



Administration for Children and Families

Office of Community Services

Division of State Assistance

Pre-Application Technical Assistance Call

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) –
Training and Technical Assistance Program:
Learning Communities Resource Center (LCRC)
*HHS-2015-ACF-OCS-ET-1006***

Friday, June 12, 2015

3:00 – 4:00 PM EST



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Agenda

Welcome/Introductions and Overview of the CSBG and the CSBG Network

Seth Hassett, Director, Division of State Assistance
Office of Community Services

Overview of the Learning Communities Resource Center Funding Opportunity Announcement

Anita Wright, MSW, Senior Advisor
Division of State Assistance, Office of Community Services

Closing Remarks

Seth Hassett, Director, Division of State Assistance
Office of Community Services



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COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)



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CSBG Overview

The role of the Office of Community Services (OCS), as it related to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), is to provide assistance to states and local communities working through a network of CSBG-eligible entities for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient.

CSBG provides states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Territories, and federal and state-recognized Indian tribes and tribal organizations, Community Action Agencies (CAA), migrant and seasonal farmworkers or other organizations designated by the states, funds to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities.

The funds support a range of services and activities to assist the needs of low-income individuals, including the homeless, migrants, and the elderly.



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Statutory Authority

This program is authorized by Sections 674(b)(2)(A) and 678A of the CSBG Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 9903(b)(2)(A) and 9913).



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Eligible Applicants

As prescribed by Section 678A(c)(2) of the CSBG Act (42 U.S.C. § 9913(c)(2)), eligible applicants are CSBG-eligible entities, or statewide or local organizations, or associations with demonstrated expertise in providing training on methods of effectively addressing the needs of low-income families and communities.

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible to receive an award. Faith-based organizations are encouraged to review the ACF Policy on Grants to Faith-Based Organizations at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/acf-policy-on-grants-to-faith-based-organizatoins>.

Individuals (including sole proprietorships) are not eligible for funding.



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How Many Awards Will be Made?

OCS expects to fund one cooperative agreement.



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How Long Will the Grant Projects Last?

- The projected project period is two (2) years (24-month Project Period with two 12-month Budget Periods).
- The overall program plan should be for the project period. However, specific details should be included for each budget period.
- Budget documents should be for annual budgets (two 12-month budget periods).

