

Training and Technical Assistance NOFA Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is this program structured as a cooperative agreement?

Answer: Under a federal cooperative agreement, the outcomes are not always known at the onset of the project and the federal agency can have substantial involvement in determining those outcomes. Under this cooperative agreement, the grantee will work with the ASC to determine the outcomes, such as what specific materials will be developed. Those outcomes will be within the areas described in the NOFA that the ASC Board has approved for the project and the total amount available over the grant period.

2. Given the cooperative nature of this grant, if we identify outcomes that exceed the budget we submitted, will there be opportunities to adjust the budget?

Answer: There may be circumstances in which, together with the ASC staff, we will identify projects that will require additional resources. In that case, the ASC staff will go back to the Board for approval and amend the grant to add the needed additional funds.

3. What are the targets for the first year of the grant?

Answer: The targets for the first year are laid out in the application and include as the primary objective, a needs assessment of the 55 State Appraiser and AMC regulatory agencies to determine the kind of training programs they need. We have a general idea of the training programs, but we need those ideas validated with a robust needs assessment with solid interview techniques. We want to identify trainings that will lead to the highest participation by the field. Once the needed curriculum is identified, we intend for the grantee to develop that curriculum. Therefore, we also expect the application to describe how you will approach developing the curriculum.

4. Because we may not know what curriculum we will be developing, we may not know what staff and expertise we will need. How will the ASC evaluate our organizational capacity?

Answer: Given the timeframe for developing your proposal and the cooperative nature of the award, we do not expect you to have the staff on board. We will not penalize applicants if they have not identified specific staff and described their background and experience. Instead we will look

for a thorough description of your process to identify and hire the expertise you will need.

5. Are we required to hire a full-time program coordinator or could there be two part-time people?

Answer: We will not reject an application that does not identify a full-time project coordinator. The ASC's intent in specifying a full-time coordinator was to signal that this is not a part-time project that someone can do part-time in addition to their other duties. We need a project lead we can count on and that has the bandwidth and expertise to oversee a high-quality technical assistance and training program. It might be 75% of one person as the lead and manager and another 25% person for administrative responsibilities. We will leave it up to you to make those distinctions and describe roles and responsibilities of the positions to ensure we have someone in charge. Also, given that this position will not be working independently of the chosen grantee or the ASC staff, we think the roles and responsibilities of the project coordinator suggest the position should be an employee, not a contractor. However, you can suggest a contractor instead of an employee and we will review it.

6. The NOFA mentions partnerships, but it may also be difficult to determine the partnerships we need or get partnerships in place before the application deadline. How will the ASC evaluate the partnerships?

Answer: As with staff, we do not expect you to have partnerships in place. The ASC particularly encourages partnerships that together bring the range of complementary background, activities, experience, knowledge and systems to develop and conduct high quality training and technical assistance programs. However, they are not required. If you do plan partnerships, we will expect to see the roles and responsibilities of each one described in the application. You can identify such partners in your applications or describe a detailed process for identifying and selecting partners in the first year of the award.

7. What level of detail do you want to see in the application for the process of identifying and selecting partner organizations?

Answer: We would expect to see a timeline for identifying partners. When do you expect to have them identified and on board? You could include a set of bullet points about what expertise they will bring to the table that you do not have. For example, if you do not have evaluation expertise, but a local university agrees to partner with you and has particular evaluation experience related to training or curriculum development, you can name them and briefly describe the specific expertise. If you do not have partnerships already identified, we would expect to see a description of a

competitive process for selecting partners, following regulations that cover federal grants.

8. Should we budget for in-person training or virtual, given the current pandemic?

Answer: It would be prudent to budget for a combination of in-person and virtual training. You may decide depending on circumstances to budget for 50% in-person and 50% virtual. You will have flexibility to move funds within line items in the budget to accommodate changes. In terms of budgeting for travel, overall per-person estimates and averages are fine. For example, for a 3-day training that includes transportation, registration, lodging, etc., \$1,800 may be reasonable. Some per-person costs might be higher and some lower and we just want your best estimates and average. Again, you can move funds from other line items if needed.

9. Can you describe a little more about what you would expect to see in the application regarding the process for identifying subject matter experts and curriculum developers?

Answer: Because this is a federal grant, we should see a competitive process for identifying contractors. You should describe that process. For example, if you plan to contract with university staff, you should establish a competitive application process. You might want to do some market research to identify potential organizations that have the experts you need. You might decide you do not need another organization; you can work with individuals. Then you would describe how you would develop a position description for contractors or staff to meet the needs, including what background and experience they would need, what education level, etc. You might also describe what networks or agencies you might work with to find the best people. Also, keep in mind that costs of recruiting these experts can be included in the budget.

10. The instructions only allow 10 pages to provide what appears to be a lot of information about processes and background. We are concerned that we cannot fit all the information within 10 pages.

Answer: It is harder to write a tight, well-thought-out proposal in 10 pages, but that is what we are looking for. There are things that you could include as attachments that may not need to be in the narrative. For example, if you are hiring a position, the position description could be an attachment to your proposal. When describing your organization capacity, there may be documents you decide to attach instead of describing fully in the narrative, such as resumes for staff who will work on the project or examples of programs the organization has developed.

11. What is the line-spacing on the application narrative?

Answer: We did not specify the line-spacing in the NOFA. Therefore, while the ASC would prefer double-spaced, applicants can format as single or 1.5 line spacing.

12. Who owns the products and curriculum that will be developed under the grant?

Answer: All content and curriculum developed under this federal grant would be owned by the grantee. The ASC will retain a world-wide, royalty free, perpetual license to use the material for its target audience of State regulatory officials. This is standard federal grant arrangement. Nothing precludes you from selling or using the material as you would like. If the federal government pays for the development of the material, it expects to be able to use the material in the future.

13. Will we be required to conduct a Single Audit as described in 2 CFR?

Answer: Single audits as described in 2 CFR 200.500 are required if the grantee expends more than \$750,000 in federal funds during its fiscal year. If your agency has multiple grants from federal agencies that exceed \$750,000 you will be required to conduct a Single Audit. However, if the ASC grant is your only grant, your agency does not meet the threshold. The ASC will conduct audits of its grant fund, but we will not audit every grant every year.

14. Can we apply for more funds than what is listed as available for the first year?

Answer: You should only apply for the amount available for the first year as described in the NOFA. However, if you think there are additional activities that will strengthen the program, you may describe them in a separate section in your narrative. You should not include them on the SF424 Budget Form. You should include an overall budget estimate for the activities in the separate section in the narrative in which you describe the activities.

15. When do you expect to make decisions about which applicant is chosen?

Answer: The ASC has established a three-stage review process for these applications which will begin by November 20. The applications will be reviewed by a panel of outside experts in adult learning, then by policy managers within ASC. After that senior staff will review the results and the scores and rankings and prepare recommendations for the ASC board's final

decision. We may also contact applicants during the later stages of the process for clarification on the application and may also work with the winning applicant to make final adjustments to the activities or budget. We expect a final decision by mid-December and award of the grant soon after that.

16. Do we need to provide budgets for all three years of the program?

Answer: You will only provide a full budget for the first year. However, the SF424 budget form includes a section in which you can provide an estimated total for the second and third years. You aren't required to provide those estimates, but can do so if you wish.

17. Can we propose additional curriculum in be implemented in the first year of the award?

Answer: Generally, we will wait for the results of the needs assessment before beginning any training programs. However, if you have a course already developed or know of a compelling immediate need that would warrant offering a course, or courses in the first year you may propose it in your application and we will consider it in the application review.