

CNCS Social Innovation Fund NOFA Q&A Session March 24, 2014



[Lois Nembhard] Thank you, everyone. Welcome to our conference call webinar on Frequently Asked Questions.

My name is Lois Nembhard, Deputy Director of the Social Innovation Fund. And what we're going to do today is take advantage of all the questions that you all submitted to us in advance. We got quite a few questions.



First, I'm going to let you know who know is here as your experts; and then we're going to get right into the questions.

CNCS Social Innovation Fund NOFA Q&A Session March 24, 2014

CNCS/SIF Representatives

- Lois Nembhard, Deputy Director
- Angela Williams, Assistant General Counsel
- Lily Zandniapour, SIF Evaluation Manager
- Susan Rice, Grants Officer

AmeriCorps | Senior Corps | Social Innovation Fund | Volunteer Generation Fund

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We have for you from the Office of Grants Management, Susan Rice and Bonnie Janicki. From the Office of General Counsel, we have Angela Williams. From Research and Evaluation, we have our Evaluation Manager, Dr. Lily Zandniapour.

Grantee Representative



Jennifer Callans
Social Innovation Fund Project Manager
United Way for Southeastern Michigan

AmeriCorps | Senior Corps | Social Innovation Fund | Volunteer Generation Fund

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And then we thought it would be good to have a grantee representative on the call to lend her perspective to the questions you have, and you can direct questions to her specifically. And for that we have Jennifer Callans from United Way of Southeastern Michigan.

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What we're going to do, before we get into your questions, is have Jenny tell you a little bit about her program so you have that context; and then we'll launch right into your questions. Jenny?

[Jenny Callans] Hi, can everybody hear me okay?

[Lois] Yes.

[Jenny] Great, thanks. As Lois said – Lois, thank you – I'm from United Way for Southeastern Michigan. We are a United Way, so we fund a lot of community impact initiatives throughout the Greater Detroit Area. It's a multicounty region that we serve. Our Social Innovation Fund project is aimed at achieving 80% kindergarten readiness in ten of our hardest hit communities here in Southeastern Michigan. We've identified a couple dozen zip codes where kids are really at risk. And we have a portfolio of 11 different subgrantee partners, each of whom is taking a different approach to impacting kindergarten readiness in a positive way.

So that's our portfolio in a nutshell. I want to talk just for a minute about what's different about the Social Innovation Fund and how it's been helpful to our work and to achieving some success in this regard. We are in our third year as a Social Innovation Fund intermediary. What's really different for our area about the Social Innovation Fund is the emphasis on rigorous evaluation and then funding what works – so taking what we learn from the evaluations and then putting our money towards these really effective programs. Obviously, we all want to fund effective programs. But at least in the Detroit area, an emphasis on evaluation has not always been there. We haven't necessarily known for sure how to go about evaluating our programs and then how to make funding decisions.

So the Social Innovation Fund is really helping us to be better stewards of the donor dollars that we work with. Obviously, we get tax dollars through the Social Innovation Fund; but we are primarily a donor-funded organization. So it's important that we be good stewards of those funds, and the SIF is helping us achieve that mission in a more rigorous way.

Successes thus far: We've got 11 different subgrantees, as I mentioned, and everybody is doing something different. Some are working with parents, some are working with Head Start teachers, some are working with licensed care providers, some with unlicensed care providers. So we have a really diverse portfolio that is actually something that is kind of a potential for future success, is that we're testing so many different initiatives that when we start to see what is working and why, we will almost immediately have a platform where we can start to replicate and scale successful initiatives.

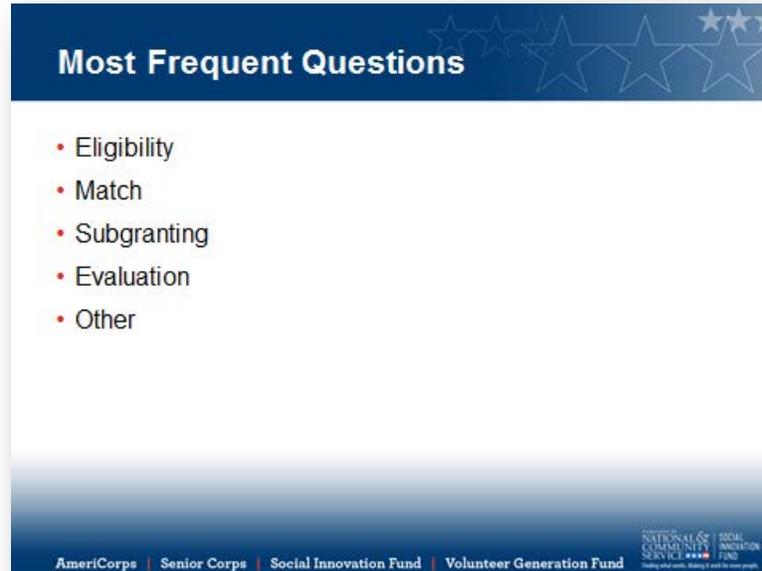
So in terms of success thus far, we're seeing some early success with work by National Kidney Foundation of Michigan and their work on children's health and how that impacts some for kindergarten. We're really excited about that because that will give us – they're doing work in Head Start classrooms. So that's something that will be fairly straightforward for us to replicate and scale.