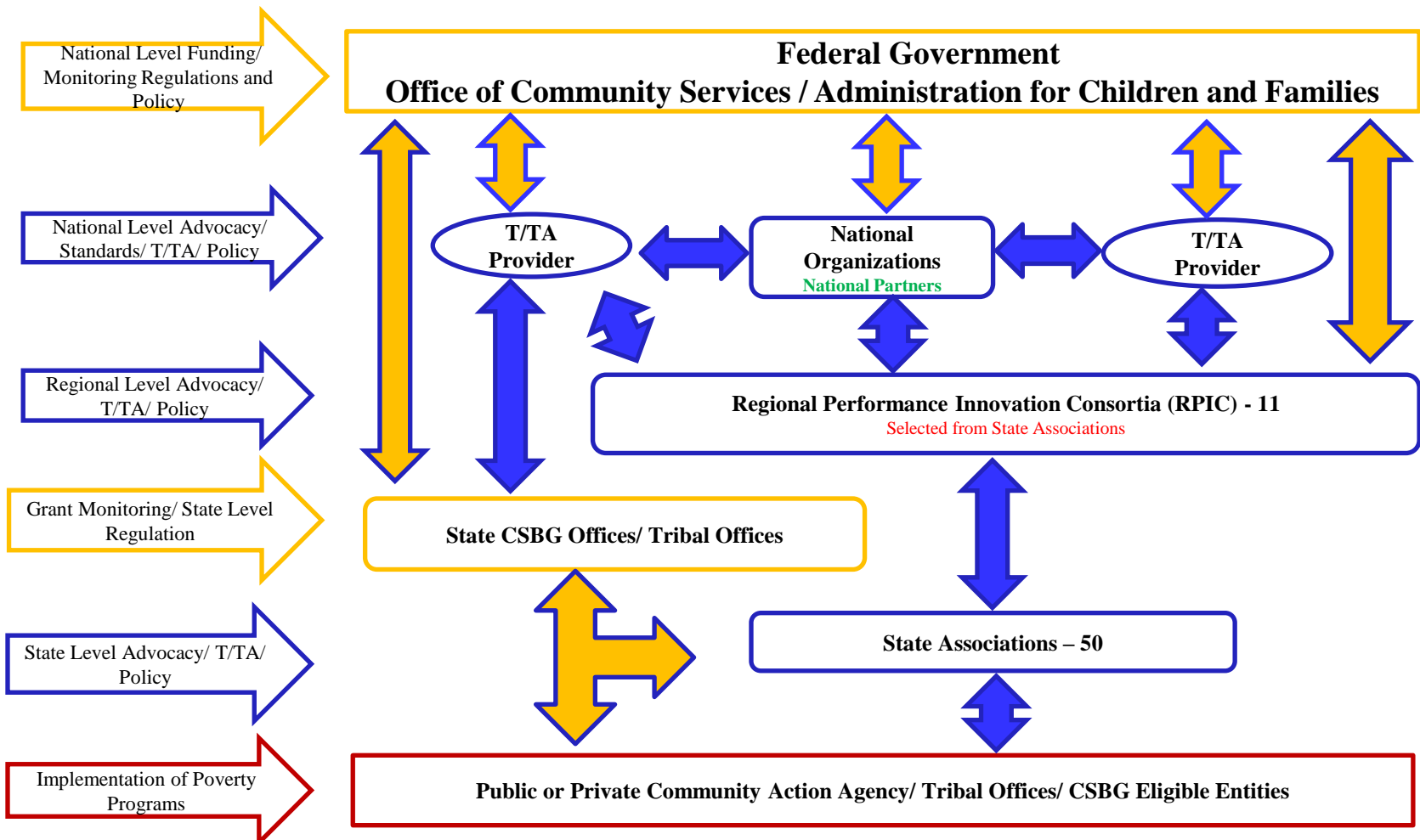


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CSBG Network Flow Chart





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The Community Services Block Grant Network

Eligible Entities

Over 1,000 agencies provide anti-poverty services and advocacy in 99% of American counties. Approximately 80% of these agencies are 501(c)3 non-profits, and 20% are public entities, part of a city or county government. These organizations are strongly community-based, with local board control, addressing poverty in a place-based system. Agencies typically run multiple programs in their mission to address the causes and the effects of poverty. CSBG funded Community Action Agencies are eligible entities.

Regional Performance and Innovation Consortium (RPIC) and State Associations

A key part of the Training and Technical Assistance network, State Associations provide member services, coordination, training and often host conferences. One Association in each region is designated as the lead agency (the RPIC) to coordinate communication and training in their ACF region, including sub-granting funds to the other State Associations.

State CSBG Lead Agency

Housed within state governments, these are the offices with the responsibility to fund, support and monitor local agencies. State Offices typically work closely with both the local community action agencies and the State Association, and are responsible for the State CSBG Plan, incorporating the agency plans for activities in their communities, as well as the annual reporting of outcomes.



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The Community Services Block Grant Network (Continued)

National T/TA Partners

CSBG funds are awarded to several national organizations with knowledge and expertise in providing services to and/or working on behalf of low-income citizens and communities. These organizations are funded to provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) to the CSBG Network.

The Office of Community Services (ACF/HHS/OCS)

The federal Office of Community Services (OCS) partners with states, communities and agencies to eliminate causes of poverty, increase self-sufficiency of individuals and families and revitalize communities. In addition to the Community Services Block Grant, other OCS programs include the Social Services Block Grant, the Community Economic Development Program, the Rural Community Development Program, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Assets for Independence Program.



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Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Program: Learning Communities Resource Center --- Funding Opportunity Announcement Overview



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History of Relevant CSBG T/TA Cooperative Agreements Related to the Learning Communities Resource Center (LCRC)

Prior to 2013, OCS funded a CSBG National Risk Mitigation and Quality Improvement T/TA Center and a CSBG State Performance Management Clearinghouse. The two grantees collaborated and established a CSBG T/TA Resource Center which contains an array of resources, including a consultant bank, to assist the CSBG Network in its anti-poverty work.

In 2013, OCS funded a cooperative agreement to support a CSBG LCRC. The LCRC maintains quality T/TA information and is responsible for creating and maintaining a national resource center on CSBG learning communities; collecting and ensuring validity of resources that employ quality practices; facilitating custom T/TA services and referrals; assessing the impact of technical assistance; and promoting meaningful and ongoing dialogue and peer-to-peer networking on topics and services addressing the causes and conditions of poverty.

This funding opportunity is intended to support future learning community endeavors and to better align, support, and enhance progress made under the 2013 LCRC cooperative agreement and the CSBG T/TA Resource Center.



