who will be the actual program officer of record for this project. She will be working closely with each of the grantees that are funded to make sure that they remain within compliance with HHS grants policy and the intent of the program.

This call is scheduled to go for about 60 minutes, maybe less. Hopefully, we won't need that much time. And as was mentioned, a transcript of this call will be available on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), alongside the funding opportunity announcement materials in about a week or so. The transcript will include everything I go over now, as well as a complete transcript of the Q&A at the end of this call.

ACL is particularly excited about this announcement as it is representative of this administration's ongoing commitment to ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion in human services programs. So, before I dive into the content of the funding opportunity announcement, I want to point out just several key dates that everyone should be aware of.

Obviously, today, May 4th, is the date of the information teleconference. This will be the only information teleconference that we hold. May 11th is the date that we are asking for letters of intent to be sent to us.

Letters of intent are optional, but we really appreciate them, particularly given the complexity of this particular initiative with six different possibilities for funding. Letters of intent are the primary means by which we set up grant reviews.

They let us know how many - approximately how many reviewers to recruit, and it may help us avoid any potential conflicts of interest between grant reviewers and applicants before the applications come in.

Letters of intent can be mailed to Nicole Becerra, Nicole.Becerra@acl.hhs.gov. Her email is in the funding opportunity document in a couple of places. June 26th, 2023, is the due date for applications. They are due at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on June 26th, 2023. This date is firm. There's no exceptions, and no extensions will be given.

Then finally, September 1st, 2023, is the approximate start date for your project. This date could slip a little bit depending on how the grant review goes. The start date could also be a little earlier if everything goes really smoothly. But September 1st is the date that we're targeting.

Regarding the number of grants that we are going to award and the funding levels associated with this particular funding opportunity, ACL has committed up to approximately \$1.2 million per year for three years to this project. Of course, that's pending the availability of federal funds each year.

We will be awarding six cooperative agreements off of the single notice of funding opportunity. Five of those cooperative agreements will go to each of five organizations focusing on a different minority older adult population that we have specified in the body of the funding announcement.

One cooperative agreement will go to an entity to serve as the coordinating center for this effort. I'm going to get into the distinctions between the two in just a moment. The amount of the award for each cooperative agreement will vary based on the funding option chosen by the applicant. I'll talk about funding ceilings and floors in just a moment.

Before I go any further though, I wanted to point out the format of the funding opportunity announcement. For those of you who are familiar with ACL's

funding opportunities, you'll note that this format and layout likely looks a little bit different, and that's intentional.

ACL has been working with our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to pilot and test a new format for funding opportunity announcements. So, this is the first time that we are using this particular format.

You all are getting a glimpse into, you know, the government working to improve processes and make things clearer in plain language. Your input and feedback with respect to the ease, readability and clarity will be most appreciated, and we'll ask folks to weigh in on that during the Q&A at the end of this call.

Regarding the target audiences for the technical assistance that ACL looks to undertake with this funding opportunity, there are two primary target audiences. The first are the entities typically associated with aging network services.

That's State units on aging, area agencies on aging, tribal entities, local aging services providers, and really working with those entities nationally to increase and improve their capacity to deliver culturally and linguistically competent services and supports that are funded by the Older Americans Act.

The second target audience are older adults and family caregivers from diverse populations themselves. We recognize that there's a large opportunity to ensure that older adults from different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, may have difficulties or need additional assistance and awareness about how to access services and supports.

Once they do, they need to be able to access services and supports that are culturally competent, relevant and respectful of their particular backgrounds. We're expecting grantees to also focus on supporting and providing technical assistance and tools and materials for older adults and family caregivers to help them navigate service delivery systems as well.

Now, just to provide a little bit of an overview of the funding announcement, I'm going to call out specific pages of the PDF and you can follow along. I'll talk - I'll refer to the PDF page numbers. On Page 2 is where you'll find where we begin an overview of the funding opportunity. It provides a very high level one-page summary.

At the top of Page 4 of the PDF, begins the actual description of the funding opportunity. I want you to note ACL's stated goal for this initiative, and it's to create and expand technical assistance or TA for organizations and individuals to better serve older adults and their family caregivers of diverse backgrounds.

On Page 5, we provide some context and background for this initiative and discuss why the issues addressed by this project are important. On Page 6, we begin talking about some of the key priority areas that ACL wishes to focus on with this initiative and note that there are two distinct options to which applicants may apply.

The option A is for what we're calling our older adults equity collaborative, or OAEC, technical assistance and resource centers. And option B is for the OAEC coordinating center. For those applicants interested in option A, please be sure to carefully study the material beginning on Page 6 of the PDF and continuing through about the middle of Page 8.

