**Young Adult Reentry Partnership (YARP) Prospective Applicant Webcast Transcript**

**March 30th, 2020**

**SLIDE 1**

**Alexander:** Welcome to the pre-recorded Reentry Employment Opportunities 2020 Prospective Applicant Information webinar, for the Funding Opportunity Announcement titled Young Adult Reentry Partnership.

**SLIDE 2**

**Alexander:** Today, you’ll be hearing from Melissa Abdullah, Grant Officer in the Office of Grants Management, myself, Alexander Green, in the Reentry Employment Opportunities Unit, and Jessica Lohmann, Senior Evaluation Specialist from the Chief Evaluation Office.

**SLIDE 3**

**Alexander:** Today we will focus on six key areas of the FOA: Application Submission Requirements, Eligibility, Partnerships, Grant Activities and Components, Priority Consideration, andETA Evaluation.

Now we will be turning it over to Melissa in the Office of Grants Management…Melissa?

**SLIDE** 4

**Melissa:** Thanks, Alexander. In the next few slides I will go over the application submission requirements.

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**Melissa:** Proposals submitted in response to this FOA must consist of four separate and distinct parts: the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance, Project Budget, which consists of the SF-424A and the budget narrative, Project Narrative, and attachments to the Project Narrative.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that the funding amount requested is consistent across all parts and sub-parts of the application.

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**Melissa:** Applicants must include the items listed here. There is no exception to this requirement.

The SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance – all applicants for Federal grant and funding opportunities must have a DUNS number and must supply their DUNS number on the SF-424. Applicants must also register with the System for Award Management (SAM)

The Project Budget must consist of the SF-424A, Budget Information Form and the Budget Narrative.

Each of these items are explained in more detail in the FOA, and all must be addressed in the application or it will be deemed non-responsive and will not be reviewed.

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**Melissa:** Applicants will most likely spend the majority of their time preparing the Project Narrative. This is where applicants demonstrate their capability to implement the grant project in accordance with the provisions of this announcement. Applicants should provide a comprehensive framework and description of all aspects of the proposed project. It must be succinct, self-explanatory, and well organized so that reviewers can understand the proposed project. The guidelines for preparing the Project Narrative are found in Section IV.B.3 and it will be evaluated using the criteria identified in Section V.A.

The Project Narrative is limited to 25 double-spaced single-sided 8.5 x 11 inch pages with Times New Roman 12 point text font and 1-inch margins. You must number the Project Narrative beginning with page number 1. We will not read or consider any materials beyond the specified page limit in the application review process.

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**Melissa**: In addition to the Project Narrative, applicants must submit attachments.

All attachments must be clearly labeled as Attachments. We will only exclude those attachments listed in Section IV.B.4 from the page limit. You must not include additional materials such as resumes or general letters of support. These will not be considered. You must submit your application in one package because documents received separately will be tracked separately and will not be attached to the application for review.

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**Melissa:** The checklist shown here should be used as a guide when preparing your application package to ensure that the application has met all of the screening criteria. Note that this checklist is only an aid for applicants and should not be included in the application package. We urge you to use this checklist to ensure your application contains all required items. If your application does not meet all of the screening criteria, it will not move forward through the merit review process.

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**Melissa:** We have instituted procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review of the applications and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be judged. The evaluation criteria are based on the information required in the application as described in Sections IV.B.2 (Project Budget) and IV.B.3. (Project Narrative). Reviewers will award points based on the evaluation criteria as shown in this chart. See the FOA for the full description of each criterion.

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**Melissa:** Applications must be received by 4:00:00pm (Eastern Time) on the closing date.

Amendment one to the FOA limited the method of submission to only electronic submissions. You can only submit applications online at www.grants.gov. See the FOA for details on how to submit your application through grants.gov.

Now I would like to turn it back over to Alexander. Alex?

**SLIDE** 12

**Alexander:** Thank you Melissa. We wanted to touch on some of the main changes this year as it pertains to Eligibility, Partnerships, Grant Activities, and Priority Consideration.

**SLIDE** 13

Alexander: As far as Eligible Applicants…

Eligibility is determined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. For these grants… All applicants must be community- or faith-based intermediary organizations (for the purpose of this funding opportunity announcement intermediary is defined as an organization that have sub-grantees, an affiliate network, or offices in at least three communities and across at least two states, and that propose to serve at least three communities across at least two states for this project), with IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit status (including women’s and minority organizations and postsecondary education institutions), any Indian and Native American entity eligible for grants under Section 166 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that have a presence in at least three communities and across at least two states.

