

Pre Application Teleconference and Q & A:
**Program Announcement for the FY 2012 Lifespan Respite Care Program
Technical Assistance Resource Center**

Moderator: Greg Link
March 3, 2012
1:00 pm CT

“This transcript has been edited to ensure readability and clarity”

Greg Link: Thank you and good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the Fiscal Year 2012 Lifespan Respite Care Program Technical Assistance Resource Center Program Announcement. This is the pre-application teleconference for interested applicants.

The primary purpose of this call is to review the program announcement for the TA Resource Center and then to answer any questions that perspective applicants may have regarding the contents of the announcement, any of the requirements of the program or any technical questions associated with completing applications for federal funding.

My name is Greg Link and I am an Aging Services Program Specialist here at AOA.

I am the Program Officer for both the National Family Caregiver Support Program and the Lifespan Respite Care Programs.

At this point, I don't know who is on the call listening in. So I am going to speak as if there are new folks out there who are not familiar with the Lifespan Respite Care Program.

This call is scheduled to go for about an hour. We probably won't need that much time. As mentioned, the call is being recorded.

A transcript of this call, including the Q&A that we do at the end, will be posted on AOA's Web site along with the program announcement hopefully by this time next week, maybe sooner.

Just to give you a bit of an overview, I am going to do a very brief overview of the Lifespan Respite Care Program for folks who may be on the call without a lot of familiarity with the program.

Then I am going to actually walk through several sections of the program announcement itself to point out some key areas that applicants should focus on as they prepare their applications and following that I will open the lines for questions.

So, by way of background, as you may or may not know, Congress passed the Lifespan Respite Act back in 2006. In 2009, and since then, Congress has appropriated approximately \$2.5 million per year for AOA to implement the program at the state level. To date, 30 states have been funded with grants to begin building and expanding Lifespan Respite Care Programs in their states.

In 2009, AOA also funded a three year cooperative agreement with the Family Care Giver Alliance in San Francisco with a subcontract to the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center. Together they implemented a resource center to carry out the Resource Center activities that are

authorized in the Lifespan Respite Care Act. That project is due to end this fall.

After three years of technical assistance activities to the states who are funded to implement Lifespan Respite Care Programs, we know that the training and TA for the grantees as well as the field as a whole remains a critical necessity.

As you may or may not know, for fiscal year 2012 AOA has three separate funding opportunities out for grants to states. Through those opportunities we are looking to continue the momentum that we have been building over the past three years.

AOA is also looking for the state grantees to begin focusing more and more on performance measurement outcome development, data collection, things of that nature, that are associated with program development.

The TA Resource Center that we are looking to fund will be expected to address the technical assistance needs of the grantees also while supporting AOA and ongoing program implementation activities.

Hopefully, those of you who are on the call have a copy of the program announcement with you or have it open on your computer screens. Before opening up the lines for individual questions from those of you on the call, I want to take a few minutes and just walk through some parts of the program announcement.

This particular funding opportunity is classified as a cooperative agreement. While technically it is a grant, a cooperative agreement implies that the funder, AOA, will be substantially more involved in all the grantee activities over the life of the project.

I'll talk more about the particular elements of the cooperative agreement a bit later.

On Page 3 of the announcement, I want to just draw your attention to several key dates. The deadline for submitting applications is 11:59 pm on May the 21st of 2012. This deadline is set in stone. I would encourage you to submit before this date, if possible, as sometimes there can be problems or errors in submission on grants.gov. You want to have enough time to adequately address any errors in submission before the deadline.

Letters of intent are due on April 10, while this is an optional thing to do it really helps me know approximately how many applications I am going to be getting and can help me structure the grant review process more efficiently. I am running this competition along with the grants to states at the same time, there is very little overlap or very little time when their application processes aren't running together. It is critical for me to know how many grant reviewers I need to tap. The letters of intent help me to do that.

We anticipate sending out notices of award on or about July 25. It is a very rough estimate and it could be later or earlier depending on factors that are well outside of my control.

We anticipate also that the project start date will be around August 1. Again, this is a rough estimate. I doubt it is going to be an earlier start date than August 1, but it could push into September depending on how the review process goes, the number of applications that we receive and so forth.

Page 3 of the program announcement begins a summary overview. On Page 4, in the middle of the page, starts the actual funding opportunity description.

This section begins with a general overview of Lifespan Respite and a bit about its funding and implementation history. The last two paragraphs of this section, which are on Page 5, begin to lay out the direction that AOA is really looking to go with future TA Resource Center activities and key focus areas for the grantee.

