

Pre Application Teleconference and Q & A:

**Program Announcement for the FY 2012 Lifespan Respite care Program
Competing Program Expansion Supplements**

**Moderator: Greg Link
March 23, 2012**

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

Greg Link: Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the teleconference to review the program announcement for the competing program expansion supplements for the 2012 lifespan respite care program. My goal on this call today is to provide those of you who are interested in applying for these Expansion funds with basic information about the funding opportunity. I want to walk through the program announcement because a couple of things have changed with AOA's program announcements and we've also refined a couple of areas for this year's expansion grant opportunity and I want to point those out to you so that you're fully aware of everything that we're looking for.

I'm Greg Link. I think I probably know most of you on the call so I'm glad you're here. The call will probably go for about an hour and it is being recorded. I will have a printed transcript of this call and the Q&A that we do at the end posted on AOA's Web site in the funding opportunity section.

The transcript from this call will be posted next to the program announcement for the expansion grant. So if you have any questions or want to look back on anything that was discussed today, you'll be able to do that.

By way of a little background, the Lifespan Respite Care Program was passed by Congress in 2006. Congress first funded the program in 2009 at a level of about \$2.5 million.

We've been working with approximately \$2.5 million each year for the past three years. This is our fourth year of implementation. To date we have funded 30 states with grants to begin building and expanding lifespan respite care programs.

In fiscal year 2011, AOA issued a funding opportunity for expansion grants to existing lifespan respite grantees. We're doing that again this year.

An important thing to note about these expansion supplements grants is that they do not extend or lengthen the timeframe of your grant. They are meant to supplement your existing budget and it does not extend the grant period. Whether you are a 2010 or a 2011 state, and you apply and should you be successful, your grant project will still end at the same time that it is scheduled to end.

This particular funding opportunity (program expansion supplement grants) is only open to the 2010 and 2011 grantees. The program announcement clearly spells out the states that are eligible. We are not going to know exactly how much money we have available for these expansion supplements until after we have processed the applications for the New States and for the Integration Grants opportunities that are available to the 2009 grantees.

I'll go over specific timelines in just a bit. What I wanted to do first is just turn your attention to Page 3 and talk about some of the key dates that are associated with this program announcement. Of course, today, March 23rd, is the information teleconference that we're doing right now.

Letters of Intent are due on April 2nd and just keep in mind that a letter of intent, if you should submit one, does not commit you to applying or actually completing an application. It is a tool for me to use in planning the grant review activities so that I know approximately how many applications I'm getting and I can then find and recruit the appropriate number of grant reviewers.

[Letters of Intent] are going to be particularly important this year for me. Because we have technically four separate grant opportunities under the lifespan respite care program, I'm going to need a larger number of reviewers. Your Letters of Intent will help me know how many applications I'm going to be getting and I can begin planning for that ahead of time.

You can email or fax your Letters of Intent. They can be a very quick email that says, "Hey Greg, we're going to apply." It does have to necessarily be on letterhead unless that's a state requirement. Then by all means, you're welcome to do that. You may email them to me at greg.link@aoa.hhs.gov or you can fax something to me if you wish. My fax number is 202-357-3549.

The next critical date for you to be aware of is the application deadline and that is 11:59 pm on Monday, May the 14th, 2012. Applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov. The due date is not negotiable. Any applications that are received after 11:59 pm on Monday, May the 14th will not be considered for funding.

I'll talk more about the specific application submission process in just a moment. The projected start date for the expansion funds is August 1st. This is an approximate date that funds will be available. The actual start date may be a little earlier or a little bit later depending on some logistical things here at

AOA with other grant management activities that we have going on at the time.

Next, I just want to take a couple of minutes and go through the program announcement for the expansion supplements. I want to call your attention to some of the things that I think are of greatest importance to you as you consider whether or not to apply for an expansion supplement, and to be aware of as you move ahead with applications.