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Purpose and Goals of the LCRC Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

This FOA is intended to fund one Learning Communities Resource Center (LCRC) cooperative agreement. The LCRC will be responsible for building the long-term capacity of the CSBG Network by creating and promoting learning communities and by improving access to validated quality information and resources on innovative, evidence-based, evidence-informed, field tested, exemplary, and /or promising practices that improve conditions for low-income individuals, families and communities.

This FOA has a strong focus on T/TA assistance and on managing the work of CSBG learning communities. OCS intends for this project to help the CSBG Network promote better use of outcome information to identify effective practices to address causes and conditions of poverty. The cooperative agreement will support an enhanced resource center including a web-based system to provide T/TA to CSBG State Lead Agencies and eligible entities.



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Child Rural Poverty Effort

This FOA includes a specialized effort focused on alleviating child poverty in rural communities and expanding access to two generation service delivery approaches. The White House Rural Council recently launched *Rural Impact*, a new effort to bring together federal agencies and public and private partners to support a multi-generational approach to investing in rural families, communities, and tribal places. *Rural Impact*, is a sustained campaign to address rural child poverty by supporting improved well-being and upward economic mobility of children in rural and tribal places. Applicants are expected to present a plan to create a new learning cluster focused on rural child poverty and multi-generational programs. This includes selecting a subject matter expert to guide the effort, developing a strategic work plan, and convening planning meetings that might include State CSBG Lead Agencies, CSBG-eligible entities, and other interagency stakeholders to develop a focused and impactful initiative.



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Core Functions

Activities undertaken should ensure that the LCRC will serve as a national clearinghouse for T/TA information and resources and will be responsible for:

- Establishing, convening and leading the work of a National Steering Committee of Stakeholders to assist with setting goals and priorities for the LCRC. The Committee must convene at least quarterly to discuss topics such as meaningful outcomes using performance measures and management systems, community needs assessments and other relevant topics. The Committee will give feedback on plans and activities conducted by the LCRC;
- Working with OCS and other Stakeholders to address both specific and broad T/TA issues;
- Establishing and providing leadership for several specific learning communities. Each group is expected to meet at least quarterly to share experiences and collaborate on anti-poverty topics and information;



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Core Functions Continued

- Recommending strategies for enhanced coordination of T/TA supported at federal, state, and communities to ensure the use of exemplary practices across the CSBG Network that focus on services to help alleviate poverty conditions;
- Collecting, managing, and disseminating valid T/TA information and resources that employ quality practices;
- Facilitating customized T/TA services and referrals and assessing the impact of such services;
- Establishing and implementing a plan for enhancing the LCRC web-based system; and
- Promoting quality practices throughout the CSBG Network that encourage continuous dialogue and peer-to-peer networking focused on services to alleviate causes and conditions of poverty.



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Program Requirements

- Clearly describe the process for convening a kick-off meeting, webinar, or conference call with OCS;
- Develop and promote learning community models that increase the analysis and use of Community Action outcome information;
- Provide consultation and T/TA to states, RPICs, CAAs and their partners for establishing learning communities with safe opportunities to analyze outcome data and identify strategies and/or programs that are achieving robust results;
- Customize T/TA services and referrals tailored to the needs of specific States CSBG Lead Agencies and CSBG-eligible entities;
- Facilitate access to local and regional technical assistance resources and, as appropriate, to national CSBG T/TA providers;
- Convene and lead frequent national, regional, or state level learning community groups and technical assistance opportunities. High-poverty areas should be targeted so that CAAs in those areas become more informed about comprehensive approaches to poverty reduction;



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Program Requirements Continued

- Enhance and maintain a web-based resource center to assist in coordination of national T/TA through a shared calendar, a consultant bank, discussion forums, toolkits, recorded webinars, and other materials developed throughout the CSBG Network. The enhancements and maintenance of the website must ensure information and resources are accessible, applicable, and accountable to the diversity within the CSBG Network. Public access to toolkits and resource materials should be available to the maximum extent feasible. It is strongly recommended that the website is 508 compliant;
- Facilitate access for the CSBG Network to information on evidence-based practice evidence informed services approaches. This would include linkages to web-based data sources that disseminate research-based information on low-income individuals and families; and
- Disseminate knowledge and resources to the CSBG Network. This includes quality T/TA information and resources focused on a wide range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty, and replicable plans and practice models.



