



## An Introduction to the 2014 AFI Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

*March 2014*

### Presentation Transcript

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The Assets for Independence (AFI) program provides five-year grants to nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other agencies that empower low-income families to become economically self-sufficient for the long-term. Grantees provide financial education training on money management issues, and they assist participants with saving earned income in special matched savings accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). Participants use the IDAs to accumulate funds with the goal of acquiring a first home, post-secondary education, or starting up or expanding a small business. The program is administered by the Federal Office of Community Services, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

On March 7, 2014, OCS released a new Funding Opportunity Announcement (also referred to as the FOA) for the Assets for Independence program. The purpose of a FOA is to explain the goals of the program, the activities that program grantees are expected to deliver in order to achieve these goals, and the criteria by which applications for funding will be reviewed. Anyone who is interested in applying for AFI should download the FOA from the link shown here

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/foa/view/HHS-2014-ACF-OCS-EI-0774> and read it thoroughly.

While this presentation is meant to provide an introduction to the contents of the FOA, it does not replace reading it for yourself.

In addition to downloading the FOA, you will need to download the grant application package from grants.gov. The grant application package is an editable PDF through which you will submit your application. More details about registering with grants.gov and the mechanics of submitting an application are described in the "Grants.gov & The Two-File Maximum" webinar, which is archived on the AFI Resource Center at the link in this slide.

One important function of the FOA is to state when the application due dates are. This FOA covers federal fiscal years 2014 through 2016. As such, it lays out when the applications will be due through 2016. Upcoming application due dates are: FY 2014: May 7, 2014 and July 14, 2014; FY 2015: October 25, 2014 and April 20, 2015; and, FY 2016: October 19, 2015 and April 18, 2016.

The deadline for electronic application submission is 11:59 p.m., ET, on the due dates listed here. Any applications submitted after the 11:59 p.m., cutoff will be held over for review after the next due date.

Now I will guide you through what's different in this new FOA, compared to the previous one. Again, this presentation is not meant to be an exhaustive explanation of the FOA and to completely understand it,



you should read it thoroughly yourself. The goal here is to highlight the differences from the previous FOA for people who were familiar with that one.

The first big change many of you will notice is in the point structure and suggested organization of the application sections. While the major sections are the same – approach, organizational capacity, and budget & budget justification – they are organized differently, have different emphases, and have different points allocated to them.

In Section IV.2 and on page 18 of the PDF version of the FOA, you will see a suggested outline for the main body of your application, which includes the Project Description and Budget & Budget Narrative. The expected content of each of these sections is described in pages 22 through 25.

On page 34 you will see how points are distributed among the topics covered in your application. They do not align 1-to-1 with the sections listed on page 18, but address the same themes and important points. For this reason, it will be important for you to carefully review both the *General Instructions for Preparing a Full Project Description* in Section IV.2. “Content and Form of Application Submission” and the evaluation criteria in Section V after you have drafted your narrative to make sure you have addressed each topic thoroughly.

The topics and point allocations for *Approach* are as follows: Target Population and Geographic Location (0-5 Points); Project Design (0-10 Points); Statement of Expected Outcomes (0-5 Points); Timeline (0-5 Points); Program Requirements (0-10 Points); Subrecipient Activities (0-5 Points); Record Keeping and Management (0-5 Points); and, Project Viability (0-5 Points).

The topics and point allocations for *Organizational Capacity* are as follows: Capacity (0-6 points); Project Partners (0-6 points); Financial Institution Partners (0-6 points); Knowledge and Experience (0-6 points); and, Staff (0-6 points). For *Budget and Budget Justification* the points are as follows: Funding (0-5 Points), and Spending Guidelines (0-5 Points). In addition bonus points are given as below: Community Development (0-2 points); Key Collaborations (0-3 points); and, Unserved States (0-5 Points).

Beyond the organization and points allocation, there are some additional differences in this FOA that you should be aware of. Geographical Diversity is a specific example of this. OCS is looking for applicants from the states of Wyoming and Rhode Island, the 2 states that do not currently have any AFI projects. As stated on the previous slide ,application points will be awarded for projects proposing to operate and serve individuals in these unserved states

The next difference is a documentation requirement for applicants that are Institutions of Higher Education. A new clarification appears in the FOA this year, concerning Applications submitted by an Institution of Higher Education. These applicants must include documentation that supports their designation as a government entity (i.e. as identified in box 9 of the SF-424).

The next difference pertains to the Documentation of the Non-Federal Cash Commitment. OCS has always required applicants to provide Documentation of the Non-Federal Cash Committed to their



projects. As before, these commitments should include information about the total amount of the commitment and when the commitment will be made available to the applicant. Starting this year, documentation must also indicate the specific project for which the commitment is being made, as identified by application due date. This means that the commitment documents must reference the application cycle which it is being submitted under.