So that's our portfolio in a nutshell. We're really thrilled to be a part of the SIF. It's been huge for our organization. I think it's going to even have more extensive impact on our organization in the next couple of years as we start to move towards the replication phase. It's really exciting work that we're embarking on. Thanks.

[Lois] Thanks, Jenny.

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We'll now start answering your questions. You'll see the categories that we've organized them into. You are free to submit additional questions via the chat function, and we'll pay attention to those and interject them as it makes sense.

Eligibility – we've gotten lots of questions about eligibility. I'll say something initially, and then I'm going to turn it over to Angela to walk through the other questions that we've gotten. But we've gotten a lot of questions just generally about who is eligible, and it is as stated in the Notice of Funding Availability, that the competition is open to existing grantmaking institutions for which grants to nonprofits are an essential part of their mission. One of the questions we keep getting is from nonprofit organizations who feel that they have an evidence-based solution, and they want the opportunity to get assistance scaling it and evaluating it. This competition is not for those organizations. Their opportunity will be after we've selected the intermediaries that we're going to fund as part of this competition, and then they run their grant competitions. That's what you want to pay attention to probably in the fall, maybe early spring, to those competitions that are going to be announced.

I will turn it over to Angela now to walk through the other eligibility questions. Angela?

[Angela] Hi, Lois, how are you? Can you hear me?

[Lois] Yes, ma'am.

[Angela] Okay, perfect. I just want to make sure that I have all of the questions and I go over them correctly; so if you could just read the question, and then I'll give a response.

[Lois] Great, let's go to the first one. There is a question specifically about religious institutions and whether or not they are eligible, and then another about how an organization demonstrates to us that they are an eligible grantmaking institution.

[Angela] With religious institutions, they're not excluded per se, but the definition for eligibility would still apply to them. So in other words, they have to state at the time of the application that they're an existing grantmaking institution, which means that making grants to nonprofits is an essential part of their mission. So there is no per se prohibition on religious institutions, but they have to be able to show that they meet

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the eligibility requirements just like everyone else. So that would be the first question as far as a religious institution. And give me the second one, one more time, Lois. I'm sorry.

[Lois] The second one is about how they demonstrate to us that they are, in fact, an eligible grantmaking institution.

[Angela] Right, so basically if you look at the parameters of the NOFA, it kind of lays out what you need to put in your proposal and where you need to put it as far as in your Narrative, in your Executive Summary. You need to show how your organization is a grantmaking institution and how it would be eligible for SIF funds. So it really should be in the Executive Summary, and that's where you should lay it out. That's in the NOFA; so if you read it, it will tell you about how you can lay that out explicitly.

[Lois] Great, thank you, Angela. We definitely got lots of questions about specific individual types of organizations, and we won't run through those because it really is about the eligibility as Angela describes it. And if that fits your organization, then you can move forward.

[Angela] I'm sorry. I just want to just emphasize something. Some of the questions that we've been getting in – I feel like maybe people are getting confused as far as definitionally what it means to be an existing grantmaking institution. And I think it's really important to point out that making grants is the essential part of the mission. So it's not something that's ancillary, and it's something that is applicable at the time that you apply. We've been getting a lot of different questions about people who intend to do something or who kind of make grants in an ancillary way, and that really probably wouldn't enable you to meet the eligibility requirements. So I just wanted to put that out there.

[Lois] Great, thank you.

Now we'll go to the section that probably had the most questions around match and kind of some budget-related questions. And for that, I'm going to turn you over to Bonnie Janicki and Susan Rice.

[Bonnie] Good afternoon. This is Bonnie Janicki. Susan and I are going to kind of do this together. We're going to read down the questions and give answers. And if you have questions as we go, like Lois said before, go ahead and type them in. We'll be happy to help clarify or answer additional questions.

Let's start with some of the real basic ones that came in: "Please confirm that the minimum grant amount is \$1 million over three years."

It's actually not that. It's \$1 million per year as is stated in the NOFA. So the minimum we give is \$1 million, and you have to actually match that dollar for dollar.

The question is: "Is the 80% required to be given to subgrantees 80% of the award or 80% of the sum of the award and match dollars?"

That is 80% of the federal share of the award. So of the funds that we give you as an intermediary, it's 80% of those funds has to be subgranted out.

"Are there any requirements for matching funds?"

I feel like that one is kind of a loaded question. I'm going to give you a very basic answer for that; and it is, "Yes." Match funds have to be in cash and from non-federal sources. They cannot be in-kind. Matching funds follow all the same rules as the federal funds. And so if you're wondering if it's something you can or can't do, you can do it with federal and you can do it with the match funds. If you can't do it with federal, then you cannot do it with match funds.