Note, that each entity that applies for a grant under option A, will be doing so to focus activities on only one of the named population groups of interest in this funding opportunity. That's African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Hispanic and Latino elders, and LGBTQ older adults and their family caregivers.

These populations are the ones most frequently served by the aging services network. So, we are looking to expand network capacity to better meet the needs of these particular minority populations.

In proposing options under option A, in proposing approaches, applicants should identify critical priority areas for their three-year project. You will need to be very specific in defining the priority areas that you wish to focus on.

We provide a rather extensive list of ideas for priority areas, but you shouldn't deem this as an exhaustive list, and you can certainly use this list as a starting point for how you want to structure and focus your particular project.

For those applicants interested in option B, that's the coordinating center option, the purpose of this is to promote greater alignment, collaboration, and coordination across first, the five resource centers that we fund under option A.

The five resource centers will be working very closely together with one another, as well as with the coordinating center. The coordinating center is also going to work across other ACL-funded resource centers focused on older adults, family caregivers, and where relevant, persons with disabilities.

More broadly to other stakeholders and entities outside of ACL's immediate funded network to promote greater crosscutting work on behalf of diverse, older adults and their family caregivers. You may apply separately for both options, but no one organization may receive more than one award under option A.

Let me repeat that. Any entity may apply for both options A and B, but no entity may receive more than one award under option A. So, for example one organization couldn't apply under option A and say we're going to focus on African American and Native American older adults. It's one population only.

We would like to have five different organizations working together and on their own to address each of the five population groups that we specify. Now, in addition to the areas of focus under each option, we have some additional expectations for all six grantees, and those are articulated in the body of the NOFO. The first is this mandatory post-award planning period. This requirement applies to both options A and B recipients.

With leadership and facilitation by ACL, a project officer, Nicole Becerra, and myself, we expect recipients to undertake a mandatory post-award planning and project alignment period, each of the national - five national organizations and their partners, as well as the coordinating center and ACL program staff, to finalize work plans, solidify partnerships, onboard new staff, and make sure that everybody's work plan is in alignment so that we can have the greatest amount of synergy over three years among all six parties to this effort. The ACL program officer is going to work very closely with the recipients to ensure successful completion of this planning period.

The second expectation that ACL has is for the accessibility of information

and 508 compliance. Given this project's focus on technical assistance and resource development - resource center development, ACL expects that all recipients will develop and employ, first of all, a far-reaching and robust dissemination strategy, but that everything - all of - any materials that are disseminated, must be fully accessible and 508 compliant, and meet cultural and linguistic needs of the intended audience.

On Page 11, please note the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement that will apply to each of the six grants awarded under this funding opportunity announcement.

On Page 13 of the NOFO begins a discussion of the awarding information. As previously noted, we're going to - ACL will award six grants off this single notice of funding opportunity. Five of them will be under option A, each of which - each of the grants under option A will be up to \$210,000 per year for three years.

Under option B, the cooperative agreement will be in the amount of up to \$100,000 per year for three years. And there is a matching requirement of 25% non-federal cash or in-kind sources, but please be sure that you read the section on Pages 14-15, and that you calculate your match properly and correctly in accordance with the examples that we provide.

The bottom of Page 15, I want you to note the funding restrictions. There are some very specific restrictions on the use of federal funds in grants. We articulate those hopefully fairly clearly on Page 15, but be sure that you adhere to those funding restrictions in your applications and in your budget narratives.

As our grant specialist goes through budget narratives during the business

review, if there are unallowable expenses or activities that federal funds can't be used for, you will be asked to revise your budget narrative, and we don't want you to have to go through that process or take additional time to do that.

At the top of Page 17 begins a section that talks in great deal about the specific elements of your application. Here, you'll find jump links that take you further down into the NOFO to provide detail on each part of your application. You'll also find information about on submitting letters of intent.

Page 18 provides very specific information on how to structure your narratives. Page 24 provides information about required budget narratives, be sure that you do one budget narrative for each year of the project, and then one cumulative budget narrative covering all three years of your project.

Pages 25 and 26 provide information about the kinds of attachments you'll be including with your applications, including a work plan covering all three years of your proposed project. At the top of Page 27, note the submission dates and times. Again, the application deadline is June 26th, 2023, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern.

Pages 27 to 29 provide some very important information about how to submit and where to call if you need assistance, particularly getting or updating your SAM's number or your grants.gov registration.

ACL staff cannot assist you with grants.gov technical issues, nor can we help you in accessing or applying for a SAM's number. So, the information about where to call is available in the funding opportunity announcement.

On Page 29 begins the section that describes the review process and the review criteria that your applications will undergo. First will be the screening

and responsiveness reviews, which are done by ACL program staff and our grant review support team.