Program Requirements Continued

A critical requirement is for the successful applicant to expand the cadre of CSBG Learning Community Groups. Each learning community must have a strong focus on service strategies that address and impact the causes and conditions of poverty. While the applicant may propose learning communities and OCS and the selected grantee may add learning communities on emerging topics, a minimum of eight learning community groups is required--one for each of the following areas:

- Place-based strategies for community revitalization;
- Multi-generation strategies;
- National poverty Trends;
- Decreasing homelessness;
- Bundling services to improve outcomes;
- Financial empowerment for families;
- Toxic stress and trauma; and
- Child rural poverty



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Key Results

It is expected that strengthening and expanding the ability of State CSBG Lead Agencies, RPIC grantees, CAAs, State Associations and other stakeholders will lead to:

- Learning community groups producing outcomes that enhance the ability of State CSBG Lead Agencies and CSBG-eligible entities to use performance data to improve services and meet goals outlined in state and local CSBG plans. Specific deliverables may include white papers, manuals and guides, documented research reviews, new formal partnerships, catalogues of noteworthy intervention models and pilot proposals;
- Stronger planning and coordination that is more responsive to challenges that hinder efforts to effectively address local service needs and conditions of low-incomes households and communities;
- More accountability, and performance outcomes that demand the most efficient and effective use of CSBG T/TA resources among State CSBG Lead Agencies;



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Key Results Continued

- Ongoing collaborations and information-sharing sessions between State CSBG Lead Agencies, RPICs, and local agencies;
- Increased access and availability of innovative and organization-specific T/TA approaches focused on a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities;
- The development, improvement, and/or creation of practices, activities, and services that maximize the resources of CSBG-eligible entities; and
- The maintenance of technical assistance resources that help to advance the efforts of State CSBG Lead Agencies and CSBG-eligible entities to carry out the mandate of the CSBG Act.



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Federal Involvement Under the Cooperative Agreement

In order to ensure that OCS meets its compliance and T/TA responsibilities for CSBG and continues its partnership with the CSBG Network, the grant awarded under this FOA will be funded in the form of a Cooperative Agreement. Federal involvement may include the following:

- Participating in a kick-off meeting, webinar, or conference call for State CSBG Lead Agencies, State CAA Associations, RPIC grantees and others to provide updates on the LCRC and pending T/TA information and resources;
- Convening in-person planning and coordination meetings involving CSBG T/TA providers to information about proposed T/TA projects, identify areas for potential coordination, and identify priority areas for T/TA projects;
- Convening conference calls, reviewing timelines and assessing progress in addressing goals among CSBG T/TA providers and other stakeholders.



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Federal Involvement Under the Cooperative Agreement (Continued)

- Reviewing recommendations and work plans to assess performance of TA projects in improving the quality of grantee activities and to assure coordination with other CSBG T/TA projects and activities;
- Identifying CSBG T/TA grantees that require T/TA in compiling innovative, exemplary practices related to a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities;
- Participating in webinars with CSBG T/TA service providers and facilitating the exchange of information that helps to identify common quality improvement issues; and
- Reviewing and determining additional learning community topic areas.



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Project Description

The project description provides the majority of information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for available assistance. It should address the activity for which federal funds are being requested, and should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the program as described in *Section I. Program Description*. Supporting documents should be included where they can present information clearly and succinctly. When appropriate, applicants should cite the evaluation criteria that are relevant to specific components of their project description. Awarding offices use this and other information in making their funding recommendations. It is important, therefore, that this information be included in the application in a manner that is clear and complete.



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Approach

- Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed project will be accomplished.
- Applicants must account for all functions or activities identified in the application.
- Describe any design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and/or community involvement in the project.
- Provide a list of organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals that will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.
- Cite potential obstacles and challenges to accomplishing project goals and explain strategies that will be used to address these challenges.



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Program Performance Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan must:

- Describe the plan for monitoring ongoing processes and the progress toward the goals and objectives of the project.
- Describe the systems and processes that will support the organization's performance management requirements through effective tracking of performance outcomes, including a description of how the organization will collect and manage data in a way that allows for accurate and timely reporting of performance outcomes.
- Describe how the evaluation will include participation and feedback from the learning community groups, State CSBG Lead Agencies, RPICs, CAAs and other CSBG stakeholders.