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Moving on, this one says: "Our match will in large part come from the City; but they will not have finished up their budget for next year before the submittal date. How can we best represent that these funds are coming without the budget being signed into law?"

By the grant application deadline, you have to submit documentation that you have cash or commitment to meet 50% of the year one match. So I would suggest that you work with the City to get a letter of commitment that demonstrates that this is actually a part of the budget.

The next one: "Can match dollars be used to support the existing model as well as scaling of the model?"

And then I would also go on: "May matching funds be used for capital investments, such as housing units?"

We've got, again, a lot of questions about what we can use match funds for. Like I said, we don't want to draw any kind of distinction between how matching funds and federal funds are used. Our funds, either federal or match, should be used to support organizations in scaling and evaluating promising approaches to addressing community challenges. So in general, we do not expect funds to be charged with SIF grants that would be used for a capital investment.

What is the next one? Okay: "Can existing current funds be used as match dollars, both for lead applicant and subgrantees?"

There are a lot of twists and turns to that question. So what I really want to do on that one is take you to our FAQ. Right around page 9 – I think the FAQs are from February – read through what we say. Matching funds should be unrestricted and should not be redirected from another purpose. But it can be. You can use some of it from existing or current funds. But for specific answers, I would take you to the FAQs.

"Can subgrantee match be from government sources?"

Intermediaries and subgrantee match must be from non-federal sources, but local government sources are permissible. You just want to get explicit permission to do that – to use it.

Okay, moving on: "Can interest be accrued on the first three years of funding provided at the time of the initial award? And if so, are there any limitations on how that accrued interest can be used?"

These funds that we award you are maintained in account at the Payment Management System with HHS, the Department of Health and Human Services. And you are supposed to draw funds as needed and for normally a reimbursement basis. The Cash Management Act speaks specifically on interest accrued. And in general, CNCS does not expect our grantees or subgrantees to draw down any more than funds that you need for immediate use.

The next one is: "Can a line of credit be used to meet the required SIF match?"

Funds are not considered match until they're expended on a grant. So if the line of credit is used to help pay for the expenditures, then it could be used as a match. It would not be the purpose. Our hope is to generate sustainability of a program, and a line of credit is not going to do that. But there's not a prohibition on that.

"Can a letter from our CFO meet the required documentation of the 50% of the first year of matching funds?"

And the answer is, "Yes," for that one.

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"Must the cash on hand documented at the time of proposal submission be available during the project period? In other words, can the documented cash on hand be expended prior to the project period?"

You cannot start charging funds to the grant until the project period has started unless you have permission from the Corporation that's in writing that says that you have permission for pre-award costs. Otherwise, all funds have to be expended during the approved project period start and end date.

I think that might – is that it? Did I skip any?

[Lois] Thank you.

Let me pause and say, Jerian [host], have questions come into the chat function that are relevant for eligibility or match that we haven't already addressed?

[Host] Yes, there are a couple. One is: "Can a collaborator also be a subgrantee?"

[Angela] This is Angela. I'm trying to understand the question. Is the question whether or not somebody who is collaborating with an existing grantmaking institution – if that person can then go ahead and apply for a subgrant from the same institution that it's collaborating with? Is that the question?

[Lois] Yes, that's our assumption.

[Angela] Okay, so the subgrant process has to be competitive. So you wouldn't be able to direct subgrant funds to a specific entity. But if the collaborator wanted to apply and they won in a competitive process, and it was something different than what they were collaborating on as the intermediary, then I don't think there is a prohibition on that.

[Host] Okay, thank you. Another one is: "Is there a precedent for fiscally-sponsored grantmaking institutions? How should fiscally-sponsored institutions apply for the SIF?"

[Bonnie] This is Bonnie with the Office of Grants Management. I'm not sure what that question is actually asking about fiscally-sponsored institutions. What we could do though is if they want to forward that one, or we could, into the mailbox, then we could try to answer that. But whoever asked it, if you could elaborate more on what fiscally – what that means, what you're trying to say – then we might be able to better answer that question.

[Lois] You can send the question to innovation@cns.gov.

[Host] Another question is: "We are a grantmaking institution, but a City entity. According to the NOFA on page 20, it appears that we may not be eligible unless we partner with other institutions. We distribute about 95% of our budget to other not-for-profits. Are we eligible?"

[Angela] Local and state governments are not eligible to apply directly as intermediaries. But they are able to partner or collaborate with other exiting grantmaking institutions to apply.

[Host] This one deals with match: "If we apply as a match partner, do all partners have to provide a match?"

[Bonnie] We do not say where the match has to come from; and if it's some sort of collaboration, we don't say, how in a collaboration, the match needs to be determined. So that would be between the collaboration and what's stated in maybe the Memorandum of Understanding or something like that.

[Host] One person notes that he or she is a U.S. resident and lives here in the States, but her NGO operates in a foreign country. Would that person qualify?

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[Bonnie] I'm confused about the—

[Host] It says: "I am a U.S. resident and live here; but my NGO operates in a foreign country. Do I qualify?"

