



Cohort for May 2016 Application Deadline

Session 2 – Project Design and Organizational Capacity

April 7, 2016

Emily: Hi, good afternoon, this is Emily from the Assets for Independence Resource Center, thanks so much for joining today's call. Let's go ahead and get started. Okay, you may notice that I'm a different voice than the person who hosts the call. Anamita hosted it last week and my name is Emily Appelnewby. I've been with the AFI Resource Center for about five years now and before that I was an IDA practitioner with an AFI project in Washington D.C. And I was actually out on maternity leave, so now I'm helping Anamita out.

Female: Ah, an explanation.

Emily: Thanks so much. So I'm really excited to hear that there was a core group of folks on this call last week who are moving forward towards a May application and excited to answer more of your questions and see how we can help you, support you in putting together the strongest application as possible. So, you know, as I'm sure you experienced last week that, you know, we have the most robust conversation when it's interview, throwing our questions out there, then those of you who are experienced AFI Grantees or experienced with non-profit program management but kind of throwing your responses, and ideas and brainstorm out there so that we can kind of all learn together so I hope that we can do that.

We're probably going to have about 10 people on this call so if you need to, might want to put yourself on mute when you're not speaking but don't put us on hold. If you need to step away, you can always hang up and dial back in. This call is being recorded and the transcript will appear on the AFI Resource Center website so it's publicly available. So today's topic for conversation is a real weighty one, the product design and organizational capacity. So this is really getting down to, you know, the nuts and bolts of how are you going to design an IDA that is going to work for the target population that you were interrupted in serving and helping them build assets. You know, what asset goals you're going to help them work towards what match rate you're going to set, you know, how are you going to provide the education and other wrap around supports to help them be successful with their idea and then their asset purchase, and then what do you need to do in terms of organizational capacity pieces, like staffing? So I'm excited to dive right in but first I want to get an idea of who we have on the call today so I'm going to go down the list of folks that we had last time and then I'll ask and see if there's anybody new who was able to join us. Do we have anyone from Briar County? What about Catholic Charities, Oregon or Crawford-Sebastian CC?

Molly: Catholic Charities Oregon is here, this is Molly O'Donnell. I have others in the office with me listening in and also two other people, one in Cali and one in Collet.

Emily: Wonderful, thanks so much for being able to join and I look forward to hearing about your project design. What about someone from, [inaudible], or Foot Hills United Way?

Rosemary: I'm from Foot Hills United Way. This is Rosemary Thompson.

Emily: Thanks Rosemary, I think I recognize your name so glad to have you on the call with us.

Rosemary: Yes, thank you.

Emily: What about someone from Virginia Microenterprise Network or the Indiana Housing and Community Development project? Okay, anyone from the Iowa Credit Union Foundation or Masa CAN? Is there anyone from Midlands to Latino CDC or...?

Male: No.

Emily: Oh, great.

Male: [inaudible] my CDC [overlap]

Emily: Um hum, okay.

Male: Thank you [overlap].

Emily: Thank you. Is there anyone from Mississippi State University or InvestWise?

John: This is John Daniels from Mississippi State University.

Emily: Is there anyone from Olive Hill CEDC or Patterson Alliance? Okay, is there anyone from the Salvation Army in Boone Fork.

Amy: Yes, this is Amy McGovern.

Emily: Hi, Amy, thanks for joining, okay, is there anyone from an organization that I didn't call out? Okay, great, thanks so much. So it looks like we have most people, it looks like we have about three people who are returning grantees and then we have a couple who are putting together their first project. So, let's see, for those of you who maybe, let's hear from the people that are putting together their first projects, applying for the first time. Do you have questions about how you need to design your project or do you have any questions you want to start us off with?

John: This is John Daniels at Mississippi State University. We were curious as to what you considered the type of, you know, manpower needed to satisfy the requirements, it's never full time equivalence, it may depend on what type of AFI program that we have we're, of course, targeting, the asset we're targeting is education. So is there a good way for us as a first time applicant to determine how many man hours we would need to allot for?