On Page 3, note the funding opportunity number that is specific to the expansion supplements. Please make sure if you go to grants.gov and you search by the funding opportunity number, that you use this number – HHS-2012-AOA-LR-1206. That is the funding opportunity number specifically for the expansion supplements.

Page 4 of the program announcement starts the funding opportunity description. This is going to be a very competitive opportunity, the expansion supplements, and indeed, all of the funding opportunities we've made available for lifespan respite funds this year.

We are working with a very limited budget. Congress did not increase our funding. And we have states that are in various stages of program implementation and development and we want to try to make funds available to as many states as possible but we realize that there's not enough to go around. So we're only going to be funding the strongest applications in each area.

Note the last full paragraph on Page 4. This is going to be very, very competitive. Your applications will be evaluated on the degree to which you demonstrate the capacity to deliver services as well as the other required

elements of this program announcement. Especially the degree to which you demonstrate the core capacities and your achievement of the core capacities that are described on Pages 6 and 7.

Page 5 of the program announcement talks a little bit about some of the accomplishments that the current grantees have made during the life of their existing grants. This section also describes the status of federal lifespan respite grantees as a way to demonstrate to them some of the activities that they can do.

At the bottom of Page 5 begins the actual description of the required activities for how the funds are to be used. I want to encourage you, really urge you to be strategic in how you develop your proposals and the elements that you put in there.

The focus of the program expansion supplements grants is the provision of respite services. So here is your opportunity. You've been working on establishing infrastructures, building stakeholder groups, strengthening your respite care coalition here and developing mechanisms and databases that will make respite services more available to individuals. And, hopefully you know the gaps in respite services that exist in your state.

This is your opportunity to describe your plan for delivering respite services and maybe even test some new service delivery modalities for respite or maybe you've been wanting to expand into voucher programs or build up a different type of respite care program. This is your opportunity.

The Assistant Secretary for Aging has requested that to the extent possible, the respite services that you provide be delivered in accordance with known

proven models or best practices or in ways that research has shown to be of most benefit.

As you know, throughout the federal government, there is an increasing focus on use of evidence in delivering services that are funded through federal dollars and this program is no different. I know that this is a tall order. And, while it's not mandatory, the scoring for applications will be based on the extent to which you can show in your applications the intent to follow best or emerging practices or look at any available evidence to support a particular service delivery method in an informed way.

Page 6 at the top, talks about the emphasis that is being placed on respite service. You can propose to build on the other required and optional services also if you choose. But the focus is on respite.

I had mentioned core capacities briefly just a moment ago.

Pages 6 and 7 begin to introduce the concept of core capacities. So you've been working on your existing grants now for anywhere from about eight to 19 months or so. And in that time you've hopefully gained a knowledge and understanding of the respite landscape in your state and you've begun to develop systems for more effective service delivery.

In your applications, please be sure that you address each of the four capacities that are listed on Pages 6 and 7. Your applications are going to be evaluated in part on the extent to which you demonstrate capacity in each of these areas.

On Page 7, I want to call your attention to core capacity number three which says a system or an approach for tracking key data elements associated with

provision of respite services and the requirement that appears at the end of this section

This is new from last year's expansion funding opportunity. Beginning in fiscal year 2012, we're going to be placing a greater emphasis on data collection and performance measurement for this program. We're going to be working very closely with the expansion grantees in addition to all of the new grantees that we take on this year to develop and implement a standard approach for data collection and performance measurement.

Please be sure that you describe in your proposals your plans for how you will collect data, the type of data, things of that nature. I really want you to spend some time focusing on core capacity number three.

Also on Page 7, core capacity number four, it talks about the involvement of the ADRC and the respite coalition. That needs to be demonstrated. How those two entities will be involved in the expansion funds and in delivering respite. The lifespan respite statute requires that applications for these funds include this element.

I'm asking you to describe how both the ADRC and the coalitions are going to be involved. And remember, you must include the MOU between the state agency or the grantee, and the respite coalition or organization with your application.

