

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and Early Head Start Expansion: 2016 Funding Opportunity Announcements

Melissa Brodowski: Great. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our webinar today on the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and Early Head Start Expansion funding opportunity announcements. During this webinar we will provide a brief overview of the new funding announcements that were just posted and highlight the resources available for prospective applicants. Just have a few logistical announcements for everyone.

This webinar is being recorded, and the recording and the slides will be available immediately afterwards so you can download it and share it with colleagues who were not able to log on at this time. Just to note, we will not be taking any questions during the webinar but please submit questions to us by e-mail and we'll show you that slide in a few moments. That will be the best way to get to us, and we'll post a summary of the questions and ACF responses as they're available on our grant application support website. Again, we'll go through that with you later in the webinar.

But to get us started I am very pleased to turn this over to Linda Smith, our deputy assistant secretary for early childhood development, for a few opening remarks about the new funding that is available. Linda's leadership in early childhood has been instrumental for getting bipartisan support for the significant increases in early childhood funding over the last several years, and we've greatly appreciated her leadership at ACF.

Linda Smith: Okay. Well, thank you, Melissa. And it is a very exciting day for us because today we're announcing three new funding opportunities that will build on the existing investments that we have made in high-quality early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers across the country. We know that Early Head Start is only able to serve about five percent of eligible low income children and families, way below what we need in this country.

Two years ago we worked with congress, the administration, and early childhood stakeholders to launch the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership program and provided a significant investment of over \$500 million to expand Early Head Start and bring those high-quality learning experiences to more children in child care and family child care centers across the country.

These new announcements will allow us to build on the momentum from those initial investments by providing additional funding for partnerships and also to expand Early Head Start across the country. The new announcements underscore the importance of assessing community needs and looking at the data about the availability of childhood programs in your communities and to propose a model that best meets those needs, whether it's through partnerships, Early Head Start expansion, or a combination of both. We are committed to increasing the supply and access to more high-quality early learning environments through these programs. We have already seen the tremendous benefits over the last few years of implementation with our initial investments in the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership.

First, the significant benefits to families and children who are now receiving comprehensive services, health and developmental screening, family engagement, and family support services in child care programs that were not there before. We have also seen significant improvements in child care and family child care settings, investments in classrooms, playgrounds, equipment, curriculum, supplies, and other enhancements to the centers and family child care homes.

We have seen major investments in the early childhood workforce. We now have more infant-toddler

teachers with CDAs, AAs, and even more moving into bachelor programs. More than 8600 teachers have now seen an increase in benefits, salaries, and professional development and other support to help increase the supply of high-quality infant-toddler child development professionals across the country. And finally, we're seeing many states doing work to align early childhood policies, regulations, and resources with quality improvement support at the national, state, and local level.

We know that it hasn't been easy and that successful partnerships take time to develop. There is a strong need for clear communication and making sure that partnership agreements provide enough resources for the child care partners to ensure high quality, but we also know that it's definitely possible. And we have started a model of working together across programs that has demonstrated a significant shift in the way Head Start and child care programs work together in this country. We are excited about the progress, and we look forward to having another great pool of applicants through these new announcements.

Thank you for all the work that you do, and now I'm going to turn it back over to Melissa.

Melissa: Thank you so much, Linda. Your leadership has really been instrumental for getting this program off the ground.

So as you can see from the next slide, we are going to be talking about the announcements, going over who can apply, providing some background on the programs, particularly Early Head Start as well as CCDF, and highlight a few points around the required elements and the review criteria. And we want to highlight several resources that are available to help agencies apply.

So I just wanted to put up a reminder. Even though we're doing some highlights, we want you to read the entire Funding Opportunity Announcement that you're interested in. We're not going to go into every detail over every point. So we really want you to read the entire announcement. And then as we mentioned, there is the e-mail for you to send your questions, which is on the screen right now.

I am now going to turn it over to two colleagues who will share some highlights from the announcements. First, we will have Shawna Pinckney who's the director of the Division of Grants within the Office of Head Start who's leading this effort, the grant reviews as well as the announcement process. And then we have Stacy McCallan who is a program specialist in the TA Division with the Office of Child Care to talk about certain sections related to CCDF. So Shawna?

Shawna Pinckney: Thank you, Melissa. The full Funding Opportunity Announcements are now currently available either on grants.gov or the ACF website as well under funding opportunities under that link. You can also use the list of numbers and letters that are here behind the name of the Funding Opportunity Announcements. We call those the funding opportunity number. If you use that set of numbers and letters, you can use that to search for the announcements again on grants.gov and/or the ACF website.

As a reminder, there are three Funding Opportunity Announcements posted, one that is for all regional – regionally-based funding in Early Head Start expansion and/or Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, one focused on American Indian Alaska Native program, and the third focused on our migrant and seasonal Early Head Start expansion partnerships. We encourage folks to identify the Funding Opportunity Announcement that best meets the needs of your community that you're interested in applying for.