[Angela] Well, no individual is going to qualify; so I think the question is a little unclear. Whoever asked the question, it might be more appropriate for you to send an e-mail in and elaborate because an individual can't apply anyway.

[Host] Okay, and there are a couple of questions that center around how do you document the match within the application. So if you could just elaborate on ways that folks can document that they have the necessary match in place within their application.

[Bonnie] Yes, it is just what it says in the application instructions. Normally some sort of letter from whoever is offering either, willing to put up the cash or the commitment, on letterhead from them would probably be your best way to document the cash or the commitment. And internally if you want to use your CFO to say – if you're using internal funds, just a letter from the CFO.

[Host] Okay, let me do a quick scan. There is one that says: "On page 17, under Section E, Relationship to Other Federal Evidence-Based Programs, it is stated that CNCS does not intend to make awards in education. Can you say more about this intent? How can an applicant address youth development under this constraint?"

[Lois] Sure, what it actually says is that the federal government has a tiered-evidence initiative that is specifically focused on education. We wouldn't want to be funding exactly what they would be funding, so we'd want to see that whatever you're proposing to us doesn't duplicate or doesn't exactly focus on what they are already doing. But the majority of our portfolio is youth development, most of it directly related to education. So there absolutely is lots of opportunity for that within our portfolio.

[Host] Okay, let's just take another look. There was some confusion around the minimum subgrant amount. In some places it says \$10,000, and in others it says \$100,000. Can you clarify?

[Lois] Sure, the very initial version of the NOFA somebody had edited out a zero. But the version that has been out since after the first week says \$100,000. \$100,000 is the statutory minimum for subgrants.

[Host] And I don't think this one has been answered: "Grantmaking institutions versus nonprofit organizations – we are a nonprofit growing in social and environmental programs. We intend to use grants to fund our program projects. Are we still eligible? So does this give funds directly to grantmaking institutions?" OK, that one has been answered.

[Lois] Okay, so we'll keep on submitting questions if you have additional ones. We're going to go on now to a few questions we have on subgranting and evaluation. Regarding subgranting, I think we just had one question which I somehow just lost. Oh, there it is.

"For the competitive process, does the competition have to be open to any 501(c)(3) in the community, or can it be by invitation?"

One of the very basic premises of the Social Innovation Fund is open competition. And so it absolutely cannot be by invitation. The opportunity needs to be publicized beyond your current network and open to organizations from beyond your current network. So it cannot be by invitation only.

"Are there any contracting restrictions for subgrantees?"

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That one we weren't fully sure what the intent was. So if that person is on the phone, on the webinar, if you wouldn't mind submitting a little bit more specifically what you intended, that would be great. Otherwise you can send it in to innovation@cns.gov.

And then we were also asked: "Is there a minimum number of subgrantees that must be in the intermediary portfolio?"

We haven't set a minimum, but what you're proposing just needs to make sense for the outcomes that you're trying to achieve and how you're describing your project to us.

So I'll break just really quickly. I'm assuming no questions have come in yet specifically around subgranting, Jerian [host]?

[Host] That is correct.

[Lois] So why don't we go on? Only one additional evaluation question has come in so far. So I'll turn to Lily for that.

[Lily] Thank you, Lois.

The one evaluation question that was submitted asks: "Must specific outcomes be pre-determined in the evaluation plan, or can they be determined in the first few months of awards through community-driven process?"

The response to that is specific outcomes need not be included in the proposed plan for evaluation at the time of submitting the grant application. However, once the grants are submitted at a later date, they need to be included in the evaluation plan. So at the stage that you are in, which is pre-submission of the grant, you don't need to worry about that. Even within your grant application submission, you don't need to outline the specifics around outcomes.

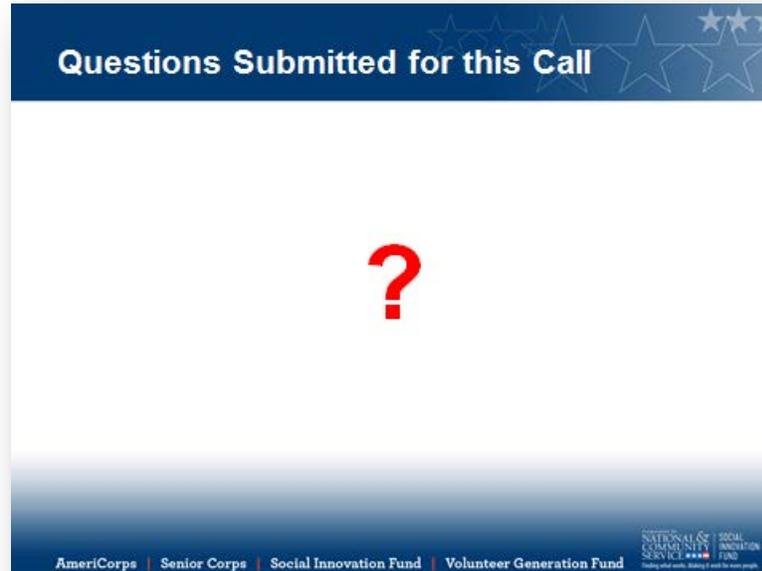
That was the only question on evaluation that was included. If there are, however, other questions, Jerian [host], that have been submitted to the chat feature, please let me know.

