Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Grant Competition Technical Assistance Call Transcript
June 16, 2015

Operator:
Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time your lines have been placed on listen only until we open for questions and answers. To ask a question you may press *1 on your touchtone phone. Please be advised, today's conference is being recorded, if you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time.   I would now like to turn the conference over to Miss Patti Stengel, please go ahead.

Patti Stengel:
Thank you very much. Thank you for joining us today. This is Patti Stengel with our Chief of Program Operation's Office here at the Corporation for National and Community Service. Joining me today here in the room at CNCS we have from our Office of General Counsel we have John Greenhaugh and Alicia Wilson. I also have with me Cynthia Dudzinski, from our Office of Grants Policy and Operations and joining us on the call we also have Stacy Bishop from our Office of Grants Management to help us answer questions.

This is our technical assistance call for the 2015 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service competition. We do have power point slides available on our competition website. You can find those at nationalservice.gov/mlknofa. If you don't happen to be sitting in front of your computer, you can always access those at a later time. I'll also be sharing a lot of information on the call, so there's no need to be following along at the same time the call is taking place.

So I'll move on to slide two at this time.

During this call I will provide a very brief overview of the Corporation for National and Community Service or (CNCS) to give you some context for this particular competition. Then I will review the highlights of the Notice of Funding to show you some of the resources available to you on the competition website, which is as I said nationalservice.gov/mlknofa and then at the end of the call I'll have time to answer any questions you might have at this time.

Now I'll move on to slide three. First, a brief overview of CNCS. The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. We accomplish this through our programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund. We also foster civic engagement through national days of service like September 11th and Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.   You can learn more about these programs by visiting our website: www.nationalservice.gov

Moving on to slide four now. I'll go over the highlights of the Notice of Funding on this particular call, but keep in mind these are only going to be the highlights, you do need to go to the Notice of Funding which is on the competition website under Notice of Funding Availability. Listening to this webinar is not a substitute for reading the entire Notice of Funding in detail as well as the grant application instructions, which are also on the competition website, as well as

the frequently asked questions document, and other technical assistance resources, which are all on the competition website.

On slide five now. This notice of funding was reopened to allow applicant to add pass-through entities. Pass0-through entities must select subrecipients on a competitive basis through a subgrant after they are selected for funding by CNCS. It is not required that an organization submit an application planning to apply acting as a pass through entity. They may apply planning to be the sole entity receiving funding from CNCS.

On slide six now. Applicants may also apply to this notice with partner organizations and a partnership plan. Partners must be named in the application at the time the application is submitted to CNCS. Additionally, the application should identify how the partnership is structured, and you'll find on pages 3 and 4 of the notice details about both pass through entities and partnership plans. If an applicant intends to provide funding for staffing to either partner organizations or as a pass through entity through subgrants National Service Criminal History Checks are required. I do encourage you to read in detail about the requirements for National Service Criminal History Checks. You can find more details about that on our website in the Knowledge Network portion of the website.

On slide seven now. A Notice of Intent to Apply is not required for this competition. If you previously submitted a Notice of Intent to Apply when this competition was originally open, there is not need to take further action by resubmitting one.

Applications are due no later than Thursday, June 25, at 5:00pm Eastern time.

Moving on to slide eight. On slide eight you'll see a list of the organizations that are eligible to apply for funds in this competition. Organizations that have been convicted of a federal crime or that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to apply. Previously receiving federal funding is not a prerequisite for submitting an application for this competition.
Those eligible include
- public or private nonprofit organizations
- Institutions of higher education
- Government entities within states or territories
- Local government
- Government-recognized veteran service organizations
- Labor organizations
- Partnerships and consortia and
- Indian tribes

Now on slide nine, keep in mind that the following eligibility note is included in the NOFA on page 4. Applicants should clearly demonstrate that they meet this eligibility requirement and this should be described in the application in the narratives and specifically in the geographic service area section of the application in eGrants which would be early on in the applicant information section of the application.

This eligibility criteria is also described in the Frequently Asked Questions document in question #5:

Applications awarded must have either:
• Multi-state, nationally focused: meaning projects in 10 or more states; or they must be
• Comprehensive regional: meaning projects in 10 or more locations involving multiple (meaning more than 1) states

Moving on to slide ten now. The following list of requirements apply to this competition. Please ensure that you consider these when determining whether to apply to this NOFA.

First, grants awarded will support activities that demonstrate opportunities to engage new and diverse groups.

Next, you'll need to identify and invest in community solutions, especially solutions that address improving economic opportunities.

These grants will leverage public-private partnerships.

