INFORMATIONAL CONFERENCE CALL TRANSCRIPT

HHS-2022-ACL-AOA-LRLR-0050

Lifespan Respite Care Program: Grants to New States and States Re-Establishing Their Core Respite Infrastructures

Moderator: Greg Link

Held on April 27, 2022 at 3:00 pm ET

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for joining today's conference. As a reminder today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. You may mute your phone by pressing Star 6 to mute and Star 6 again to unmute. I would now like to turn the call over to Greg Link. Thank you sir. You may begin.

Greg Link: Thank you so much. Good afternoon everyone. As the operator said, my name is Greg Link. I am the Director of the Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services at the Administration for Community Living.

And today's information call is to go through the Funding Opportunity Announcement for ACL's recently published Lifespan Respite Care Program grants to new States and states reestablishing their core respite infrastructures program announcement. This is the only program we have - currently have two program announcements out on the street for the Lifespan Respite Care Program.

This call today is only about the grants to new states and states reestablishing their core infrastructures. We will have a similar call later in the week I believe on Friday that we'll discuss our other funding opportunity.

So what the purpose of today's call really is to walk interested applicants through the bulk of the Funding Opportunity Announcement. My intent is to point out some key things that you should be aware of as you're preparing your applications, things to watch out for, things to make sure that you accomplish and complete.

And then we'll open it up for questions from any of those - for those of you who do have questions about the Funding Opportunity Announcement and how to complete your applications. Please be sure that your phones are on mute so that everyone can hear.

I would like to ask that you all hold questions until I open the call at the end for questions and answers. I'd like to get through the entirety of the funding announcement, go through the remarks that I have, and then we will open it up for questions.

I did want to ask is there any other staff person from the Administration for Community Living on the line today, particularly somebody from our Grant's Office? Okay, apparently not. So anyway thank you all for being here, and thank you for your interest in this Funding Opportunity Announcement.

Hopefully you all have the document either open on your computer or if you are, you know, still somewhat paper dependent, like I am, you have maybe printed it out. And because what I'm going to try to do is walk through the announcement and point out certain things to you.

And I'll be going, not necessarily page by page, but I will point out specific pages that you should be paying attention to. So let's go ahead and get started.

I'm on Page Number - Page 2 of 50 in the PDF. I just want to point out a couple of things to you all. There are a list of - underneath the - where the table of contents ends there's a couple of dates that you should be aware of.

The due date for letters of intent for your application to apply is May 16, 2022. Letters of intent, and I'll talk about this a little bit more in a minute, letters of intent are requested, they're not required.

We use letters of intent as a tool to help us plan the grant review. We want to know who is applying or have a good sense so that we can select grant reviewers in a way that ensures we don't have inadvertent conflicts of interest.

So letters of intent or do May 16. And then the due date for applications is June the 17, 2022. And that is 11:59 pm on June the 17, 2022, that date is non-negotiable. And applications that are received after the due date will not be reviewed and will not receive any consideration.

So there's a little note here right before the Executive Summary that encourages applicants to begin submitting or to submit their applications at least three to five days prior to the application closing date. That way in case you have technical difficulties with grants.gov you can troubleshoot those because oftentimes - if folks could please mute their lines please. Thank you.

Grants.gov can oftentimes take up to 48 hours to respond to questions or to notify you of a successful submission so you want to be sure to get this in very - as soon as you can upon completion of your work.

Beginning at the top of Page 3 we just have our Executive Summary, which kind of provides a very, very high level overview of the funding opportunity itself. We're going to go ahead and skip that and we're going to jump down to Page 4, Section 1 where we talk about the funding opportunity description.

And this really lays out ACL's intent behind this particular funding opportunity. Since 2009 ACL has been implementing the requirements of the Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2006.

And the intent of the program really is to help states and ultimately communities improve their respect care infrastructures for family caregivers and those individuals that they provide supports to who are across the age and disability spectrum.

This program is not an aging specific program. It's not a disability specific program. It is intended to serve all eligible family caregivers providing supports to any person who needs it. And so it's with that in mind that we look to the grantees to really begin to strengthen their state infrastructures for providing an array of respite care services.