Emily: So there is no, there's nothing specified in the funding opportunity announcement about the level of staffing that you need to have. But, I think, that one thing to think about is probably that's it's going to be a combination of time from people at different roles within the organization and at different levels. When you think especially about the requirements around a program oversight that indicates that, you know, while there may be a program manager level person who oversees the day to day

implementation of the project. Probably there's going to be some need for oversight from like a CEO or executive director, or a CFO.

And then also in terms of, you know, making the financial aspect of the project work. There's probably going to be a need for, like I said, an insight from someone like the CFO or someone in the finance office. But, no, there's nothing in the FOA but we do have some information from the last report to Congress about the average, I think, it's the information's about the number of people, number of FTE's required for operating the program but it's based on, you know, the smallest programs. It's less than one FTE and then just the program gets larger. They, you know, goes up to like 1.5 FTE and goes up from there.

John: What was the national average?

Emily: It's been awhile since I looked at it so I'm going to need to follow-up with you. I'm going to need to pull that information and follow-up with the group with that information.

John: But typically is maybe .5 to 1.5, somewhere in that range?

Emily: Yes, definitely, that feels right to me.

John: Okay, I just, you know, for example, we were wondering is there an average for, like, say that manager position or the person you say in finance. Is it hard to say, you know, I mean, what's a good range of per person kind of time allotment to get the program up and, you know, to maintain it.

Emily: Um hum. Well, that's not information that, I think, that we collect about how the grantees currently collect about all the grantees are operating their program. But I do hear from many applicants that the program managers are not, you know, it's not one-person full time on an AFI project. But let's turn it around to some of the existing projects that we have on the call so Salvation Army and Foot Hills. What were your experiences, what's your current staffing on your IDA project and then what was it like during the wrap up phases and when you got started?

Amy: This is Amy from the Salvation Army. I was actually not here when they did the initial grant. I hadn't been hired yet but when I was hired it was probably half of my job. So probably about, you know, considered a half an employee and this time when we put the proposal together. I'm going to be pretty much the one running it as well as I have a part time co-worker. I don't know if that answers the question.

Emily: Thanks so much and Amy is it going to be your whole role or are you going to be on other projects and programs as well?

Amy: I'll also be on other projects and programs. One of the programs that we work with is to help clients reach self-sufficiency. And, so we're hoping to get the AFI to be sort of the, one of the main pieces to that program.

Emily: Right, that's what we hear from a lot of other organizations about how they have an AFI IDA program that does help the other work that they're doing and, so it's leveraging the time of staff at multiple levels. Are you putting time in your proposal budget for your executive director, or financial officer or anything like that?

Amy: Yes we are. We have a bookkeeper that will also be listed.

Emily: That makes a lot of sense, okay.

DAVID: [overlap]

Emily: Rosemary, oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

DAVID: For your financial, for your bookkeeper what FTE equivalent did you consider for that position?

Amy: I have to look at our proposal that we're putting together. In our proposal we listed, of course, the majors who are our commanding officers, they're our administrators. And then our bookkeeper and our PR program fund development person, they sort of go hand in hand with having a piece of it. But then I will actually be the program coordinator and my part time social service case manager will also be helping out.

Molly: This is Molly from Catholic Charity so are you requesting one FTE or is it 1.5 total in your project proposal?

Emily: Is that the [overlap 0:18:26.0-British] Amy? I'm sorry, remind me again, FTE.

Molly: I just wanted to ask if you were proposing one FTE total or 1.5?

Amy? What is FTE, what does that stand for?

Molly: Full Time Equivalent, one full time employment.

Amy: Okay, my recollection, we are not asking for a full time employee for this.

Emily: So I was can, I actually was able to pull up the report to Congress and the overall average was 1.15 FTE. And that was among the 530 programs responding but it varies significantly in terms of the number of favor, account holders that they had. So, you know for programs that were under 25 account holders it was .5 FTE and for programs that were 75 to 150 it was more, like I said, 1.5.

Amy: Yeah, this is Amy at the Salvation Army again and I do see in our proposal we just put 1 and that's me.