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**Alexander**: An individual is eligible to participate in a program funded through this FOA if that individual, on the date of enrollment (the date of enrollment is when the individual has gone through the application process, been accepted, and received confirmation that they will participate in the program): is at least 18 years and not older than 24 years of age, is a high school dropout\* or currently involved or has been involved with the juvenile or adult criminal justice system, which includes, currently or previously incarcerated, under the supervision of the criminal justice system, either in out-of-home placements, on probation, or on parole, under an alternative sentence by the criminal justice system, or under a diversion program as an alternative to prosecution, is low-income as defined by WIOA, Sec. 3(36)(A-B), is eligible to enroll in a community college, resides in or is returning to the targeted geographic area, and is eligible to work in the United States.

Note: Up to 10 percent of participants may reside outside the targeted geographic area.

Not more than 10 percent of participants may be high school dropouts without being involved in the juvenile or adult criminal justice system.

Grantees have the discretion to enroll individuals convicted of violent offenses or sexual offenses and those assessed as high-risk of either offense. Grantees that choose to serve these populations must conduct a rigorous risk assessment of criminogenic need (i.e., causing or likely to cause criminal behavior). In all cases, the grantee must have a clear and consistent written enrollment policy that addresses program enrollment. Grantees will be required to submit their written enrollment policies if awarded a grant.

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**Alexander:** Applicants must ensure that their sub-grantees identify their primary partners and describe the specifics of their partnership by providing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Letter of Commitment (LOC) signed by the authorizing agent of each primary partnership organization.

MOUs or LOCs must be from each partner and fully describe: services provided to the organization or participants, procedures for enrollment or recruitment, if applicable, and a plan for coordination of services between partners.

Please note, Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Commitment must be included as attachments and will not be counted against the page limit for the project narrative.

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**Alexander:**

There are three Primary Partnerships.

Applicants must ensure that all sub-grantees partner with one or more community colleges that will provide education and training and that have designed their courses and career pathways or guided pathways program curricula to ensure relevance to the needs of local industries and jobs.

Applicants must ensure that all sub-grantees partner with the criminal justice system. Applicants must explain how criminal justice system partner(s) will support program operations and ensure that all program participants can participate in all required services. Criminal justice system partners may include the following: correctional facilities, parole, probation, residential reentry centers, law enforcement, and/or courts.

Applicants must ensure that all sub-grantees partner with at least one employer and/or employer association. Applicants must also explain how employer(s) and/or employer association partner(s) will be engaged in the program to provide employment, job shadowing, mentoring, work-based learning, occupational training, work experience, and curriculum development (if applicable).

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**Alexander:** Grantees are encouraged to work with additional partners to leverage resources.

The Department strongly encourages recipients of this FOA to participate as additional one-stop partners. Partnering with the workforce system provides mutual benefits, including the enhancement of services and outreach. For additional information please see TEGL 17-16.

Applicants must ensure that their sub-grantees leverage resources by partnering with local and State Workforce Development Boards and local organizations that provide housing, transportation, substance abuse and mental health services, and other supportive services as needed.

Applicants must ensure that their sub-grantees identify their additional partners and describe the specifics of their partnership in a MOU or LOC signed by the authorizing agent of the partner organization which fully describes services to be provided to the organization or participants, procedures for enrollment or recruitment, if applicable, and a plan for coordination of services between partners, including coordination between pre-release and post-release service providers, if applicable.

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**Alexander**: Grant Activities and Components. All projects under this FOA must include the following grant activities and components; employment-focused services which lead to hiring and must include a variety of the following approaches, occupational education leading to industry-recognized credentials, work-based learning, which could include apprenticeship, and work experience, case management, including an individual development plan, assessments, and career exploration, documented strategies to address and overcome barriers, legal services (such as record expungement, modifying child support arrears, or obtaining a state driver’s license), job placement assistance, collaboration with agencies to provide supportive services, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, healthcare, transportation, childcare, housing, legal aid, and other social services, and assistance with securing identification, such as a driver’s licenses and state-issued identification.

Grantees will be allowed to use up to 5 percent of their grant to provide housing, substance abuse, and mental health services for participants. However, grantees must submit a written policy on the use of these funds as a condition of award. (pg. 8 of the FOA)

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**Alexander**: Grant Activities and Components. Grantees must ensure that each sub-grantee budgets no more than 25 percent of their grant funds on community college capacity building for the target population of this FOA.