Additionally, these grants will increase the impact of national service on community needs in communities served by CNCS-supported programs.

Additionally, these grants need to ensure that activities focus on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and provide opportunities to connect to service beyond the holiday. This means that the activities need to occur primarily on or very close to Martin Luther King Jr. day.

Activities need to reflect the life and teaching of Martin Luther King, Jr., and expand the impact of Martin Luther King Service Day activities from one year to the next and finally, activities need to provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people.

On slide twelve you'll see the priority considerations for this competition. For this year we're giving priority consideration to those applicants that have a disability inclusion plan, meaning that they're ensuring that people with disabilities are among those actually serving at their Martin Luther King Day of Service event. The disability inclusion plan should be clearly described in the selection criteria response.
Including this priority consideration does not necessarily guarantee funding for your application.

Slide thirteen now. CNCS prioritizes grant-making in programs addressing one or more of the six CNCS Focus Areas: which are Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families. You can review Appendix I for a brief description of each Focus Area and the key goal of capacity building. Applicants who intend to join with partner organizations or subgrantees must select partner organizations that focus on the Focus Areas.

On slide fourteen now. This competition does require the use of the two capacity building performance measures and they are G3-3.1 and G3-3.2, which are the Number of community volunteers recruited by CNCS – supported organizations or National service participants and the number of community volunteers managed by CNCS supported national service participants. And these are what you will find in the performance measure module when you go to submit your application in eGrants.

On slide fifteen now. Applicants also have the option of using outcome G3-3.3: which is number of organizations implementing three or more effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity building services provided by CNCS supported organizations or National Service participants. So you'll also find this as an option within the national performance measures module when you go to submit your application in eGrants, but again, this outcome is an optional one to use when you're submitting your application.

On slide sixteen now. Applicants should also develop performance measures in the CNCS focus areas to further describe their service activities for their proposed grant activities. It is expected that you'll report against these performance measure targets for your project if your application were awarded in this competition.
You can find more information about the CNCS performance measures at www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/home. That's /npm for National Performance Measures/Home and you'll also find that link on slide sixteen of the power point slides, which you'll find on the competition website.

Moving on to slide seventeen now. The funding amount that should be submitted for this competition is for a one year budget period. The project period for grants for this competition is two years. The amount awarded is for year one of the two year project period. Grants are eligible for continuation funding for year two as long as they demonstrate satisfactory performance and there are available congressional appropriations.

On slide eighteen now. The total amount available for this competition is approximately $750,000. CNCS will make awards between $50,000 and $300,000. The minimum an applicant should apply for is $50,000. And the maximum an applicant should apply for is $300,000.

Now on slide nineteen. All applications must be submitted through eGrants, which is CNCS's online grants submission system. We do recommend that you begin the process of submitting your application in eGrants early. Creating an eGrants account and beginning your application takes quite a while, so start this process well in advance of the deadline. We also recommend starting your application as a word processing document and then copying and pasting it into eGrants days in advance of the deadline, so start this process now.

The National Service Hotline is also available to answer any technical questions related to eGrants. Their hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00am-7:00pm Eastern Standard time.
The application page limits are 15 pages as they print from eGrants. So if you are in eGrants, there is a review and submit button on the final page of the eGrants application, you can check to see how long the printable version of your application is from that view. This 15 page limit does include the executive summary, project narratives, and the cover page or also called the

facesheet. It DOES NOT include the budget or national performance measures. So double check that printable version in eGrants prior to submitting so that you're sure you're within those page limits. Reviewers will stop reading applications after page 15.

Moving on to slide twenty. The application must include the required non-federal share. The required non-federal share is 70% of the total project budget. That match can be either cash and/or in-kind.

Applications must include a DUNS number as well as an Employer Identification Number. All applicant organizations must be registered with the Systems for Award Management, or SAM. I do encourage you to begin that registration process as soon as possible. Page 6 of the Notice has more information about that and further details about setting up that process.

Now on page twenty-one, you'll see a table of the selection criteria and weights from the Notice. Program Design is worth 60% and broken into the subcategories of goals and objectives, which is worth 35%; national performance measure outputs, which is worth 15%, and description of partner engagement process, which is worth 10%. Organizational Capability is worth 25% and is broken into the subcategories of ability to provide program oversight for 15% and ability to provide fiscal oversight for 10%.
Cost effectiveness and budget adequacy is worth 15% and broken into budget and program design for 10% and proposed source of match for 5%.
And you'll find all of this broken into the various selection criteria on pages 8 through 10 of the Notice with all of the selection criteria questions.