This is a requirement of statute that the MOU be included in any application for lifespan funds. It can be the same MOU that you submitted with your pre-your original grant. So if nothing has changed and you don't want to revisit the terms of the MOU, just take the MOU from your first application and just stick it in here.

You must have the MOU in your application or your application will be rejected because of the statutory requirement that the MOU be included.

Pages 8 and 9 talk about sub grants and subcontracts and partnerships and participating in technical assistance. This is basically the same language that is in the program announcement that we currently have out for new states and the integration grants. You are permitted to do some of the work especially respite services provision that is called for in this program announcement via a sub grant or contract.

But you need to spell out your process for doing so and how you are going to fund and issue mini grants. Then describe the process you're going to use so that it is very clear in your proposals.

You also need to describe the stakeholder composition and their roles. Hopefully that's grown and evolved during the course of your original grant. It's going to be important to describe how your activities in this area will be brought to bear on how you move forward.

Page 9 begins the award information. I want to be very clear here that at this point, we don't know how much funding will be available for these expansion grants. It is all going to depend on the final number of states that we fund as new grants and with the integration grants or the funding that's available for the 2009 grantees whose projects are ending.

We won't know that until mid-June sometime. We're running all these competitions concurrently. Because of the amount of time it takes to hold the competition and process applications, we really couldn't wait until we

awarded the new grants and the integration grants before we opened up the expansion grant opportunity.

While I don't expect to have a million dollars available for expansion grants, we put the upper limit there as opposed to lower. We expect to fund as few as zero. If we should get enough fundable applications in the other two options and as many as eight or nine if we have enough money left over. So it's possible that we may not fund any expansion grants this year, or we may fund several and it's all going to depend on looking at all of the grant applications.

There's a 25% match requirement. It's required by statute. The Lifespan Respite Act does not give AOA the authority to waive or reduce the match requirement. So just keep in mind that match has to be non-federal and it can be both cash or in-kind as sources.

Page 10 is the standard eligibility information. The competition is limited to the 18 states who have active projects - basically the 2010 and the 2011 lifespan respite grantees. We've listed them there in Section 1 of the eligibility. Those are the states who are eligible to apply.

Page 11 talks about responsiveness and screening criteria. Each of your applications is going to be screened against the responsiveness criteria. So, are you an eligible agency? Have you included the MOU between the eligible agency and the respite coalition or organization? And, you're just not proposing passing through your funding [to another entity].

Page 11 begins some of the general administrative information. It talks about the administrative screening for the appropriate length for narratives, margins, things of that nature that we look for in all of our program announcements.

Just keep in mind that if your applications miss any of these technical or responsiveness criteria, they will not be passed on for review and they will not be funded.

Page 12 provides the guidance on where you get your application packages, contact information, how to get set up on grants.gov or to refresh or renew your grants.gov information. I believe your login IDs for grants.gov and your passwords have to be renewed annually.

If it's been some time since you've done that, you may want to go in sooner rather than later and make sure that you have your grants.gov access information, your DUNS number and all of that ready to go so that you're not scrambling at the very last minute when you're ready to submit your applications.

Just a couple of things on grants.gov. Start now if you haven't registered or you need to re-register or refresh your password. Don't wait until the due date. If you can at all have your applications ready to submit a day or two ahead of the due date, that would be great.

It just saves headaches at your end if the grants.gov screen freezes up or for whatever reason your applications don't go through, you'll have time to try again. If you have issues or problems with grants.gov, the phone number to call is in the program announcement on Page 12.

Grants.gov is not an AOA system. We do not have folks here at AOA who can help you with grants.gov. I can't help you with grants.gov either, so use the number that's there to call if you need assistance with it.

Page 14, again, the Letter of Intent and where to send it. Page 14 also begins discussing the project narrative and what you need to include.

Remember as with your original applications, the narrative is the heart of your application. It's where you are going to describe to the reviews how you are going to use these expansion funds, the process by which you will provide services or expand on activities that you're doing and the anticipated impact.