Page 30 begins the section that provides the exact criteria by which each application will be reviewed and scored by independent third-party reviewers. Please make sure that you pay close attention to these review criteria and check your completed applications against the criteria prior to submitting. If you do that, you can make sure that you've addressed everything and that you have a complete application.

Beginning on Page 36 to the end of the funding opportunity announcement, is other administrative information, policies, reporting requirements, agency contact information, templates and instructions, particularly for your budget narratives and work plans, templates that you're welcome to use, and also further instructions about how to complete various parts of the application.

That concludes the overview of the funding opportunity announcement. I'd like to ask the operator to open the lines for questions. Please remember that we'd like to hear from you regarding your thoughts on the new format and layout of the funding opportunity. Please feel free to weigh in on that even if you don't have questions. So, with that, I'm going to open up the lines for questions.

Coordinator: Thank you. If you'd like to ask a question over the phone, please press Star 1. Please ensure that your phone is unmuted and record your name to ask a question. Again, that is Star 1. To ask a question.

If you need to withdraw your requests, please press Star 2. One moment while we wait for any questions to come in. This question comes from [name] you may go ahead.

Q: Can we use this funding to enhance the programs we already have, or would we have to create a brand-new program?

A: The organizations that are funded from this funding opportunity announcement are expected to work on a national level. These funds are not intended to fund individual programs or projects at the State or the community level.

Q: Thank you.

Coordinator: The next question comes from [name] you may go ahead.

Q: Thank you. This is [name]. Just wanted to say, Greg, that I think the application is very clear and easy to read this time around, so thank you.

A: Cool. Thank you.

Coordinator: The next question comes from [name] you may go ahead.

Q: Hi. This is the [name]. I'm working for two agencies. One is nonprofit agency for Chinese community, and another is home healthcare and adult care center. I wonder which agency to apply this program will be better.

A: Well, that's hard to say. You'll really need to look at - to determine which agency applies, you will need to look at the requirements and what ACL is looking to accomplish in this funding opportunity announcement.

And keep in mind, as I mentioned earlier, that we are looking for projects that will work on a national level, not funding individual agencies to work in

specific communities. So, the work that you'll be doing will be on behalf of the entire country capacity building, training, technical assistance.

Q: Okay. We are planning to set up the training center for caregivers.

A: Okay, that's a bit narrow in focus. You should look at the funding opportunity announcement. We are looking to build broad capacity in the aging services network at the State level, at the community level for tribes. So, caregiver services are certainly part of that, but it is broader than that.

Q: Got it. Okay. Thank you.

A: Okay.

Coordinator: The next question comes from [name] you may go ahead.

Q: Yes. Thank you. Good afternoon, Greg. This is [name]. I wanted to weigh in and to say the application is easy to read and understand. Thank you.

A: Great. Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

Coordinator: Once again, if you'd like to ask a question, please press Star 1, unmute your phone and record your name. At this time, there are no - one moment, please. One just came in. The question is from [name] You may go ahead.

Q: It's not a question. Hello.

A: Yes, go on.

Q: I just wanted to comment that the application was very readable. I'm calling from [name of organization], and I found it very easy to follow. Thank you.

A: Great. Thank you for that feedback. Appreciate it.

Coordinator: There are no additional remarks or questions at this time. However, if you would like to make one, please press Star 1, unmute your phone and record your name.

Greg Link: Okay. Well, it seems like the questions have been answered. I want to thank everyone for their interest in this funding opportunity announcement. Thank you to those who provided feedback on the format and layout of the funding opportunity announcement. We don't know where that little experiment is going to go, but it was kind of a cool project, and ...

Coordinator: Greg, I'm sorry.

Greg Link: Yes.

Coordinator: Another question just came in.

Greg Link: Sure.

Coordinator: Okay. This question is for [name]. You may go ahead.

Q: Hello. Thank you. My question is about the agency as you're applying. Is it required to collaborate with another agency or an area agency on aging?

A: If your organization is interested in applying for one of the opportunities, one of the priority areas, you can certainly do it on your own, provided that you can meet ACL's expectations for national work that's of a national scope.

Honestly, very few organizations go it alone with projects like this. Each of the five grantees and the coordinating center are required to work together. So, that will be a requirement of the grant is that you work with the other entities that we fund. However, for your specific project, you can bring whichever partners to the project that you wish or not. It's up to you.

Q: Thank you.

Coordinator: That was the last question.

Greg Link: Thank you all so much. I wish you the best of luck in your applications. Please do send Nicole letters of intent if you intend to apply. Even if you ultimately don't apply, it doesn't matter. We just like to have as much information upfront so that we know how to structure the grant review.

With that, we will conclude the call. The transcript will be posted on grants.gov in the next week or so, and best of luck to you in your applications. Thank you.

Coordinator: That concludes today's conference. Thank you all for joining. You may now disconnect.

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