Now on slide twenty-two. The review and selection process includes several distinct stages. You'll see them on pages 9-11 of the Notice of Funding. First, CNCS staff will review all applications to determine compliance. This isn't a full read of the applications. Next panels of CNCS staff reviewers assess applications based on the selection criteria.
The results are then reviewed for fairness and consistency. Some applications may be selected for a quality control assessment.
In the risk assessment evaluation, CNCS evaluates the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds.
Then during clarification, applicants may be contacted requesting additional clarifying information to resolve questions and issues about their application.
Finally, the CEO selects the final portfolio based on the results of the review and selection process.
Following grant awards, each applicant receives a summary of feedback pertaining to their specific application.

Then slide twenty-three, there are a number of technical assistance resources, as I mentioned, available to you and they are listed in the Notice, as well as on the website. Any questions about this competition can be submitted by email to mlkgrants@cns.gov. The answers to submitted questions are added to the FAQ document which are posted publicly on the Notice. I do encourage you to submit questions early, rather than waiting until the competition deadline,

because it does take us awhile to respond to those, so don't wait until the last day to submit questions. Please submit those earlier rather than later.

Moving on to slide twenty-four, here you see a reminder, applications are due June 25 at 5:00 Eastern Time. And now operator, we'll go ahead and open the line for any questions.

Operator:
And at this time if you would like to ask a question, please press * 1 on your touchtone phone. You'll be prompted to record your name for proper registration. Your name is required to introduce your question. Once again, if you have a questions, please press * 1 and record your name clearly when prompted. One moment please.

And again, as a reminder if you have a question, please press *1 and record your name when prompted.

We have a question from Mary Beth. Your line is open.

Mary Beth:
Thank you. I just wanted a clarification on the guideline to have 10 or more locations in a multi-state project. How are you all defining locations? Is that different service sites? Is it different towns? What's the parameter of that?

Patti:
The parameters aren't defined other than what we have in the FAQ #5 on the website. So if you need me to, I can reiterate what that response is on the website. The definition is:

- Multi-state, nationally focused: which we define as projects in 10 or more states; or
- Comprehensive regional: which we define as projects in 10 or more locations involving (more than 1) state

So it's 10 or more states or projects in 10 or more locations involving more than one more state.

Mary Beth:
Ok. Thank you.

Operator:
Thank you and our next question comes from Christina. Your line is open.

Christina:
Our question is regarding in kind matching fund and we're wondering if we can use the time spent from the VISTA Leaders as in kind match. This isn't the actual VISTA volunteers, but the leaders that we have that do administrative support. They're not on site. They're at our admin offices.

Patti:

Sure. We're actually vetting that question through our general counsel office with our general counsel who is specific to VISTA issues so we'll have a public response for you hopefully in the near future.

Christina:
Ok, so maybe by noon or?

Patti:
I wish I could give you a more specific timeline. I've seen your question submitted to the inbox, so when the answer is posted to the FAQ document, I'll also send an email response directly to you.

Christina:
Fabulous. Thank you.

Operator:
Thank you and again as a reminder, if you have a question please press *1 and record your name when prompted.

We have a question from Sandra. Your line is open.

Sandra:
On the Focus Areas. Are we required to narrow down or can we allow our subgrantees to address any of the Focus Areas?

Patti:
In terms of Performance Measures, the requirements is two Capacity Building outputs and then to also describe activities using any of the other performance measures, so there's no other requirement in terms of selecting any of the other Focus Areas.

Sandra:
So if we want to keep it open to address any of the other Focus Areas, we can do that.

Patti:
Right, that's up to you as an applicant.

I'm sorry. Can you repeat that, we couldn't hear you.

Sandra:
Oh, we're done.

Operator:
Thank you and again it is *1 if you have a question. We have a question from Beth. Your line is open.

Beth:

Is there an upper limit to the amount that we can award as pass through grants?

Patti:
No. there is not.

Beth:
Thank you.

Operator:
Thank you and at this time we have no further questions.

Patti:
Alright well as a reminder, the application deadline is June 25 at 5:00 Eastern time. Do not delay if you have questions. I encourage you to utilize the national service hotline if you encounter any technical issues as the deadline approaches the MLKgrants@cns.gov inbox is not the best resource for addressing technical issues as they come up, that's where the national service hotline can help you in terms of getting your application submitted and resolving those eGrants issues that can be problematic on that last day.

Operator, any last questions that might have come up?

Operator:
We have no further questions.

Patti:
Well thank you all for joining us today and we look forward to reading your applications.

Operator:
That concludes today's conferences. Thanks very much for participating. You may disconnect your lines at this time.