Molly: So maybe this question is for the help desk. This is Molly, again, at Catholic Charities. So if we were to propose that we have the project manager or, excuse me, the program director, and then an IDA specialist and accounting staff that 1.15 that would seem like a reasonable staffing expectation.

Emily: And how many savers are you targeting?

Molly: 42.5

Emily: Okay.

Molly: I understand the average [overlap 0:20:46.0]

Emily: Right.

Molly: After savers is that it's considered 50 after you save per 1 FTE.

Emily: Okay, where did you get that information, is that just from the IDA field in general?

Molly: Yeah, I'm not exactly, I can't remember exactly where that's, it was from the report from Congress, I believe.

Emily: Oh, okay.

Molly: That's where it originated.

Emily: Okay, that would be the source that I would look at also. Yeah, I think, that in terms of, I can't say for sure that a reviewer would say that, that is the right level of staffing. I think it would depend on a lot in terms of what services are being offered. You know in-house by your organization versus what services? And, you know, support systems are being offered by partners but then, so as long as you have those activities, whatever you're saying you'll do in-house. A plan for covering those, plus a plan for covering project management and oversight then that seems reasonable.

Molly: Okay, thank you.

Emily: Are there any projects that have questions, and applicants who have questions about how to define the target population that they want to work with? What's allowable and maybe how narrowly versus how broadly to talk about it?

Amy: I just had a question, this is Amy at Williamsburg again. In our last AFI grant when we ran it before the assets that we targeted were first time business, home and education but there was also one that was a transfer to a dependent IDA.

Emily: Um hum.

Amy: And we actually never use that. Do we still need to keep that in our proposal this time, is that part of the AFI?

Emily: That is an allowable use of AFI IDA funds, a way to use it, but it's definitely not required. The project does not have to offer all three or even the transfer use and offer any combination of MU's like...

Amy: Okay, so if we decide not to use that do we need to put that in the proposal?

Emily: No just by not referencing it.

Amy: Okay.

Emily: It'll be understood.

Amy: Okay.

Emily: Yeah.

Molly: Okay, this is Molly again from Catholic Charities. This is kind of about the AFI saver, a couple questions. If we're working with the immigrant population can we work with ITIN number?

Emily: Yes, my understanding is, yes, it's not a restriction from the AFI program but you'll also want to coordinate with your financial institution and make sure that they can take an ITIN for the type of product that they want to use for your IDA's.

Molly: Got it, okay, thank you, and then the other follow-up question is when working with a married couple that they've saved for a home. If the husband is working but the wife is not can the IDA people [inaudible] name?

Emily: No the individual account holder has to have a source of earned income to make the deposit from.

Molly: Okay, and then a follow-up to that as far as the social security and disability cannot be considered earned income?

Emily: No, I think, the line is if they are, I think, if it's taxable, and, so it needs to be a, you know, a wage that you can report on your income.

Molly: So like alimony could be considered earned income because you pay taxes on it. Right?

Emily: That's probably one of those gray areas where you would have to, you would leave it up to your discretion about whether that fits the spirit of the earned income requirements.

Molly: Okay, thank you.

Emily: No problem.

Molly: Sort of as a follow-up to those questions, if you have a couple are they each allowed to have an IDA or is it just per household?

Emily: Yeah, so the way that the legislation is written it talks about a maximum of what the individual can receive Federal Assistance from AFI and a maximum that the household can receive. And, so it's \$2,000 dollars for the individual and \$4,000 dollars per household. And then, of course, that Federal system's matched with your non-Federal cash contributions. So, you know, \$2,000 for an individual, \$2,000 Federal plus \$2,000 not Federal means they would receive \$4,000 total.

So it's the same thing for the household so the household could not receive more than \$4,000 dollars from the AFI program. So you could have the husband receiving \$2,000 in Federal funds but through their AFI IDA and the wife receiving \$2,000 in Federal funds from their AFI IDA.

Molly: Okay, great.