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Program Performance Evaluation Plan (Continued)

The evaluation plan must:

- Include an assessment of the T/TA activities undertaken by the LCRC, and an assessment of the validity and reliability of tool kits and other products used to achieve the goals of the LCRC.
- Describe plans for evaluating outcomes from training and technical assistance events.
- Describe how the plan for performance evaluation will contribute to ensuring that immediate T/TA needs are address as well as the ways in which it will help the CSBG Network better address long-term T/TA needs related to quality improvement and reducing poverty.



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CSBG LCRC Application Review Criteria

Criteria Sections	Maximum Points
Objectives and Need for Assistance	15
Infrastructure Development	15
Implementation Plan	30
Outcomes Expected	20
Organizational Capacity	10
Budget and Budget Justification	10



Objectives and Need for Assistance (15 Points)

In this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

The project description is clear and complete and includes a timeline with specific and measurable goals and objectives. The project narrative of the application presents a clear statement of work to be undertaken and objectives for the period of the proposed work.

Specifically:

- (1) The applicant outlines a clear plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed LCRC's work will be accomplished, accounts for all functions or activities identified for the T/TA approaches, and for the structure and logistics for the learning community groups.
- The applicant states the reasons for taking the proposed approach rather than others, and describes any unusual feature of the project such as design or technological innovation, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement. (0 - 3 points)



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Objectives and Need for Assistance Continued

- The overall project goals and objectives show a clear understanding of the purpose for the LCRC, and the plans and procedures for achieving them, are well-developed. Goals and objectives parallel those of the logic model. (0 - 3 points)
- The applicant presents a well-defined logic model which guides the proposed project. The logic model demonstrates strong links between proposed inputs and activities and intended short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes for the LCRC. (0 - 2 points)
- Applicant describes a plan to assess and document the success of the project, and to measure the effectiveness of the LCRC and the benefits to the targeted population. (0 - 2 points)

(2) The applicant clearly identifies the need for assistance, the significant features and components of the LCRC, clearly states the goals (i.e., products of an effective project) and subordinate objectives (i.e., measurable steps for reaching these goals) of the project, and provides rationale for the project goals. The applicant clearly describes how the goals and objectives of proposed project activities will address the needs of State CSBG Lead Agencies, CSBG-eligible entities, and other organizations in the CSBG Network. (0 - 5 points).



Infrastructure Development (15 points)

In reviewing this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- (1) The application proposes a clear and thorough plan to develop necessary web resources or maintain and update any existing websites. (0 - 10 points).
- (2) The applicant demonstrates the capacity to enhance and maintain a web-based information exchange system that includes a database of materials, a tracking system, and addresses the long-term needs of the CSBG Network as described in *Section IV.2 The Project Description, Infrastructure Development*. (0 - 5 points)



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Implementation Plan (30 points)

In reviewing this section, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- (1) The applicant presents a well-conceived overall approach to the project, including a preliminary design for the implementation and details describing how project will be implemented in an effective way to achieve the purpose and goals stated in *Section I. Program Description, Overview of the Learning Communities Resource Center, Purpose and Goals*.
- The applicant thoroughly describes a plan to create subject-focused learning community groups to promote innovative, evidence-based, or promising practices among CSBG-eligible entities and State CSBG Lead Agencies. (0 - 2 points).
- The applicant provides a clear and thorough description of the facilitation process to provide custom T/TA services and referrals tailored to meet the needs of specific CSBG-eligible entities, and State CSBG Lead Agencies. (0 - 2 points).



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Implementation Plan Continued

- The applicant identifies strategies to help CSBG-eligible entities and State CSBG Lead Agencies integrate enhanced or newly acquired information into their policies and operational procedures. (0 - 2 points)
- The applicant clearly documents a plan to develop educational materials and T/TA documents that address a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities. (0 - 2 points)
- The applicant provides a clear description on the process for convening a kick-off meeting, webinar, or conference call(s), as mentioned in *Section I. Program Description, Overview of the Learning Communities Resource Center, Purpose and Goals* and *Section IV.2 The Project Description, Implementation Plan of this FOA*. (0 - 2 points)



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Implementation Plan Continued

(2) The applicant describes a clear plan for ensuring that the learning communities meet regularly, remain focused on their respective topic areas, and that each community produces action oriented deliverables that are clearly stated in the application. (0 - 5 points)

(3) The applicant describes a clear approach for forming and overseeing a National Steering Committee. (0 - 5 points)

(4) The applicant clearly describes its capacity to fully implement the specialized effort on rural child poverty, including the ability to secure a subject matter expert for the project. (0 - 5 points)