Please be sure that within the 20 page limit, you completely tell your story. Be planful and careful as you write your project narrative. As with all grant competitive applications, we're going to be using outside review panels and the narrative is your only opportunity to tell your story.

Reviewers are not going to be calling you for clarification or things like that. I want you to note the bullets that are on Page 15 under the problem statement section. And also on the proposed intervention section that straddles Pages 15 and 16, these elements that are called for in the lifespan statute. So please include them in your narrative.

Page 17 gives some additional required elements for your application. The templates that are to be used for your work plan, your budget narratives and so on. Pages 20, 21 and 22 describe the exact criteria by which your applications will be scored.

The scoring forms that the reviewers will be cut and pasted from these pages into review form scoring forms. The reviewers will be looking for each one of these questions to be answered somewhere in your narrative or in the application.

So if you've got your application complete, take the time to go through the scoring criteria and make sure that you can answer yes to each question and then you'll know that you have a complete application that's ready to go forward and that should be fairly competitive.

After the May 14th deadline, the grants office will compile your applications and we get them out to the reviewers hopefully within a day or two. The reviewers have typically ten to 14 days to score their applications and then we convene them for a conference call or a meeting to review the applications and they arrive at their scoring and funding recommendations.

Pages 23 through to the end of the application contain some routine administrative information and all of the attachments that you need for templates and forms and things like that as well as the examples for completing your applications.

That's the expansion grant program announcement. I'd like to go ahead and open the lines for questions if anybody has any questions.

Q&A Portion of the Call

Question: I had talked to you earlier on a call about what the states that got this money last year are doing with it because I'm not finding that information on the AOA Web site. That would be helpful to know: what the states from last year that got this money are doing with it.

Greg Link: Many of them are doing direct respite services or funding respite services. And that is the focus of the expansion supplement opportunity. So the focus has to be on gap filling respite services.

Question: Okay, and that's what I was curious about because I did read in an announcement where it talked about gaps and things like that. And, of course, our worry is the statewide [requirement]. You know, [state] is a big state. And to take that small amount of money and make it go statewide is tough so we thought, you know, if they're using voucher programs and how they're actually getting it out through the state, which would be helpful.

Greg Link: Yes, some are doing voucher programs.

Question: Hi, we have a question on Page 21, Item 3 which is the sustainability. It says the sustainability of the program. That's the whole lifespan program. With this money that we're getting and we're putting it towards respite, we do have sustainability plans but it might not be at that high of a level. Can you give us some good examples of sustainability in other states?

Greg Link: Well, because we haven't actually seen the outcomes yet from last year's expansions, it's kind of hard to speak to that. What we mean by sustainability is working to ensure that any activities that you start up with these funds can be continued once the federal funds are over. And so that comes down to being able to make choices for example, if you do provide services, are you going to have another mechanism for funding or are you building a system or an infrastructure that will live on well past the expenditure of federal funds.

Question: I have a couple of questions. One, I know this is primarily supposed to be for direct respite services but you mentioned there are other things that we could include like training, volunteer recruitment. Is there an optimal percentage of direct service- funding that should be spent on direct services?

Greg Link: We haven't provided that so it's really up to the state.

Question: Okay. I know we're supposed to be serving all ages and abilities. I'm wondering if it would be acceptable to focus either direct services funding or training surrounding specific perceived (gaps) within our state like, for instance, autism and Alzheimer's are two things that came up in preliminary discussions.

Greg Link: Yes, I think it's a good approach, if in your previous work on your initial grants, you've identified some gaps in training and, you know that there's a weakness in one area but not in another area that you can make that case. I think that's acceptable. But again, look at the entire program announcement and all of the required and optional services plus AOA's requirement that respite be the focus and determine the best approach for [your state].

Question: Great. You mentioned that funding can be spent expanding existing volunteer recruitment programs. I'm wondering if what you are considering existing volunteer recruitment programs. For instance, if we developed a plan for it but we haven't actually started volunteer recruitment yet, could we still?