MICHELLE: Hi, this is Michelle from MidAmerican Partnership, I do have a question about the household and just where you just mentioned about. So if they were not husband and wife but siblings but that's high to the same household as well?

Emily: Let's see, so, I think, I'm trying to think of how we define household and, I think, that we have, it has been operationally defined as people who file their income taxes together. So that would lead into the question, you know, are the brother and sister filing their income taxes jointly?

MICHELLE: Oh, okay, thanks.

Emily: And if they're not then, I guess, they could possibly be considered as two separate households entirely.

MICHELLE: Okay, sounds good.

Emily: I know what kind of conversation because we do have an IDA, we also fund from the office of refugee [inaudible 0:28:10.3] and it just come up, you know, a few times to us in determining that and, so...

MICHELLE: Definitely, I can see how that would happen for sure.

Emily: Yep.

Molly: So this is Molly again from Catholic Charities I have a follow-up to that question about the refugees...

Emily: Yeah.

Molly: Is it possible to receive AFI funding and the refugee AFI funding at the same time?

Emily: Yeah, definitely, one organization can receive it and an individual could participate in both but you couldn't use the refugee IDA funds as the non-Federal cash commitment for [inaudible 0:28:51.1]

Molly: Oh, that, okay, how about they could save for a refugee IDA and an AFI IDA for the same time for the same asset?

Emily: Yeah, well, I should say that there's no regulation against that on the AFI side but you might want to check with ORR on their side.

Molly: Okay, thank you.

Emily: Yeah.

Rosemary: This is Rosemary from Foot Hills and I wanted to just mention, I think, there's a maximum permitted is per grant if that's helpful at all to anyone.

Emily: Yeah, thank you for bringing that up, that's certainly true. So if you're going to, you know, have two concurrent AFI's, yeah, I think, where that plays out is you're going to have two concurrent AFI grants. You know, theoretically you could have an individual saving in an IDA under your first grant and, at the same time, saving in a second IDA under your second grant and they could use the combined funds for their asset purchase.

And we actually we see that happening with the Universities in Arizona who are doing that kind of or they've applied for multiple AFI grants and, so students are opening up new IDA's every school year and kind of reaching their savings goal for each IDA is what they see as a savings goal for the year and then they're stacking them and using them that way. I wanted to loop back to somebody, I think, maybe was it Molly who said that your, the number of proposed participants you have is something like 42.5?

Molly: Yes, yes it was me.

Emily: Okay, yeah, and, so obviously it was a number like a non-complete number like 42.5. You're expecting some degree of attrition probably out of your program or maybe somebody not, you know, how do you see that .5 working out? Is that somebody not using the full amount for their purchase?

Molly: Yeah, it's the last person that signed up their self. No, it's based on the total request to AFI that we're making, and the match that we have, and divide it out really, basically by category and the match

amount. So it works out to 42.5 so how would I see that working out? I would say that, again, the last person to sign up basically would get that smaller match but then when the new, we're going to apply again for AFI. Then new funding came in then we would be able to increase that amount hopefully.

Emily: Okay, I mean, I think, another way that it could play out is that you would have individuals that would not end up using the full amount of the match that you're offering them.

Molly: Fair, that's true.

Emily: And just kind of overtime, collectively, it kind of just evens out to the amount that you're looking to spend because, you know, there might be some issue with offering somebody less than you've offered other people. But, on the other hand, you could say it as, "Well, if you want to get in now, you know, this is your opportunity but you'll have to take these, the program under these designs."

Molly: Right?

Emily: How are folks planning to address the issue of retention, and attrition, and replacing people who have left the program in their application. Or maybe I should start by asking some maybe some current grantees to talk about, the attrition they see if you have any way to quantify the rate of attrition. But also what are some signal that you see among people who might leave the program and how if you, is there any way that you've revised your program over the years to make sure that people don't leave.

Amy: This is Amy with the Salvation Army again. One of the things we did with our former AFI grant was towards the end of the program as sort of an incentive for the small business and education we did change the match rate for people so that, you know, they had to basically put in less to receive the match sort of as an incentive to get some of our clients just beyond that hurdle.