At the bottom of Page 4 we go into some general background. Some context setting where we talk about family caregivers, who they are. We set the tone for, you know, the individuals, the family's, family units that ACL envisions being served and supported by this program.

We talk a little bit also at the bottom of Page 5 about what is respite care services? I mean respite is one of the hallmarks and one of the fundamental support services for family caregivers. It provides caregivers a break from their care giving responsibilities and time to refresh, recharge.

It also perhaps allows them time for self-care, whether its medical appointments, or meditation, or counseling sessions what have you respite is designed to give the family caregiver the break that they need. And there real - there is no one way to provide respite care services, and really this program looks to help and encourage states to develop person and family centered respite care options.

At the top of Page 6 we give you all a bit of an overview of the Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2006. It describes, the act itself, describes lifespan respite as a coordinated system of accessible community based respite services for family caregivers of children or adults with special needs very, very broad definition of respite in this case and states in their applications are encouraged to speak to the broadness of that definition.

We, in this section, we also provide some links to the actual test - to the text of the act as well as the reauthorized Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2020. So you can go straight to the source and read congressional intent behind the program.

And at the bottom of Page, 6 going on this Page 7, we talk about how the respite care environment has evolved over the years. You know, at ACL we really believe that the Lifespan Respite Care Program has helped states to really think with intention about how they - how respite care programs are designed and delivered, and has really served as an opportunity to fill gaps in respite services where perhaps funding streams may be inadequate or a particular population of family caregivers and the person that they're supporting are not covered by any one of the established programs in the state.

This respite care, the Lifespan Respite Care Program is also helping to really speak to one of the recommendations of the Family Caregiving Advisory Council who in their initial report to congress, in late last year in Recommendation 3.2 the Family Caregiving Advisory Council is really looking to develop and improve respite care options for families across the age and disability spectrum. And so this program is one of those ongoing initiatives at the federal level that is really speaking to that.

At the bottom of Page 7, and then going on for a couple of - for several pages, is where we get into the meat of the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

And we present - really the overarching goal of this opportunity is to both support the initial development implementation and the requirements of the act as well as - so for states who have never had a grant -- and there still are a number of states who have not had grants under the Lifespan Respite Care Program -- this - if that's the case then this funding opportunity is you and you would be considered one of the new states coming to this funding opportunity.

The other group of states that we're making this funding opportunity available to are what we call our returning states. Perhaps, you know, at the very beginning of the program back in 2009 and 2010 a state had a grant, worked on it for three years, and then for whatever reason after federal funding and support ended in the state the program kind of sort of went dormant or the work on it lapsed. We understand that happens and can happen.

And so for those states who may have had a grant previously and want to then reestablish their lifespan programs, reinvigorate them, this is also then a program - a funding opportunity for you. What we ask is that in your applications you indicate which type of state you are.

And if you're returning state really pay some special attention to how you are going to be picking up the ball again and running with it. Where is your - where does your program, where does your lifespan respite care system - where - what is its current state and how do you expect to really use this funding opportunity over the course of three years to really begin to reinvigorate some of those activities. So new states and returning states this is the focus for this particular Funding Opportunity Announcement.

At the top of Page 8 we provide a link to the ARCH National Respite Care and Resource Center, technical assistance center, that ACL has funded since 2009.

ARCH has a ton of amazing resources for states who are considering applying as well as for grantees who have been at this work for a number of years. If you're successful in your application, and you receive a grant you are going to see that ARCH is a tremendous resource for you as you begin to develop your lifespan respect programs.

So at the top of Page 8 we talk about the application narrative should clearly and completely describe the state agencies plans for implementing the required an optional services. And within the framework of the required and optional services -- and I'll get to those in the second -- applicants must fully described how your program will at a minimum either develop a new program, because you've never had a grant before, or reestablish your core respite infrastructure as a returning state, and you're going to improve the statewide dissemination and coordination of respite care.

Because we're moving into this post, sort of a post COVID environment, how you're going to develop or modify or otherwise adapt respite services to a post COVID environment. You know, we saw during the height of the pandemic programs pivot very quickly to providing different respite in different forms, really beginning to speak creatively to the needs of family caregivers.