[Host] No additional questions have been submitted.

[Lily] Thank you.

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[Lois] Okay, so we'll go to some of the general questions now. Somebody asks: "What are the most important things to highlight in the grant proposal?" That would be everything that is detailed in the selection criteria. You would want to respond to everything there. We're not able to identify one thing as more important than the other. You get a sense of the balance, the weight, because we do identify the percentage weight for each section of the selection criteria; but you need to respond to everything.

Someone wondered what the breakdown for funding – in other words how many recipients our award is funding. We haven't pre-determined a number of recipients.

"If awarded the grant, when might we expect funding?"

Grant awards will be made by September 30th – possibly prior to that, but definitely by September 30th. However, as mentioned before, once you're approved for funding in August, you could request to incur pre-award costs. The Office of Grants Management would review that and approve or disapprove. But there are allowable costs directly related to what you propose in your application that could be approved.

"In the distinction between a geographically-based SIF and an issue-based SIF, how do you define a specific local geographic area?"

We'll leave that up to you to define what that specific local geographic area is. The idea is that you're focusing on having a significant impact on a single geographic region as opposed to much more broadly. But you can determine for us what that looks like. A current example – we have the Twin Cities region in Minneapolis. We have the Greater Washington D.C. area. It's up to you to define that.

Someone wondered that, if they're focusing on Opportunity Youth, is it acceptable to target a sub-population. And, yes, that would be fine. The examples they gave were 16- to 24-year-olds or justice involvement only, and that would be fine.

Another question was: "We work in coordination with other federal agencies. Is this something we should mention? If so, how is it best to do so?"

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I would say that in general, you should mention any current partnerships that are relevant to what you're proposing that would enhance your proposal. This came up on one of the other questions -- the note that we would expect our funding would not duplicate or replace current funding from any source. So that's definitely something that you'd want to keep in mind as you talk about it in your application. Section 1(e) talks about our expectations about funding that's from another federal evidence-based program and that's related to one of the questions we just responded to.

That is it in terms of the questions that came in, in advance. But we definitely want to give you an opportunity to ask any additional questions that you might have.

[Host] And we do have some. A couple of follow-up ones – back to the question of are there any contracting restrictions for subgrantees: "Must the subgrantee deliver all services directly?"

[Bonnie] I think that this should be handled on a case-by-case basis because there are a lot of different services that at the subgrantee level can be contracted to other providers. But like I said, it's more or less on a case-by-case basis – the answer would be.

[Lois] So once an organization is approved for funding, we have some guidance on that already, and we would deal with your specific case and help you understand how best to do that.

[Host] We have several related to evaluation: "How do requirements for evaluation in this round differ from the last round of SIF grants, if at all?"

[Lily] I don't see the requirements being very different. So I would say it's remained generally within the same way that they were basically articulated, at least going back to 2012 and 2011. However, the inaugural year, I think there were some differences. But since then, I think it's been fairly stable.

[Host] "Is a moderate level of evidence sufficient to meet evaluation criteria? We have some philosophical issues with identifying families or children and then not serving them."

[HostLily] Let me get a little bit more specific. At the time of application, that issue is not really relevant because the question of submission of evaluation plans and advancing the base of evidence of a particular intervention or a program model comes into play at a later point in time.

What you would want to do in terms of the reference you make to a moderate level of evidence is go back to the NOFA and read the description of what is meant by moderate level of evidence. That is the target. That is the target: Moderate or strong level of evidence is what we want to see the interventions target with their evaluation plans. And there are different ways of designing an evaluation where you don't necessarily end up not serving particular groups. So that's something that can be hashed out and worked through following grant awards, through discussions and more in-depth conversation about the particular case.

[Lois] And I would just add to something Lily said before as well. Our overall process is in your application, you're responding to what we're asking you about your evaluation strategy – how you're going to approach evaluation. But then we have incredibly detailed guidance that we'll be providing to you when you will submit your evaluation plan to us, and then we work with you to finalize and approve it. And that's quite a few months after grant award.

[Host] Okay, thank you. We're heading back into the realm of match now: "Can the match at the subgrantee level need to be for the new scaling portion of the program or can the match be for the total program budget. For example, if we grant \$100,000 to a program through the SIF to help the program expand to serve a larger population and the program already has an annual budget of \$300,000, do they have to get new match for the \$100,000 grant? Or can any of their regular program's budgets qualify as match?"

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[Bonnie] This is Bonnie – and, Susan, correct me if I'm wrong. But I think it has to be new match specifically for the SIF Program. Would you guys agree? We're good?

[Susan] Yes, it has to be funds that are used to perform the activities in the narrative that the subgrantee has given to the intermediary for that particular project.