Emily: Okay, so what is it that, so is it the match rate that changed or the required minimum like monthly or quarterly deposits got smaller?

Molly: No we actually submitted to have the match rate changed just for the two or the three goals.

Emily: Okay, and, so, okay...

Molly: So it went from a 2:1 match to a 3:1 match.

Emily: Okay, and was that based on the year of your project or is that based on them after being enrolled for X number of months?

Molly: No it was based on the project coming close to an end so it was like our last year in a project to get people to be able to reach their goal quicker.

Emily: Okay, yeah, yeah, to make sure that the money got spent and to encourage people to save more and...

Molly: Right.

Emily: And follow through.

Rosemary: This is Rosemary and our program sometimes people have a challenge actually making the home purchase. They think they're on the right track but they just don't have enough resources. So we make sure to wait for them to working a little bit more with the home ownership counselor or make sure that they're aware of all the other down payment assistance programs in the community so that they compare what they're saving with AFI with another resource to make that home purchase possible.

Emily: Okay, so other sources of down payment assistance and what have you found is available in your area?

Rosemary: Our Realtors Association, our State Relators Association has a very nice tool that compiles all of those resources together so that in addition to, we maintain a blog. And, so I have written a blog about the different resources in the community depending on the city that people live in may have a city of affordable housing program as well. So often they pair that or they work with habitat for humanity as well so there are a number of different options depending on what they want to do. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't and, so we do try to be lenient with people and sometimes give them an extension on their time in the program.

Emily: I see, and, so are there any new kind of factors that you're being able to identify about who tends to be successful in the project versus who tends to be less successful?

Rosemary: I think it really depends on each individual, of course, it comes back to maybe other additional resources from people are saving as additional savings beyond their IDA, which is helpful. We're in a pretty difficult market right now so some people thought that they would be in a good position to purchase or purchase not. And we encourage people to come back into the program if this is not the right time for them but we do anticipate when they should be using their funds and connecting with them along the way.

Emily: Yeah, that makes sense, it definitely resonates with my experience with the IDA program that I ran a couple of years ago in terms of if people had emergency savings or, you know, a social network to rely on, if they had economic hardships. It meant that they were most likely to take money, to me, to withdrawal money from their IDA as an emergency withdrawal or shut down their IDA completely to help take care of those road bumps. So that's definitely something to think about when you're having the conversation about starting the IDA is talking with people also about where they have those financial cushions to fall back on that wouldn't be their IDA.

I guess, another thing that I noticed from my time from the IDA program that I ran was that the people who seem to be more successful were maybe the people who had the asset goal, first and foremost, in their mind and it was less about just wanting to get the match and the, you know, free money. Those people who signed up just because they knew that they could get the matching funds but didn't have a specific goal in mind kind of weren't as targeted and focused. Whereas the people who know I wanted to buy a house, it's in my goal ever since I had my daughter. You know, those people who are really motivated I thought tended to be more successful.

MICHELLE: Hi everyone, this is Michelle, again, I was just wondering for those who have worked with, I guess, like participants are helpful, I'm sorry, innovational in education and business. I often find that, I think, for us and our IDA, and we work with our refugee immigrant populations who've been here 5 years or less. And, I think, for them their most important asset to reach is a car and then second would

be house. But participants, and also education, have always been a challenge for us so are there any kind of like, you know, methods or advice, you know in retaining or recruiting? You know, participants in education that maybe it's because it might be different for AFI because, since it's not a – the requirements are slightly different from ORR so I would just like to hear from others in terms of that.

Male: [Inaudible] your program and we have a school sign pretty soon dedicated to trained businesses but we use a lot of resources from the community. For example, we reward our Commander in Chief then we [inaudible] center. We've play only University and the legal [inaudible] accountants, CPA's, people from the community and there's the called the most important thing is this partner, she's all we have. Is one person working with [inaudible] but you think the resources or the community and [inaudible] support a lot, we finance here, a little vacation, I mean, whatever sources.