And so we acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 has had on our service delivery systems. And we offer this as an opportunity for states to really think about how can you deliver services in the post COVID - respite services in the post COVID environment.

The Lifespan Respite Care Act has five required services that all grantees are required to deliver. And so in the middle of Page 8 we talk about the five required services.

And it's really, you know, the five required activities that states are to undertake with their grant funds is developing and enhancing lifespan respite care at the state and local levels, providing evidence informed quality respite care services, so the direct provision respite services is something we require with some portion of your grant.

Training of and recruiting of respite care workers and volunteers. One of the unique things about the Lifespan Respite Care Program is that it has built within it the ability for states to use some of their funds to address some of the direct care work force issues that we know so many states are grappling with right now.

The - another required service is the provisions of information about available l respite supports and services. Information we know is one of the most valuable services to family caregivers. Information about where to find and access respite is critical to them.

And then finally, the fifth required service is assistance to caregivers and gaining access to such respite services. So assistance could be somewhat case management, options counseling or really helping the caregiver navigate, you know, any of the bureaucracy that it may exist at the community level for really making applications to programs really smoothing the way for them to be - to receive respite care services.

Below the five required services we all - the Lifespan Respite Care also has three optional services that states can use their funding to develop and deliver. Training for family caregivers, training and education for new caregivers, I mean this is oftentimes one of the biggest challenges that caregivers have is they're new to the role, they have a lot of questions, they're afraid, and they need to get to services and supports earlier.

We know that from the research that the sooner you can get supports and services to a family caregiver the more likely it is that they will be able to remain in that role for a longer period of time, perhaps experience less burn out. And also it can strengthen the relationship of the caregiver and the care recipient.

So really pay attention to how you're structuring your application to make sure that you speak to each of the five required services and how you're going to deliver them. For the direct provision - for the provision of direct respite services we are not requiring a minimum, I don't believe of services to be provided. That's up to states.

We know that these are not huge grants. And yet we still are looking to our grantees to use some of the funds that they receive in this grant to provide respite services, fill gaps where services may not be completely or adequately funded, open respite services to new populations of family caregivers how - whatever the need in the state is.

Going to the top of Page 9 we talk about some of the applicants, you know, are required to demonstrate certain competencies and capacities in coming to this application into this work. You know, again we speak to required respite services an understanding of the populations that you're serving.

So, you know, hopefully you have a pretty good understanding in your state already of the needs of - the respite needs of populations where are the gaps. You should be addressing those needs in the narrative of your applications.

This program has a big emphasis on choice and control for families. And so how will the proposed programs help families choose and control their services?

And also this is - this program is intended to serve the lifespan. And so really you do need to discuss in your applications and throughout the work on a project is how all family members, regardless of their age or disability, will be served that is another one of the requirements.

At the top of Page 10 we talk about stakeholder collaboration and partnerships. Some of the most successful grants that I've seen in the years that I've been working with this program is good stakeholder collaboration. Working with the state's respite coalition as well as other consumer groups, stakeholder groups that really can help round out and fully developed a respite care program in a project.

You know, you should have letters of support from participating stakeholder organizations. You know, letters of support that really articulate what your collaborators and partners will be doing because those will be part of the application review process.

At the top of Page 11 I want to call everyone's attention to something that is very, very specific and very, very much a requirement.

The Lifespan Respite Act is very clear that every application for lifespan respite care funds must include a memorandum of agreement regarding the joint responsibility for the development of the program between the eligible state agency that's applying -- and I'm going to go through the eligibility requirements in a minute -- and the state - the public or private nonprofit statewide respite coalition or organization that you'll be working with.

The MOU required. And it's - and it will be - you'll see later it's a responsiveness criteria. If your application does not include this MOU between the state agency and the respite care coalition or organization the application will not move forward, it will not be reviewed. So please in your applications please be sure that you include this memorandum of agreement or memorandum of understanding.