In addition, this year's FOA contains additional documentation requirements when the non-federal cash commitments is coming from one of four specific types of funding sources, listed on this slide. For Third-party Organizations - The commitment must be on agency letterhead and signed by the person in the third-party organization with the authority to make a financial commitment on behalf of their organization. When the funding is coming from the Applicant Organization - The commitment must be on agency letterhead and signed by the authorized organizational representative (also known as the AOR) and at least one other organizational representative (e.g., Board Member, Financial Director, etc.) and include an audit report or agency balance sheet that identifies unrestricted funds and/or funds restricted for use as commitment to the proposed AFI project. When the funding is coming from Individual(s) - The commitment must include the individual(s) contact information (name, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail) be signed by the donor, and be notarized. Finally, for State and Local Government or Tribal Funds - The commitment must be on government/tribal letterhead and signed by the agency's AOR, or their designee. If signed by the designee, documentation of such designation is required.

Please also note this piece of guidance for entities that plan to Submit Applications for Multiple Funding Cycles in the Same Fiscal Year. In Section III.I Eligible Applicants, the FOA states: Entities seeking more than one grant award in the same fiscal year must provide documentation of non-federal cash commitments that are separate, distinct, and specific to each application. Entities seeking only one grant award in the same fiscal year must clearly indicate such by identifying future applications in the same fiscal year as a "resubmission."

The next difference is a big one, which is the new Two-File Requirement. In 2013, the ACF Office of Grants Management implemented the Two File Requirement as a way to simplify the process for application submission. All AFI applicants must adhere to this requirement, which states that applicants must attach no more than two files when submitting an application. The only exception to that is the Standard Federal forms. The first file is the Project Description and Budget & Budget Justification. The second file is the appendices. Standard federal forms are to be submitted in addition to these 2 files. This information can be found under Section IV.2. of the FOA.

I will go over what each of these files should contain in the next 3 slides.

The first file is the Project Description and Budget & Budget Justification – here is where you would include the narrative describing the plan for your project, as well as your project budget and budget justification. This should look familiar because it's the outline I referenced earlier in the presentation. Note that this budget and budget justification is in addition to the SF424 and 424A. The second



document must contain all documents required in the Appendices – for example organizational charts, third-party agreements, letters of support, resumes, and audit reports. Applicants should review the AFI Funding Opportunity Announcement for specific guidance regarding the content of each document.

Please note that the required standard forms will be accepted in addition to the two files. The standard forms that are required for an AFI application are listed in this slide. They are the same as in previous FOAs.

One particular note about the SF-424 appears on page 16 of the FOA. It states: Please do not attach additional documents to the SF-424 at Question 14 and/or after Question 15. Instead of providing a separate response to Question 14, all applicants are required to submit the SF for Project/Performance Site Location(s) (SF-P/PSL). In the SF-P/PSL, applicants may cite their primary location and up to 29 additional performance sites. Documents submitted as attachments to the SF-424 will be removed from the application and will not be reviewed.

Another note about the SF-424A and 424B: Grants.gov offers application instructions that you can download when you download the application package. These are generic instructions for the SF-424A and 424B that are not specific to the AFI program. Our Project Builder Toolkit contains instructions for filling out the SF-424A and 424B that are specific to the AFI program, so we recommend you read those as well. They can be accessed at the link shown in the slide.

Finally, I wanted to point out two areas that are not necessarily new, but where this FOA provides some very helpful, specific guidance about the goals for your project. The first is about project features applicants should consider when developing their application. As listed in Section I of the FOA, they are Marketing and Recruitment; Case Management and Coaching; Asset-specific Training and Other Related Services; Data Collection; Record Keeping and Management; and, Evaluation Activities.

The other clarification is on data collection. Past FOAs have asked applicants to affirm their commitment to using the AFI performance management framework. This FOA clearly states the two performance measures that OCS is interested in: the amount of IDA savings participants use for an asset purchase, and the number of participants who withdraw funds from their IDA for an asset purchase.

Knowing that these 2 performance measures are of the utmost importance to OCS, consider throughout your application how each element of your project design supports these goals.

I hope that you have found this presentation helpful. Again, it was our goal to help you: Learn how to access the FOA; Learn the application due dates for FY 2014-2016; Become familiar with the content of the FOA; and, Learn where they can get answers to questions about the FOA and the application process.

This slide shows the contact information for the AFI Resource Center. We are here to answer your questions about the FOA and designing an AFI project. You can contact us at any time if you have questions.