Emily: Now, Michelle help me understand your question – is it specifically about retention in the context of small business savers in particular?

MICHELLE: Yes, I would say they could swap the [inaudible] and then also in education as well.

Emily: I can't see that I [overlap] know of any resources about retention that are specific to saving those two asset goals. But I do know that there are resources and webinars, with shared experience from current grantees about how to put together a successful small business IDA and education IDA program. So, you know, in theory if they're as well designed as possible for those specific asset goals maybe the retention rate would increase so if you look on our website idaresources.acf.hhs.gov. One of the boxes at the middle is called, I think, it's AFI Grantee Tool Kit, and then there's a section called IDA's for specific assets and populations. And that's where there are sections specifically with information about business IDA's and education IDA's definitely.

MICHELLE: Oh, okay, yeah, thank you.

Emily: You need a source to think about putting together a strong program.

MECHELLE: Okay, sure, thank you.

Emily: Hi, did someone just join the call?

ROB: Yes, it's Rob [inaudible] I'm in Lakeland.

Emily: Okay great, thanks so much for calling in.

ROB: You bet, are we having trouble today?

Emily: No, I'm sorry, were you intending to join the Assets for Independence Resource Center call?

ROB: Yes.

Emily: Okay, great, okay, yeah, we're in the middle of the conversation.

ROB: Sorry, pardon me.

Emily: That's okay, go. No, so we're having a great conversation, we've been talking so far a lot about project design and staffing. So I actually did want to circle back on the project, the organizational capacity side of things and see if there were any questions that people have there so it's not exactly

looking at all the pieces that the FOA, the funding opportunity announcement – asked to be included in the work plan so they talk about things like a data management system, and periodic internal reviews about project implementation, and partnership, management and oversight. Do people have any questions about all those, all the pieces that have to be included in the work plan about how you'll functionally carry out the IDA program?

John: This is John Daniels from Mississippi University again, I was curious as to, do most people use their manager type position for data management purposes, or do they consult out with someone else in the organization or another organization, and, if so, how many, what FTE equivalent would you assign to that capacity?

Emily: I don't think that we have any information on the National level about the burden of data collection. So, I think, that we'll probably have to go with a couple anecdotal answers here. My experience with the IDA program that I was supporting was that data collection wasn't just an ongoing part of operating the program. So basically anytime I talked with a client I had the screen open – that was our CRM that was based in salesforce. You know, I had it open and I was, you know, I was taking notes about any changes that they've told me about in their address, or current, or their situation or anything like that.

But we definitely did use our, you know, our front office staff, the administrative people to do the data entry. To get information from peoples paper applications into our computer system on the initial side and then at the end of the year it would be by myself for the program associate working most directly with the IDA program who pulled the data for doing the annual data reports. What about, can we hear from Amy or, sorry, Rosemary about how they handled data collection?

Amy: This is Amy from Lyon Support when we had to [inaudible] before we used the AFI, I think, it was AFI squared computer database but I [overlap]...

Emily: Yeah, unfortunately, that product is not being offered anymore.

Amy: Yeah, so that actually ended like shortly before our grant ended so we didn't, other than using that, we didn't create anything or find anything since then. That was actually a question I had of what is being used?

Rosemary: This is Rosemary, our program is a partnership with the county here and, so we have a shared database that we have been using. And, so we're able to divide the responsibilities of that data entry between myself and my co-worker. So we both have different aspects of that data entry and I also work with the volunteers here so I have someone that's dedicated to helping me put that information into my database.

Emily: That sounds like a great use of a volunteer to make that process even lower cost for the organization.

Rosemary: It is, we do have some turnover with volunteers but if you put in that time up front it can be helpful over the long run at least.

Emily: And, I, just like [inaudible 0:49:50.3] how did you come about your database and what information you collect and what you put in?

Rosemary: Is that for me?

Emily: Sure.