This 25 percent limitation can be used to provide allowable activities, such as those listed below.

Applicants must ensure participants are provided comprehensive and personalized student support services and career guidance, which must include a Learning Plan. Additionally, applicants must include at least one of the below activities; providing online and technology-based learning strategies where feasible, providing competency-based assessments and training courses, aligning education with industry-recognized stacked and latticed credentials on an in-demand career pathway, supporting evidence-based remediation policies and practices, and where possible, assessing credit for prior learning and awarding credits for prior learning.

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**Alexander**: Please note: in order to focus grant funds on services that directly benefit participants, ETA expects grant budgets to limit community college adaptations or capacity building to 25 percent of the grant budget. However, ETA will consider higher percentages in cases where the applicant can demonstrate value to the target population through higher community college expenditures in these areas.

For more information on Pell Grants, see Volume 3 Chapter 3 of the 2019-20 FSA Handbook (link below).

Though ETA does not tend to specify the industries which grantees should train in as ETA wants this to be driven by the local/regional economy and labor market data, ETA does want to highlight the importance of focusing on occupations that offer a high-wage.

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**Alexander**:Grantees will provide reentry services and will spend at least 75 percent of grant funds to offer the following services; job assistance services, job preparatory experiences, career exploration activities, which include information on barriers to employment and requirements for entering their occupation, assistance with applying for financial aid for postsecondary education, particularly for programs of study leading to degrees, tuition assistance, where financial aid is not available, case management, including the development of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that identifies strategies for achieving their employment goal, including overcoming barriers and acquiring supportive services, legal services, such as record expungement, modifying child support arrears, or obtaining a state driver’s license, assistance with linking participants to the social services required to help participants transition back to their communities, and providing 12 months of follow-up services.

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**Alexander**:Applicants must ensure that occupational training provided has no state or local licensing regulations that restrict individuals with criminal records from obtaining licenses in that career.

**SLIDE** 23

**Alexander:** Applicants that demonstrate in number 10 of the abstract that at least one of their sub-grantees’ target areas is in an area of high poverty and high crime will receive one (1) bonus point.

Applicants will receive priority consideration of one (1) bonus point if the applicant has demonstrated in item number 9 of their abstract, at least one census tract in their target area is a qualified Opportunity Zone designated by the Secretary of Treasury; applicants will not receive additional bonus points for more than one opportunity zone.

Designated Opportunity Zone census tracts may be found at the link below: [www.cdfifund.gov/pages/opportunity-zones.aspx](http://www.cdfifund.gov/pages/opportunity-zones.aspx)

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**Alexander**: We will now turn it over to Jessica in the Chief Evaluation Office. Jessica?

**Jessica**: Thanks, Alex. My name is Jessica Lohmann and I’m a Senior Evaluation Specialist in DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office. The Chief Evaluation Office is an independent evaluation office at DOL that coordinates, manages, and implements DOL’s evaluation program. We are committed to rigorous, independent evaluations and building an evidence-based culture at DOL.

**SLIDE** 25

**Jessica:** Today I am going to discuss the importance of evidence and evaluation, give an overview of reentry research, particularly around youth and young adults, and explain where you fit in.

**SLIDE** 26

**Jessica:** The use of evidence and evaluation is needed for continuous learning and program improvement on the ground. It is important to build evidence where it does not exist and continue to build upon what we already know. For those programs that we don’t have evidence on, we want to pair the experience of those in the field with evaluations to build that knowledge. It is important to test theory and practice in the field to understand its impact on those we serve.

Using existing evidence and building evidence with evaluation can help programs determine if they are achieving the desired end goals and results for participants, making decisions that impact outcomes of interest (such as employment and recidivism), tweaking programs to improve their impacts, and help determine how to better use of scarce resources.

In addition to program benefits, there has been an increased focus and emphasis on using evidence to inform policy making in recent years. This is reflected in a number of areas including the President’s FY2021 budget which discusses the use of “Evidence to Promote Better Outcomes” and emphasizes that, “The Administration continues to implement evidence-building activities to improve policy, programs, and regulations, including through multiyear learning agendas, annual evaluation plans, and capacity assessments.“

Additionally, congress recently passed and the President signed the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act that enhances evidence-building capacity in government and requires all government agencies to develop an evaluation plan. Federal agencies are currently developing plans to implement this legislation.