Page 5, at the bottom, begins the discussion of the required activities and objectives for the TA Resource Center. I want to call your attention to the first paragraph in which we lay out the expectation that the TA Resource Center take a multi-faceted approach in the TA that you provide and that you propose as part of your application. We are looking for grantees to focus on three key areas. The first is practice. And by practice I mean, supporting implementation activities the grantees for Lifespan Respite Care Programs. This includes working with the grantees to support their work to implement programs. Also included in this area is the expectation that the grantee will work within the broader field of respite and in conjunction with the fields of caregiver support to help states more fully integrate the notion of Lifespan Respite in their continuum of respite care programs and supports.

The second key area that applicants for the TA Resource Center should focus on is performance measurement and data collection. This is a new area that we are focusing on for this particular TA Resource Center opportunity. It really reflects the direction of the AOA and indeed the department is moving with most of their programs.

Even though this is a small program, Congress and the Administration, and by Administration I mean the Office of Management and Budget, the Department and indeed our own Assistant Secretary are expecting that we are going to be able to demonstrate the Lifespan Respite Care program's impact and success. Data is becoming increasingly important. So one of the focus areas for the

grantee will be to work very closely with the AOA Program Officer -- that would be myself -- and the grantees to develop a performance measurement framework, outcome measures and data collection methodologies that can really begin to tell and demonstrate the effectiveness and the success of this program in meeting the respite care needs of a very broad population of individuals of all ages and disabilities.

The third focus area for this project is research. As with many initiatives currently under way in not only in the Department, but also government-wide, research is becoming an increasingly more essential underpinning of program efforts. We are looking for the TA Resource Center grantee that we fund to work with AOA and the field to identify, collect, synthesize, disseminate and even stimulate research in the respite arena.

For all three of these focus areas, applicants are expected to describe their approaches for ensuring they are met in the work that they propose. When you do this, be sure that you are including a description of your expertise in these areas. You are also being encouraged to consider multiple approaches and strategies for achieving the intended goals in each of these focus areas.

Page 7, at the top, talks about what AOA is expecting the grantee to bring to the table in terms of knowledge and expertise. There are a number of bulleted items there. Please be sure that you address the extent to which you, your organization, the stakeholder group or the collaboration that you bring together for this application and for this TA Resource Center addresses these criteria.

Just a quick note about sub grants or subcontracts, sub grants for specific activities are permissible. The Lifespan Respite Act does give that authority, However, you need to be very strategic and thorough in your explanation of

why sub grants or contracts are necessary. You are including your criteria for selecting a sub grantee or a contractor and what your approach will be for ensuring that sub grantees or contractors will complete tasks on time and in accordance with the terms and conditions of this cooperative agreement which we are going to touch on in just a couple of moments.

Page 7 at the bottom lays out the award information. As mentioned earlier, this is a cooperative agreement. It is going to be funded at a level of up to \$250,000 per year for three years. That is pending the availability of federal funds.

We know that we have our appropriation for Lifespan Respite for 2012. We have submitted our budget request for 2013. Hopefully, that will be successful. Prospective applicants need to understand that it's \$250,000 per year for three years, pending the availability of federal funds. AOA is only going to award one cooperative agreement under this announcement.

As I had mentioned a moment ago, as a cooperative agreement, the grantee can expect substantial involvement from the AOA Program Officer. I will be very much involved in the development of your approach for providing TA, in planning major TA activities, reviewing materials that you produce including drafts of materials and documents along the way and being very engaged throughout the work that you do over the course of three years.

My involvement as your Program Officer will start as we finalize the work plan that you submit with the application. That is generally done within 45 days of your Notice of Award. We will work very collaboratively on all of the tasks and work that you do.

Page 8, about 2/3 of the way down the page, lays out the terms of the cooperative agreement. Here I have spelled out for you the activities to be carried out by AOA, in the first set of bullets, followed by the key tasks and activities that the grantee will be expected to do.

Page 9 specifies that the cooperative agreement and the work plan can be modified during the course of the project with mutual agreement by both parties. AOA fully recognizes that as grantees begin their work over time shifting needs and priorities in their states or in the work that they are doing may necessitate the need to make modifications to the project's work plan. That is permissible, but each request to change a task or an objective on the work plan must be discussed with me before embarking on that.

Page 9 also lays out the eligibility information. This is an open competition for eligible domestic public or private not-for-profit entities. Page 9 also talks about the cost sharing or matching. The Lifespan Respite Care Act requires a 25% match cash or in kind from any recipient of funds under this program. There is no provision in the act to permit a waiver or a reduction in the match requirement, therefore none will be provided or offered. I really encourage applicants to consider the extent to which non-federal, in-kind, contributions can be brought to bear on your ability to meet the match requirements.