Greg Link: You know, I can't say yes or no. It sounds reasonable to me. Because the recruitment and retention and training of volunteers is one of the requirements of the lifespan act, I would certainly see that as something that would be very viable.

Question: Okay. Then lastly I'm just wondering if you could quickly give some examples of some respite service models that would - that are being used or that you would - that you might have in mind already.

Greg Link: There are a number of respite delivery models. I can't recommend one over the other. There are voucher programs. There are volunteer programs. There are faith-based programs. There are respite cooperatives. There's a lot of

information about different types of respite service models on the ARCH respite Web site, the TA resource center for lifespan.

And I would encourage all of you as you begin thinking about how you are going to use these expansion funds to provide respite. What's the best way to do it and what are the models out there? The ARCH respite Webs site has a great deal of information on different respite models and programs and you may find a model that really fits well with your existing state infrastructure.

Question: You went over the core capacities and you specifically called out core capacity Number 3 which has to do with a new requirement. It isn't clear whether there's specific funding in this new pot if it comes through that we should be designating for that. So that's part of my question.

And then I wanted to ask if there's any further information you can provide in terms of that concept, in terms of what you're thinking about. So, for example, if our state is looking at how we might incorporate things we learn from this grant into our data collection, is that more what you're talking about or are you looking at new ways that we might be designing and implementing a standard approach for a performance measurement and data collection framework?

Greg Link: My answer to that would be I think it could be either, depending on what the state's needs are. We recognize that in the lifespan respite approach that there are some states who are very far along in this and, indeed, were very far along in lifespan respite program development before this program ever came on the scene and so may have infrastructures that are already in place that include data collection.

And others are just starting from scratch. The intent here for core capacity Number 3, is the requirement to demonstrate the cost benefit of the lifespan respite care program. There's a very small blurb in the legislation that says the GAO will do a cost and benefit study program.

The only way we can determine that is through data collection. But we're not telling you specifically what to collect or how to collect it. We're leaving that up to the states because we recognize the challenges inherent in this because it is across multiple programs and funding streams that differ from state to state. What we're going to be doing in the last part of that core capacity Number 3 is a bit more specific than it was last year because we're going to require the grantees to work with the TA provider to actually come up with some kind of a fairly standard uniform data collection methodology. A standard for the federal program but then allow each state to maybe have their own variations of it for their own needs and purposes.

Question: My other question I think is a little more concrete and it has to do with the Memorandum of Understanding which we do have as part of our overall lifespan respite grant. Can you just clarify, are you looking for us to update that if we do apply here? Is that something we should - are we required to do that or is that just something that we should do?

Greg Link: You're not required to but if you want to you can.

Question: We're just wondering to what extent can we repeat information from the previous application and to what extent would that be kind of held against us? With demographics and thing like that, obviously we would update it with any current, new information. But I was just wondering about that aspect of the application.

Greg Link: I really can't speak to that. I think you need to use your own judgment. What I look at overall is what have you learned in the year or two since your original grant and how can that information now be brought to bear and better explain what it is you know about your state and how you will bring that information and how you will use that information to inform how you use your expansion funds.

Question: We're wondering if it says in our RFP that services need to be provided statewide. I'm wondering if any kind of a regional rollout would be acceptable or pilot program.

Greg Link: Statewide is statewide.

Greg Link: Okay, well I think that probably is all of the questions. So I want to thank everyone for taking the time to listen in and to ask your questions. Good luck in your work in these applications. Remember Letters of Intent are really helpful to me as I determine how many grant reviewers I need.

It's always easier to have too many reviewers and say, "No, thank you," then at the last minute to scramble to try to find four new people with open schedules to conduct grant reviews. So Letters of Intent, again, they can be just very, very quick little emails to me. Nothing formal. It's just a heads up for me.

With that, I will thank you all. Have a great weekend and I'll be talking to you again in the future. Take care.

END