[Host] I think these next two questions are related; so I'm going to go ahead and ask them both together: "Can the role of the intermediary be split across multiple organizations by function? Example, one is the grantmaking intermediary; the other is a fiscal agent."

And then the second question is: "If we propose a collective impact approach, do the cross-sector partners need to be named in the grant proposal, or can recruitment of partners be part of the activities proposed for grant funding?"

[Angela] I just want to take the first part of the question. There has to be a lead applicant that would be responsible for meeting all the eligibility requirements. Even if there is a collaboration or partnership, there has to be a lead applicant. So hopefully that answers the question as to whether or not you could parcel out different responsibilities. There has to be a lead applicant that could theoretically meet all of the obligations under the grant. And the collaborator, or the partnership, would just be additional resources. But the lead applicant has to meet all of the requirements.

[Lois] We have a current example where the lead applicant is working with an organization that really has the expertise in evaluation and the program model. And so we definitely appreciate that there are collaborations like that that make sense. But as Angela said, you absolutely need a lead applicant.

In terms of collective impact, you would want to – in order to present your strongest case about the selective impact approach that you're taking – you would want to identify the partners that are playing the different roles in that approach and in the program that you're proposing, in particular the backbone organization.

[Host] This is a follow-up to the first question that dealt with the fiscally-sponsored organization question. It says: "We are a semi-autonomous grantmaking entity that is managed by a larger nonprofit. Will we need to apply through our parent organization, the organization that legally holds the nonprofit status?"

[Bonnie] This is Bonnie. I think that's between you and your organization, whether or not you have the authority to apply or not because we're going to hold whoever applies as responsible for the grant. And you have to have that authority to commit your organization.

[Host] This one is a budget evaluation question: "What portion of the budget needs to be allocated to external evaluation? Do we need to have an external evaluator and evaluation plan in place at the time of the application?"

[Lily] You don't have to have an evaluation plan in place at the time of application. You have to demonstrate in your application that you're capable of engaging an evaluation partner or have an established relationship that you can use and a plan for addressing the evaluation requirements in place – but not the actual plan for evaluating a particular intervention.

[Host] Okay, back to match: "Can a funder provide match at the initial level and at the subgrantee level? I think you know the regional foundations that might contribute to the initial match and also the subgrantee match for subgrantees selected in their particular region."

[Bonnie] And so the answer to that one is, "Yes." The funder could provide match at both levels, yes.

[Host] This next one deals with program design: "We are considering proposing a program design in which subgrantees will select or implement one of several identified interventions, all of which would be

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within a common, overarching framework. In this scenario, would we be considered by CNCS as an applicant with or without a pre-identified intervention?"

[Lois] That would be pre-identified because it sounds like you know exactly what the intervention is and presumably also the evidence that it's based on or informed by. So you would want to talk about each of those interventions, if that is what your portfolio is going to be limited to. You'd want to talk about that in your application; and we would assess, at the time of application, the evidence level.

[Host] "Grantees are expected to evidence growth in populations served or program capacity. How do you define 'growth'? Can you please clarify?"

[Lois] I think that's referring to the scaling aspect of the program. And the NOFA talks about how we look at that and what our expectations are. In some cases, it could be serving more of the original population that you were serving prior to the program. In other cases, it might be scaling the program or growing the program to new populations in new geographic areas. So you would want to talk about the approach that you're planning to take.

[Host] Great, thank you.

[Lois] While we're waiting for additional questions, I wanted to give Jenny an opportunity to say a little bit about how her organization approached subgranting and evaluation. Since we're having some questions there, that might be helpful to get one practical example.

[Jenny] Sorry, I'm unmuting myself. I'm sorry, Lois. Would you go ahead and repeat that question so I can make sure that I answer it fully, please?

[Lois] Sure, could you talk a little bit about UFSM's approach and experience with subgranting and with evaluation?

[Jenny] Yes, subgranting was really an interesting process for us. Those of us who are familiar with United Ways will realize that we have typically very strong relationships within the community and that we might often fund the same partner over and over for a continued body of work. But because the Social Innovation Fund requires a very valuable level of openness, we had an open RFP. And we ended up forging relationships with a lot of entities – well not a lot, but a few – entities that we hadn't funded previously for any work. So that was really valuable for us in terms of building new relationships, increasing the scope of our work throughout our region, and just learning about some new stuff that was out there.

It also gave us an opportunity to expand our relationships with some of our current partners because we had partners with whom we had an existing funding relationship apply for new work that is truly innovative. And so being innovative, it would not necessarily have qualified for funding from us in the past because we tend to be a little bit of a risk-averse organization. So our RFP process was very valuable in that way.

Then when it came to evaluation, it was a real struggle for us. We relied a great deal on the resources that CNCS offers. Lily is on the phone, and she can attest to how much we had to reach out to her and to the evaluation teams that support CNCS to get guidance on how to structure subgrantee evaluation plans, what level of evidence was valid for what kind of intervention depending on how much data we already had and that sort of thing.