We encourage you to keep them very broad and flexible. We know that over the course of the three-year project goals can shift, needs can shift. And so you want to have an MOU that does not lock you into certain things but is fluid enough that you got - that all of the parties to the MOU can pivot to ensure that the program continues to make progress and to achieve its goals and objectives.

So again I can't stress this enough because it just kills me to have to toss out an application because the MOU, memorandum of agreement, memorandum of understanding was not included. And we will not come back to you once the application is received to say, "Hey you forgot this." That's just because plenty of applicants do and there are some unfortunately who don't. So please include that MOU with your application at the time of submission.

From Page 11 to - on to 12 and Page 13 we talk about some additional application elements. You know, we do expect you to propose measurable outcomes. We give you some guidance on how to do that.

We also expect participation in technical assistance efforts. If you're awarded a grant under the Lifespan Respite Care Program there will be the expectation that you work closely with the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, the technical assistance center, as well as the ACL Program Officer, Lori Stalbaum to really help your project grow.

We do permit, at the bottom of Page 12, we do permit grants and subcontracts. So the state as the prime grantee in administering the requirements of the Lifespan Respite Care Program if you want to have subcontracts with entities in the state to do part of the project, that's absolutely fine. Subcontracts and sub grants are fine.

Please be sure that in the narrative you articulate what those sub grants or contracts will be used for how you will monitor them to make sure that they're living up to their end of the agreement that you have vis-a-vis that contract or sub grant. And how you're going to monitor for quality because in the end the prime grantee is the - is ultimately responsible for all of the activities under this grant.

At the top of Page 13 we talk about the awarding information. These are cooperative agreements. And what that means is that the grantee can expect substantial involvement over the course of the project with the Administration for Community Living Program Officer.

The estimated total funding for each grant is about $599,000 over the course of three years. We're looking at award ceilings of about $299,500 per year, that would be the ceiling. I don't know that we will have many that make that ceiling.

And we're also looking at an award floor of about $239,000. We're - and these are annual budgets so that means each year the grantee on continuation will receive the ceiling award that they applied for each year for three years.

We've increased - we're increasing - we're able to increase the amount of funds offered to this program. And we believe that by more robustly funding grantees that we can, you know, achieve more impactful results in the state.

We anticipate awarding up to two grants off of this particular funding opportunity announcement. How many we award from this announcement will depend on the number of awards that we make off of the other funding opportunity announcements that are - that's out there for program enhancement grants to states who are working on, you know, working for multiple years and want to continue to grow their programs.

We'll be making funding decisions funding only the highest scoring applications in each of those two funding opportunities until all the funds are used up. So we don't anticipate more than two awards being made for grants to new states or grants or returning states as we're calling it.

So Please be sure to read, on Page 13, how we're structuring the awards. And you'll - and then also on Page 14 and 15 please be sure that you read through and understand your obligations as the grantee under the cooperative agreement.

We've - we have a lot of experience in managing cooperative agreements. And it affords ACL, and the Program Officer, and the grantees a lot of really good opportunity to work closely together to ensure that the programs you develop really are adhering closely to the intent of the law and ACL's priority areas.

At the bottom of Page 15 we talk about eligible applicants for this. The Lifespan Respite Care Act actually dictates who is eligible for funding under this program, and it's a very limited pool of potential applicants.

They have to be state government agencies. And it's either the state agency that administers the Older Americans Act of 1965 as amended, which is typically known as the State Unit on Aging, or the state agency that administers the state's program under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, or another state agency that the governor designates to administer the program under the Lifespan Respite Care Act.

In some cases this has been the states disabilities agency. We've had a couple of state mental health agencies involved as grantees.

But it's really those - the state unit on aging, the state's Medicaid agency or another state agency that the Governor designates. If the application is submitted by an entity that is not one of those three entities the application will be screened out and not reviewed. And that is one of the response in this criteria that I'll go over in just a couple of minutes.

There is cost sharing requirements for this program. By statute grantees must put up 25% match. It can be cash or in kind sources.

We provide some guidance for how to calculate the match. And please be sure that you follow the directions when you're calculating your match in your application. We are not able to offer waivers to the match requirement, but there is plenty of opportunity in the in kind space to - with the use of volunteers and all of that to meet your match requirements.