Implementation Plan Continued

(5) The applicant describes a clear plan that includes the method for providing T/TA focused on this project's core functions, including website enhancement, expansion and maintenance; information collection and resource management; custom T/TA services and referrals; and information dissemination. Specifically:

- Applicant clearly describes the process used to determine which materials will be included and excluded from the LCRC. (0 - 3 points)
- Applicant clearly describes the quality control process to manage and assess the validity and quality of informational resources. (0 - 2 points)



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Outcomes Expected (20 points)

In reviewing the outcomes expected, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- (1) The applicant describes how the project will assure long-term program and management improvements for State CSBG Lead Agencies and CSBG-eligible entities in the interest of enhancing CSBG services and activities throughout the CSBG Network. (0 - 5 points)
- (2) The applicant describes how the project will contribute to and promote a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities that State CSBG Lead Agencies and other CSBG Network members can reference for guidance, insight, and possible replication. (0 - 5 points)
- (3) The applicant describes their strategy for developing workshops or training events. (0 - 5 points)
- (4) The applicant describes methods of securing participant feedback and evaluations of proposed project activities. (0 - 5 points)



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Organizational Capacity (10 points)

In reviewing the organizational capacity, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

(1) The responsibilities and roles of the organization's staff and its partner(s) are specifically stated and substantiated by requirements stated in *Section IV.2. The Project Description, Organizational Capacity*. Specifically:

- The applicant provides strong evidence of sufficient experience and expertise in the program areas of this FOA; in collaboration with partner organizations; in culturally competent service delivery; and in administration, development, implementation, management, and evaluation of similar projects. (0 - 3 points)
- The applicant describes, for example in a resume, the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the proposed project director and primary staff members, and documents how their specific qualifications and level of expertise will support the successful implementation of the proposed project activities, particularly as it relates to a full range of services to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities, programmatic aspects of community services, knowledge management, website development, and maintenance. (0 - 3 points).



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Organizational Capacity Continued

In reviewing the organizational capacity, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

The applicant clearly documents the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of each proposed project staff position, including consultants, subcontractors, and/or partners. These are well-defined and appropriate to the successful implementation of the proposed project with respect to the target population. (0 - 2 points)

The applicant clearly describes a plan to ensure that confidential and/or sensitive information is properly handled and safeguarded. (0 - 2 points)



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Budget and Budget Justification (10 points)

In reviewing the budget and budget justification, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- (1) The applicant includes a budget that details the itemized expenses for the project. The narrative budget justification clearly states how each itemized expense will be used. (0 - 5 points)

- (2) The costs of the project are reasonable, allocable and program-related and are commensurate with the types and range of activities and services to be conducted, the number of participants to be served, and the expected goals and objectives. (0 - 5 points).



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Two-File Requirement

- **Each applicant is required to upload ONLY two electronic files, excluding SFs and OMB-approved forms.**
- **File One:** Must contain the entire Project Description, and the Budget and Budget Justification (including a line-item budget and a budget narrative).
- **File Two:** Must contain all documents required in the Appendices.

Adherence to the Two-File Requirement:

- No more than two files will be accepted for the review. Applications with additional files will be amended and files will be removed from the review. SFs and OMB-approved forms will not be considered additional files.



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Project Description

The **combined** page number limitation for the Project Description *and* the Appendices must not exceed 150 pages.

The Project Description must include the following items in this order. All items must be labeled, numbered, and organized clearly in the Table of Contents:

- Table of Contents
- Project Summary/Abstract
- Objectives and Need for Assistance
- Outcomes Expected
- Approach
- Project Timeline and Milestones
- Program Performance Evaluation Plan
- Organizational Capacity
- Dissemination Plan
- Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds
- Project Budget and Budget Justification



Project Description

The **combined** page number limitation for the Project Description *and* the Appendices must not exceed 150 pages.

The Appendices has a suggested limitation of 75 pages and must include the following in this order. All items must be labeled, numbered, and organized clearly in the Table of Contents:

- Table of Contents
- Proof of Legal Status of Entity/Proof of Non-Profit Status
- Logic Model
- Protection of Sensitive and/or Confidential Information
- Third-party Agreements
- Letters of Support
- Resumes
- Other Supporting Documentation



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Submission

- Applications are due **Monday, July 13, 2015**
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit in advance of the deadline.
- Electronic submission required through <http://www.Grants.gov>
- Electronic applications received after 11:59 p.m. Eastern time will be disqualified.



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For Questions or Comments

Contact us at OCSgrants@acf.hhs.gov

or

(855) 792-6551