Because of the collaborative nature of this funding opportunity or at least the collaboration that we would be expecting to see and the expectation is for the involvement of outside stakeholders in a variety of areas, you have a potentially good source for in kind match.

Page 10, near the top, talks about responsiveness and screening criteria. I want to call your attention to these criteria and ask that you pay particular attention to both the responsiveness criteria and the screening criteria. Your

applications are going to go through two screenings here at AOA before ever being passed on to the review panels for final scoring.

I will be reviewing each application to determine that it meets the three responsiveness criteria that are specified here: demonstrated expertise in family care giving respite, training and TA expertise and the intent to perform all activities directly or via subcontract or grant. All three of these criteria must be demonstrated for applications to be forwarded on for review and scoring.

Simultaneously, our grants management office will be doing a technical screening of all the applications to ensure that each meets the technical requirements spelled out in that section. So for instance, was the application submitted on time? Are the required margins and font sizes there? Has the applicant adhered to the required maximum length for program for the narratives? Note that documents like the work plan, resumes, letters of support, and the budget justification are not considered part of the 20 page narrative length. The narrative does need to be limited to no more than 20 pages.

Pages 11 and 12 contain some routine, but really important, information about where to get application materials: how to register with grants.gov and how to submit applications through grants.gov. There's also information about how to obtain your DUNS number. As you look at pages 11 and 12, read them and take the steps necessary to make sure that you have your necessary DUNS number and also any passwords that you need for grants.gov refreshed or have them in place and you know they're working. Do that sooner rather than later.

In some cases it may take several days to get things in place, especially if you have not applied for a grants.gov access or a DUNS number before. What you

do not want to do is wait until the very last minute. So, even if you think you might be applying, I would encourage you to get all of this stuff done upfront so that you know you're ready to go when you have your entire application package ready to submit. Do not wait until the last minute to get access to grants.gov.

It's very important to note that neither I, nor anyone here at AOA, can assist you with any problems you have with grants.gov. Grants.gov is not an AOA computer system or a system that we have any control over administratively in terms of helping you work through technical issues.

If you have technical issues with grants.gov, call the 1-800 number that is provided on Page 11. Please don't call AOA or send me an email or leave a voicemail with the assumption that I'll be able to help you with grants.gov. Do not waste time doing that, contact to grants.gov directly.

Page 13 to 16 contain descriptions about each of the required sections of your application narrative and what they need to contain. Page 17, near the bottom, talks about funding restrictions. Please read this section. It is especially important because the section pertaining to the funding of meals is new. This is in response to a recent GAO report. Part of your work may include proposing conferences or meetings. You need to completely understand this section and adhere to it in your budget and your proposed activities.

Page 18 starts the application review information section. I have laid out here the exact criteria by which your application is going to be evaluated and scored. So, if after you complete your application and you review it before submitting it -- and you can answer yes to each question on these pages, you could be fairly certain that the application you are submitting has all of the required information that we are looking for.

Remember that the application narrative is the most important part of your application. It is the heart of your application and it is your one and only opportunity to describe to the reviewers what you're proposing and how you're going to accomplish your task. So please be sure that it is very clear, it is very descriptive, that it is concise and covers everything that you intend to do.

Reviewers, the folks who are reviewing your grant applications, will not be contacting you to get clarification on anything. And so you have to make sure that you clearly articulate the plan that you have and the program that you are laying out.

Page 21 talks just a little bit about the review and selection process. Basically, we will have panels of three reviewers and a moderator who review and score each application. They turn in their completed score sheets and recommendations for funding to me for processing.

I anticipate that the review process itself will take place during the first week or two of June. Once that is completed then the administrative and budget review is going to occur later in June.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the call, we anticipate sending a Notice of Award to the successful applicants sometime around July 25 or so for a start date of August 1st. Once the Notice of Award is sent with the start date, that start date is not negotiable. It is set in stone and that is when we then begin tracking your performance and progress.

The rest of the application, from Page 21 on to the end, contains all of the routine administrative information that you need to know along with templates

for completing your budget, budget narrative work plans and things of that nature.

That concludes my overview of the program announcement. At this time operator I'd like to open the lines for any questions that folks may have.

Greg Link: It doesn't look like we're going to have any questions. With that, I'd like to conclude this call and thank those of you who've listened in for your interest and look forward to receiving applications for this funding opportunity. Thank you so much.

END