We do discourage you from exceeding the minimum match requirement. If you propose more than 25% match, it's not going to earn you extra points in the review, but you are on the hook for that extra match.

So in these uncertain financial times and fiscal times we found it's often best to adhere to the minimum match requirements and not go over that because we will unfortunately have to hold you accountable for the match that you state you're going to put up.

At the bottom of Page 16 are the responsiveness criteria for your applications, and there's only two of them. The first one, I just mentioned, it's that the organization that applies is an eligible entity to apply.

And then the second is the inclusion of a memorandum of agreement between the state agency that applies and the state's respite coalition or organization. Those are the only two responsiveness criteria that we have.

If either of those are not met then your application is screened out, and it will not be considered for funding. So please be sure to pay attention to those.

The applications are also put through an administrative screening process at the top of page Seven 17. Please limit your narratives to no more than 30 pages.

If anything - any narrative that you submit over 30 pages will be cut off. This ensures that our - the grant reviewers are not reading, you know, 60, 70, 80 page applications.

We believe applicants can make their case for a project, tell their story and how the project is going to impact their state in 30 pages. So please do keep your project narratives to 30 pages. Note that the work plan, letters of commitment, keep project personnel resumes in (VDAY) are not counted as part of the project narrative, so you do have some leeway there.

At the - on Page 17 in Section 4 is a section that you all, especially if you're new to federal grants or haven't done one in a while, please be sure that you read Section 4 about obtaining your grant - your application package. All applications must be submitted through grants.gov.

The - we don't accept emailed applications, so you have to have an account on grants.gov. This section, beginning on Page 17 and going on for a couple of pages, talks about how - about registering on grants.gov. Registering for a SAMs number and everything that you have to do, you know, to make sure that you have the appropriate credentials to submit an application.

I would strongly suggest that if you're unsure of whether or not you're registered - you have a SAMs number or your registered on grants.gov please start that immediately. And work with the relevant folks in your agencies or organizations that can ensure that you guys are appropriately registered for grants.gov and SAM because we - and ACL cannot help you with grants.gov. That's not one of our systems.

So if you need technical assistance in submitting an application please contact grants.gov. And don't, please don't email Lori Stalbaum or myself as we can't help you. We don't have access to grants.gov in an administrative way. So please look closely at Page 17 and 18 and make sure that you complete all of the registrations that you need.

Page 19, we talk again about the letters of intent. Those are due on May the 16th. They're requested not required. They don't have to be anything formal it could be simply an email, a quick email to Lori to say hey we intend to apply or it can be something more formal if that's what your agency requires, it's up to you guys.

But we use these to help us figure out what our review process needs to be. How many reviewers we need and who we need to avoid inviting to be an application reviewer so that we don't set ourselves up for a conflict of interest at the last minute, so letters of intent are greatly, greatly appreciated.

At the bottom of Page 19, and going on for a couple of pages, is the requirements for the project narrative. Please read through that and make sure, because we've included some statutorily required elements that must be in the project narrative particularly in the problem statement, on Page 20 and the proposed Intervention on Page 21 and 22. Please read that and make sure that you understand, you know, what the narrative expectations are.

We go into some detail on Page 22 about outcomes and how to write measurable outcomes. And then on Page 23 we talk about, you know, how you should talk about your project management, the program evaluation, how the dissemination activities will occur and how you characterize your organizational capacity?

On Page 24 there are two sections, one on the budget narrative and one on the work plan. Those are two elements that are absolutely critical for including in your application.

In addition to the basic SF-424 budget that you submit as part of your application the budget narrative provides the grant - the application reviewers the details that they need to have in order to understand how you're going to spend the money and on what. So the work plan is equally as important.

For the budget narratives we want - we require a budget for each of the three years, a budget narrative for each of the three years, and then one comprehensive budget narrative covering all three years that shows how the totality of funds will be used.

The work plan, like I said, is just as important. We expect a work plan for each of the three project years with enough detail including tasks, and objectives, and who will be working on each of those tasks and objectives that the grant reviewers can understand how the project is going to unfold.