Rosemary: Oh, okay, well, like I said, the database was not selected by our organization it was something that the county was using. I'm not only within the program that we work with so it was something that was already selected and used by a number of organizations. So it didn't always have exactly the, you know, the perfect solution to capture all the information but it has worked for us. And the information that we've put in is basic information from our application, demographic information, and the savings amount on a monthly basis. And then we also have another Excel that we're able to maintain to use as well as the database, and then we also track any expenses, so purchases and withdrawals from the program. T

Emily: Thanks so much for sharing that Rosemary, yeah, so, I think, some key pieces about the data management system. The key functions that need to be there are how you determined that the participant was eligible – so you need people to capture that information in there and you're, "Like household income, and family household size so you can always be able to refer to that information. You need to be able to track the completion of program requirements. And, so, you know, if you're going to have a financial education as a required component you need to be able to track in theirs was completed, that kind of thing.

And then, like she was mentioning, you need some way to be able to track their banking activity. So their deposits and then their withdrawals and then, you know, the interest that's earned within their account and kind of reconciliation that. So there are some, what we see, there are a couple private software products that people are using – they seem pretty happy with them. And then a lot of people are doing what Rosemary said about kind of said using a combination of software of database tools and an excel tracking sheet to kind of, you know, to put together a combination that works for their project, which would obviously be a lower cost solution and they'll probably not quite be as tailored.

So, again, I want to point you to some information on our website, IDAresources.acf.hhs.gov, one of the squares is called data management, and one of the sections is resources to choose a data management system. And, so there's a matrix about the different data management system options that are out there and different price points to help you make this decision about which one you want to invest in. And, so, you know, it can be anything from an excel spreadsheet to, you know, a much more tailored and customized solution.

Rosemary: And if I can just ask, you know, in our proposal, I think, we can have, I think, it's around 15% for administrative costs. Can that count if the data leads to that?

Emily: Yeah, so the cost, so one of the allowable uses, so not less than 2% of the AFI grant fund, so that's the Federal portion of your grant shall be used for the collection of data for AFI's requires you to submit and, so, yeah, that could be how you could use that 2% of your grant.

Rosemary: Okay.

John: This is John Daniels from Mississippi State University.

Emily: Yeah.

John: In reading the project budget and justification it was looking at, you had mentioned that being 2% of the Federal portion for data collection that talked about that you have a mirrored function in which you spend your non-governmental matching funds and your AFI funds. So did I misread that or does that mean if we use 2% of the Federal funds for data management we must use 2% of our matching funds for the same purpose or did I...?

Emily: No, that's a great question. The way that we interpret the legislation is that you do not have to use the 15% of the non-Federal portion of your budget in the same proportions as you use it for, as you have to use the Federal funds. But you could not go above 15% in terms of how much of your non-Federal funds you use for this kind of administrative work.

John: So, for example, we could not say, "For our overhead we're only going to use 15% of the Federal funds and of our matching funds is going to go 100% to the recipients of the project."

Emily: No actually my understanding is that you could use 100% of your non-Federal funds as match, yes.

John: Okay because, I think, that would be, you know, it could be a selling point for a lot of people out there looking for those matching funds to say, "Everything that you give will be going straight towards those who will be, you know, buying these allowable purchases."

Emily: Sure, yeah, yeah, definitely, you need to think about, yeah, what kind of margin your organization needs in order to be successful with the program but, yeah, I could definitely see that being a selling point.

John: Here at Mississippi State, of course, you know, we have a lot of in-house resources for things like the financial management, we already own the database that would function properly. The overhead is being offered by the University as far as, you know, all of the utilities. So I'm wondering, part of me wants to say, you know, "To make our application stronger to use less of a FTE." But then I don't want to reduce it to the point where it looks like we're not going to be able to, you know, where it actually would be a negative mark on that application that we are not allotting enough money to cover, you know, staffing, I guess.

Emily: Right, that's exactly what I would caution against is the, you know, in trying to seem competitive by putting more money toward other purchases than matching funds. But there are so many of those required, you know, management aspects that you require input from people at different levels of the origination that, yes, those obviously can be provided in-kind but then you have to be able to speak to that. So, yeah, it's more about, yeah, how would you use that 15% to get the strongest program possible because, I think, that the reviewers, you know, would want to see you use the funds that can be used for staff time.