There are numerous other organizations and areas focused on using and building evidence to improve programs including federal evidence reviews and private organizations pushing for and requiring evaluation as part of pilot projects.

DOL understands the importance of using data and evidence to make decisions. We want to fund programs that we know have been successful in the past and continue to learn about new strategies being implemented in the field.

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**Jessica:** Building evidence and evaluation is a continuous cycle. When building evidence it is important to plan ahead and determine how to structure your program in a way that will hopefully lead to successful outcomes for participants. To do this, you need to examine what, if any, data and evidence can help inform your program. The planning process can also apply theory, particularly in cases when there is little to no evidence. Developing a theory of change (or the expected outcomes associated with program services) will help ground the program model and lay the groundwork for what the intended impacts are. Once you have planned and determined your key program components then it is time to implement it in the field. Evaluating the results of the program will help inform potential program improvements. It is vital that the evaluation be used to then inform future planning.

This cyclical process helps ensure programs and policies are continuously informed with the latest information and evidence. We all want to help the people we serve and evaluation provides the evidence, or “tools”, so that we can do so as effectively as possible.

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**Jessica:** DOL’s REO program is committed to learning what strategies work best to assist communities in planning and implementing comprehensive reentry programs to address the full range of challenges involved in helping incarcerated individuals make successful transitions back to the community, including providing employment opportunities. That is why we are planning an independent evaluation of these grants.

First, I’d like to take a minute to discuss some of what we currently know about reentry and employment.

There is strong empirical evidence for the connection between employment and criminal activity, including recidivism. Those who are employed are less likely to become involved in criminal activity and those with previous criminal involvement are less likely to commit a new offence if they are gainfully employed.

However, there have been few rigorous studies on the cause-and-effect relationship, particularly in the context of employment-focused reentry models. Further, among the few studies produced so far, results have been mixed. It is the goal of ETA and CEO to add to the evidence base of employment-focused reentry models.

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**Jessica:** Arrest rates are highest between the ages of 18 and 24, after which point they decline sharply with age (Snyder, Cooper, and Mulako-Wangota 2017), highlighting the need for programming for young adults that is distinct from programming for adults. Advances in neuroscience have identified ways that young adults process information differently from youth and older adults, leading to differences in decision making, impulse control, and reasoning (Steinberg 2014). As a result, young adults are more susceptible than older adults to impulses that lead to criminal activity because their brains are still developing capacities for understanding the connections between actions and consequences (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2015).

Ancillary services can help to make employment programs more effective. For example, past research has found positive results for employment assistance programs with an intervention that included intensive case management and wrap-around services.

Cognitive behavioral therapy has also consistently been shown to be important in reducing recidivism.

There are many new strategies being implemented by practitioners that have yet to be rigorously examined. This includes interventions and programs that target higher quality jobs to reduce recidivism and workforce services that emphasize skill building and career preparation which may be more effective than those providing job placement assistance only.

Evidence is continuously being developed in this area and we hope to build off of that by learning from the programs implemented under this grant.

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**Jessica:** A number of the strategies I just discussed can be found in the resources listed on this page. Besides providing descriptive information about program approaches, several of the websites also provide syntheses, or summaries, of the strength of a collection of studies to establishing evidence in the field. Further, these webpages include information about programs that have been evaluated as well as theories and strategies that have yet to be tested. This list is by no means comprehensive and additional research and models exist.

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**Jessica:** As you will see in the FOA, a commitment to participate in an evaluation is a condition of award, if undertaken by DOL. This includes willingness to actively participate in the implementation and/or impact study and to assist in obtaining the cooperation of program partners.

We may require grantees to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. We may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. As a part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grantees must agree to: (1) make records available to the evaluation contractor on participants, employers, and funding; (2) provide access to program operating personnel, participants, and operational and financial records, and any other relevant documents to calculate program costs and benefits; (3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate, or support as requested, the assignment by lottery of participants to program services (i.e., treatment group) or to the control group (i.e., no program services), including the possible increased recruitment of potential participants; and (4) follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor under the direction of DOL.

I will now turn it back over to Alex to wrap up the webinar.

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**Alexander**: This concludes our prospective applicant webinar. If you have additional questions on the Young Adult Reentry Partnership Funding Opportunity Announcement, you can contact Samantha Stowers, the grants management specialist listed as the contact in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

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**Alexander**: Thank you!