We contracted with an outside evaluation professional in order to make sure that we had someone to review all the documents that were coming to us because we still don't have that in-house evaluation capacity. So it was a growth experience for us and for our subgrantees in terms of learning how to go through all of these processes. But that ultimately makes our work that much better and that much more impactful.

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[Host] Okay, I do have some more questions. Regarding the open competition: "If you have made it an open competition, but end up having connected organizations apply, probably because they know you, does CNCS frown upon that?"

[Angela] This is Angela. I think the critical question – your subgrantee plan has to be accepted and approved by CNCS beforehand. So as long as the entity can demonstrate that it's a competitive process and there is no one that's pre-selected or that they're directing funds in any type of preferential manner, I think that's okay. I think that as long as the subgrantee plan is sufficient, then who ultimately wins I don't think we'd have a stake in that.

[Host] "If we are a local government and partner with a lead grantmaking agency, can we still handle all of SIF program finances and grant administration aspects of the partnership? Or is that limited to the lead agency?"

[Bonnie] That is between what you outline in your contract. We don't have a say in that.

[Host] "You indicate that the grantmaking institution needs to have a significant portion of their work be around grantmaking. Can you define or describe in detail what you mean by 'significant portion'? Do you have a specific percentage of the organization's expenditures, for instance?"

[Lois] No, I don't. It really is as described in the NOFA in the Eligibility section. If we were to look at your website or a description of your organization and your mission, it would need to be clear that grantmaking is a very crucial and integral part of how you do what you do.

[Host] "If we apply as an eligible partnership, can the match verification at the time of application be made across the partner organizations?"

[Bonnie] I'm not sure if I completely understand that question. But I want to say potentially, "Yes." It could be.

[Lois] Yes, if the source of the fund is non-federal and it's cash, then that should be fine.

[Susan] And the partner organizations can give a letter of commitment to the authorized lead agency.

[Host] "What are the required financial documents at the time of the application? Do applicants have to complete the Financial Management Survey that CNCS uses for other applications – for example, Senior Corps programs?"

[Bonnie] So if selected to move forward for clarification, then we will send a Financial Management Survey; set up the account with Payment Management System; and we'll ask those applicants that are selected for clarification to take an online course as well.

[Host] "Do we have to be an intermediary organization prior to the grant application, or can we become one through applying for this grant?"

[Angela] Hi, this is Angela. You have to be an existing grantmaking institution at the time of the application.

[Host] "Does the SIF have priority geographic focus for this round?"

[Lois] Not beyond what is stated in the application. In the Priorities section, we do say we're interested in reaching geographic regions that are currently underrepresented. And you can talk about that if you feel your application is doing that. But beyond that, we haven't targeted specific geographic regions.

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[Host] "Would a proposal using a collective impact approach necessarily have to apply as an eligible partnership?"

[Lois] No, they would not.

[Host] "Will the SIF be open for new applications next year?"

[Lois] We certainly hope so. We are in the President's budget at the same level of funding we got for 2014. But that's an extended process with Congress to determine what the Corporation for National Community Service's final 2015 appropriation will be.

[Host] "We are a regional quasi-governmental organization, not a city or a county. Are we eligible to apply?"

[Angela] Hi, this Angela. I don't know what "quasi" means specifically. So if that person is on the phone or if they have an opportunity, they may want to send in an e-mail with more specificity. I'm not sure what quasi-government – I mean, it means different things in different situations. So I don't know what it means for this person in this situation.

[Host] "Can you describe what needs to be demonstrated by a subgrantee for a match waiver?"

[Lois] Currently, the way our statute or law is written, subgrantees are actually not eligible to apply for match waivers. It's at the intermediary level. And at that level, they would need to demonstrate that – you get more specifics if you decided that that is something that you felt applied to you – but you would need to demonstrate that the region that you're planning to serve is philanthropically underserved and you're not able to meet the one-to-one match.

[Host] "We do provide federal and state grants currently to nonprofits. How do we apply to be a grantmaker under CNCS?"

[Lois] There isn't any separate – I don't know they're wondering if there's some way that they qualify to be a grantmaker under us. But if you meet our definitions and eligibility requirements for an existing grantmaking institution, you would just submit an application for the SIF program that you're proposing.

[Host] "And just to clarify, was the \$100,000 grant minimum to subgrantees per year or over a two- or three-year grant period?"

[Lois] It is per year. And just a note on that is that in many cases, \$100,000 ends up being not sufficient to do all the subgrantee needs to do, especially if they're managing the evaluation costs. And we have some information on our website on the NOFA page about budgeting for evaluation that you might find helpful.

[Host] "If you don't meet your evaluation goals for growth, does this negatively impact future funding?"

[Lois] I'll tackle it separately because we don't really have a concept of evaluation goals for growth. We have growth goals or scaling goals and then your evaluation plan. And on an ongoing basis and definitely each year, we'll assess how well you're doing to what you agreed with us to do regarding evaluation, regarding subgrantee, regarding growth. And so those will be factors each year as we consider providing you continuation funding. Or in this case, we're hoping to provide three years of funding upfront for each grantee. But each year, we consider how you're doing and assess your progress, so those will definitely all be factors.