You know, using that time as effectively as possible to increase participant success because, you know, if you're offering, you know, no matter how many slots you offer if you're not providing enough for people. Then that's not a recipe for success necessarily, and, so, but that's definitely up to what you think. You know, based on how you know your students, how much support they would need, you know, on an average semester or year basis.

Molly: This is Molly at Catholic Charities, I have a question about the MOU's and how really how robust they have to be. Should they be included in the proposal and do we have to have everything kind of spelled out ahead of time or if we have kind of a partnership where we already refer like for a business class and all that. Do we have to have at all in MOU form, I guess, is kind of my question?

Emily: Yeah, so they talk about the funding opportunity and I've also talked about these partnerships needing to be, you know, put in writing in terms of assigned third party agreements. And, the one that they talk about that definitely has to be in there is with your financial institution and that's the one that you need to have a third party agreement signed by each party. And then they, I don't think they put quite as fine of a point on it with other partners that you're using. But, I would say, that the more significant a partner's role is in providing your AFI project you probably do want to have a signed third party agreement. So, for example, if, you know, all of your savers are small business savers and you're going to require them all to go through this organization's small business development classes – then, yeah, you should probably have a signed agreement with that organization.

Molly: Thank you.

Emily: So we're coming near the end of the hour so I want to find out are there any final questions that folks have on this topic. Obviously we're going to meet again in another couple weeks, so we can talk about it then too, but are there any burning questions people want to get to today?

Molly: Hi, this is Molly again and I have another one. And when you mention in the request your proposal that you want an AFI fit. What do you really mean by that?

Emily: Sorry, can you say that again?

Molly: So project liability and set with AFI program?

Emily: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah, you know, you give up to 15 points for that. Well, it's not really, you know, can you kind of expand on that?

Emily: It was explained definitively on the page, it looks like, 30 of the funding opportunity announcement. So think of it in terms of a fit with the target population that you're going to serve – you know – are they eligible obviously? And then are they actually, are they in a good position to be successful with an AFI IDA in terms of saving regularly and making that asset purchase? And then also are there assets that are available to them and within their price range? So if you, you know, you were working with low income individuals who want to be home owners but there really is a lack of affordable home ownership communities in your cities than that's probably going to be a challenge.

And if you want to do it anyway then you should probably address in your AFI application how you're going to address that challenge of helping your low income home buyers find affordable properties that they will qualify to get into. So, you know are you going to work with developers or something like that. So it's really about, so the way I see it is about, you know, you understand how the AFI IDA's, the restrictions they have on them, and their goals and how they're put together. Does that overlay that fits, I already used the same word, does fit with your community context and the people that you want to serve or is it an unrealistic project for them, in which case you might want to think about tweaking your asset goals or your target populations.

Molly: Okay, okay, that's helpful, thank you.

Emily: Yeah.

Molly: Actually I have another question. On the reporting of data how is that done at the, you know, end of the period, how do you guys collect that data from us?

Emily: Yeah, so there's some standard Federal Grant Reports, there's a financial form, it's going to be 269, you know, required to print anyone who has a Federal Grant and that's how much money did you spend and how much money do you have left? I think that's just the one-page report, one or two pages, and then there's a rather, then there's an extensive online data collection system where you'll have a log in. And, so you'll log in and then it'll ask you questions for, I think, it's cumulative.

So, you know, so since the beginning of your program things like how many people have you enrolled, how much money have they saved, how many people have dropped out, how many people have completed financial education classes. And, so that's the kind of thing where good data management throughout the year, if you've been doing good data management throughout the year, then you can just run a couple of reports. It's not that big of a challenge but if you're having to pull numbers in different places or do data entry to catch up then, it can, I guess, can probably be more of a headache.

Molly: And do we report this on an annual basis or at the end of the five years?

Emily: On an annual basis.

Molly: Okay, thank you.

Emily: Okay, with that I'm going to go ahead and wrap up today's call...