At the very end of your application package of the funding opportunity announcement are templates for budget narratives and work plans that you're welcome to use. You can adapt them if your agency doesn't have templates of its own for those then feel free to use the ones that ACL has included. Just make sure that, you know, if you do modify them that you include, at a minimum, all of the elements that we look for in a budget narrative and in a work plan.

Then I want to just point draw your attention to - we're going to jump down to Page 26. We - the due date for the applications, as I mentioned earlier, is June the 17 at 11:59 pm. And all applications have to be submitted via grants.gov.

The bottom of Page 27 please pay attention to fund - funding restrictions. The following activities are not fundable, construction or major rehab of buildings, basic research and continuation of existing projects without expansion or new and innovative approaches. So please make sure that you're not proposing activities in any of those areas.

And then on Page 28 we talk about the prohibition and general unallowability of meals being paid for with grant funds. Please make sure that you read and understand that.

At the bottom of Page 28, and going on for a couple of pages, is another section that you all want to pay really close attention to and this is the application review criteria. We lay out the exact criteria by which each of your applications will be reviewed by a panel, a third - by a panel of third party independent reviewers.

There - it's a series of yes or no questions covering five main categories project relevance and current need, approach, budget, project impact and organizational capacity. And then within each of those sections there's a series of yes and no questions.

It's been our experience that if when you submit an application before you do so if you can answer yes to each of the questions in the review criteria, meaning that you've included that and addressed that element in your application, that you probably have a fairly sound application. It doesn't guarantee that it's going to be funded, but you will have at least addressed each of the required application elements.

So spend some time getting to - familiar with the review criteria. These are the exact same review criteria that the independent reviewers will be using to score your applications. And that section concludes on Page 31.

On 32, we talk about the review and selection process which I touched on. We anticipate that the start date for these new projects will be around August the 1st.

Given the - where we are in the current project year we don't expect to get notices of award out much before middle to the end of July of this year with an anticipated project start date for this particular program for August 1 of 2022. And if you're successful, if your application is funded, you will receive an electronic notice of award.

And it will contain all of the terms and conditions that you need to understand and know about how the project will be managed reporting requirements and the like. The rest of the funding opportunity announcement is a lot of standard language.

Lori Stalbaum is the Program Officer of Record. She is off this week. She would be your contact if you have questions while you're preparing your applications. We can answer limited questions but today really is your opportunity to ask questions about the funding opportunity and your approach.

So with that I'm going to conclude my remarks, and we'll see if any of you have questions. So if you have a question feel free to unmute your line, introduce yourself and pose your question and I will do my best to answer it.

(Kara Ortega): Good afternoon. My name is (Kara Ortega). And I'm from the state of New Mexico. I wanted to know with this funding opportunity and the budget part is there going to be any required travel to the national office?

Greg Link: We don't require travel to ACLs national - to our offices here in DC. We do encourage you to, and you're permitted, to budget a portion of your funding to attend the national respite conference.

So you can do that because we believe that training and the opportunity for networking is an integral part of your program development activities, so you're welcome to do that. But we have never required grantees to come to DC for any reason.

And of course in person conferences, you know, we're looking forward to those starting up again. Again, no guarantee, you know, given COVID and the pandemic and all of that, but you can budget for travel to a national conference.

(Kara Ortega)**:** Thank you. Appreciate it.

Greg Link: Sure. Any other questions? Well this is encouraging, everybody understands and that's great. We will have a printed transcript of this call posted along with the funding opportunity announcement in about a week to ten days, so if you wanted to refer back to any of my comments you'll be able to use the transcript.

And like I said if you have questions in the interim we can answer them in a limited way, but we have to be careful that we don't provide unfair advantage if you're asking questions. So now is really the time to ask your questions in an open invitation forum like this. So I'll ask one more time are there any questions from prospective applicants?

Well hearing none I want to thank you all for your time. I wish you good luck as you prepare your applications. And we look forward to working with you if your applications are successful. So with that I will conclude the call and thank you very much.

END