[Host] Okay, and actually the last question is: "How does an organization submit their Letter of Intent to apply for SIF? Is there a particular format for it?"

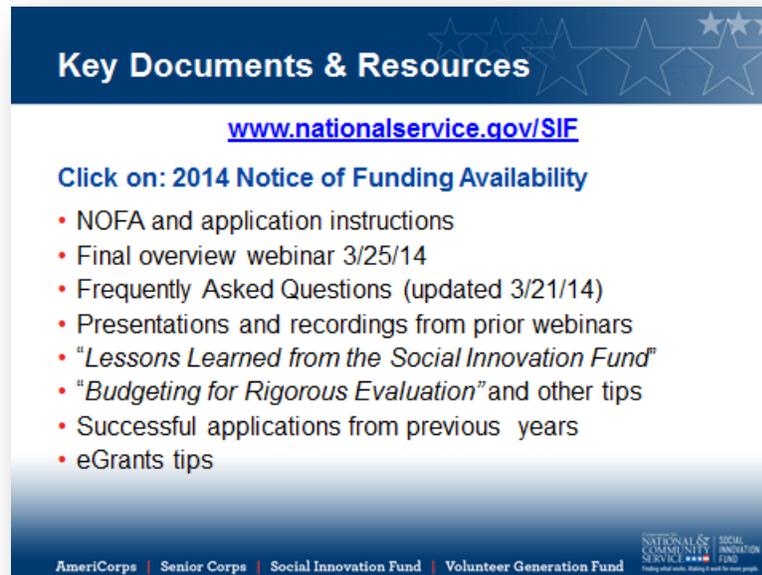
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[Lois] Sure, you send it in to innovation@cns.gov. And officially, today is the deadline for it. But, one, it's not required; it's just helpful to us. And, two, feel free to submit it later if you miss today's deadline but definitely if you are planning to apply because I think that would still be helpful. The Notice gives some information on that. We just want to know the name of your organization and contact information and that, yes, you are planning to apply.

[Host] Okay, there are no more new questions.

[Lois] Wonderful, so if you come up with additional questions or if you need some more clarifications to questions that we covered today, please, we encourage you to send an e-mail at innovation@cns.gov.



The slide features a dark blue header with the text "Key Documents & Resources" in white. Below the header, the URL www.nationalservice.gov/SIF is displayed in blue. A blue link "Click on: 2014 Notice of Funding Availability" is followed by a bulleted list of resources. The footer contains logos for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund, along with the National & Community Service Fund logo and the tagline "Finding what works. Making it work for more people."

Key Documents & Resources

www.nationalservice.gov/SIF

Click on: [2014 Notice of Funding Availability](#)

- NOFA and application instructions
- Final overview webinar 3/25/14
- Frequently Asked Questions (updated 3/21/14)
- Presentations and recordings from prior webinars
- *"Lessons Learned from the Social Innovation Fund"*
- *"Budgeting for Rigorous Evaluation"* and other tips
- Successful applications from previous years
- eGrants tips

AmeriCorps | Senior Corps | Social Innovation Fund | Volunteer Generation Fund

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Finding what works. Making it work for more people.

Just a reminder about the resources that we have available to you, there actually is one additional overview webinar tomorrow. But I'm assuming that most of you, if not all of you on this call, have already participated in that. I definitely encourage you to listen to the webinar on evaluation that took place a couple of weeks ago.

Frequently Asked Questions – we have a version that we were about to post but then we got so many questions in advance of this call that in the next couple of days, by mid-week, we'll have one greatly expanded Frequently Asked Questions posted on the website. The one on there now was still the original one from February and the questions we got initially.

Then a reminder about the different tips and other resources on the website: budgeting for rigorous evaluation, other tips, and then there's a Lessons Learned from the Social Innovation Fund document that was put out by grantmakers for effective organizations and based directly on their conversation experience with organizations that are current grantees, the lessons that they learned that might be helpful to others considering this as an opportunity.

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Key Dates

- Notice of intent due **March 24, 2014** (encouraged)
- Application due **April 22, 2014 by 5 pm eastern**
- Grant awards: August 2014

AmeriCorps | Senior Corps | Social Innovation Fund | Volunteer Generation Fund

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Once again, in terms of reaching us: innovation@cns.gov. We check that box multiple times a day and provide you with a response. Applications are due April 22, 2014, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern.

How to Reach Us

Email: innovation@cns.gov (preferred)

Voicemail: 202.606.3223

Updates: Sign up at www.nationalservice.gov/sif

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That is all we have for you. Thank you very much for your engagement, for all your questions. Some of them, as you could tell, stumped us a little bit; and we like that. It forces us to think a little bit deeper. This is still a relatively new program, so we're always getting questions that force us to think about nuances that we haven't considered before. So keep the questions coming.

Thanks, everyone.

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[Host] Okay, and with that, we will conclude this webinar. Have a good day, everyone. Bye now.