In terms of who is eligible for this funding, first, important to note that any public entity, state, non-profit, for-profit organizations that are community-based and/or faith-based organizations are certainly eligible to apply. In addition, all of our existing current grantees – that is Head Start, Early Head Start, our Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees, migrant and seasonal grantees, AIAN grantees, or travel grantees – all existing grantees are eligible to apply. If you are not an existing grantee but are interested in this funding opportunity and meet our other eligibility requirements, you too are welcome and encouraged to apply. And again, those include public entities, for-profits, non-profits, faith-based organizations, colleges, universities, and certainly state entities as well.

Very important note that as an applicant you have a choice in applying of only one of the three ways. You must choose one option that best meets the needs of your community. Your choices are Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, non-partnership Early Head Start expansion, or a mix of both options. Also important to note, if, as an applicant, you do submit more than one application for service area – and we define a service area as a community that you are providing services. It could be by zip code. It could be by county, or it could be by state. If you submit more than one application, we will only review the last on-time submitted application from your applicant entity. Very important piece to keep in mind. You must select one option to apply for.

We want to spend a few moments just talking a little bit more about Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. We know that many of you have paid attention to the enormous effort that we have made here at ACF highlighting these opportunities over the past year and a half and highlighting the work that has been going on with more than 275 grantees that were funded as part of the original appropriated \$500 million that we allocated in FY '14. We did a large outreach effort at that time and have learned a lot from our first year of funding and implementation. We worked hard in this Funding Opportunity Announcement, and we hope that you see it as you read the document, to try to incorporate all of the lessons we learned in our first year and a half of implementation.

And again, to summarize the goal of the partnership, we really are working to bring together the best of the strengths of Early Head Start and the strengths of our child care partners to support Early Head Start programs in states and community in expanding high-quality early learning development opportunities for our infants and toddlers.

New or existing grantees can partner with local child care partners and/or family child care programs, but you will be required to leverage the current investment through the Child Care and Development Fund or CCDF and other sources to improve the quality of infant-toddler care. Layering of these funds is used to enhance and support early learning settings and provide new full-day comprehensive services that meet the needs of working families.

Infants and toddlers in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership will also benefit from facilities and homes that are licensed to now meet Early Head Start facility safety requirements. Other what we call carry-over benefits for all children who are served in these programs include children in classroom that are also enrolled with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership children will benefit from lower ratios, class size, and qualifications of teachers, just to name a few.

Finally, while enrolled in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, those children will be eligible for direct family specific benefits such as home visits, health tracking, promotion, and family partnership agreements, again, just to name a few of the benefits that participants will be able to receive.

When we think about our Early Head Start program, it began in 1995 when we added it to the Head Start

program. It was added to the Head Start Act. The purpose of Early Head Start is to provide family center services for low income families with very young children, designed to promote the development of children, and to enable their parents to fulfill their role as parents and to move towards self- sufficiency.

In Early Head Start we continue to promote children's school readiness, but for our infants and toddlers it is in the relationship-based learning environment that supports children's growth in language, literacy, math, science, social-emotional functioning, physical development and well-being, and their approaches to learning. We also support our infants and toddlers through the provision of health, educational, nutritional, social, and family support services. And for us, we talk about that broadly as our comprehensive services approach to early child care.

Just a little bit more about the scope and design of Early Head Start in terms of what we think about that's really important for our infants and toddlers. This is certainly not a complete list but just highlights some of the things, again, that we think are most important for our youngest children that we serve. We seek to provide early and continuous intensive comprehensive child development services and family supports that, again, enhance these services, physical, social, emotional, and certainly the intellectual development of participating children.

We work to support the positive parent-child interactions, to support the parents' roles as parents, and to work with the program to coordinate with other services provided in the state. Some of those might include home-based services, other programs in the community, programs that support our infants and toddlers with disabilities, and homeless infants, just to name a few. We also work to ensure that children with documented behavioral programs are supported through Early Head Start using appropriate screening, and we work to make formal linkages with Head Start programs in order to support continuity and transition of those children and families through their education.

I now want to turn it over to my colleague Stacy McCallan from the Office of Child Care to share more information about the CCDF program.

Stacy McCallan: Thank you, and I'm happy to be here in partnership with colleagues from OHS and ECD to share information about CCDF. CCDF is the primary federal program devoted to providing families with child care subsidies and supporting states, territories, and tribes and improving the quality of child care programs. CCDF is administered by ACF Office of Child Care or OCC, which provides funding, oversight, and technical assistance to states, territories, and tribes that administer the program.

As you can see, the mission of OCC is to ensure that more children and low income families have access to high-quality care, and we are so excited about the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership because it is completely in line with this mission. And we see tremendous benefit to the partnerships that provided to families and providers across the country.

CCDF was reauthorized on a bipartisan basis in 2014, and this reauthorization includes a number of important reforms to the program. For example, the new law phases in an increase in the minimum amount of funds that must be used to improve the quality of child care and other additional services to parents, such as resource and referral counseling regarding the selection of child care providers from 4 percent to 9 percent over a five-year period. In addition, the law requires states to spend a minimum of 3 percent to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers.

This slide speaks to some of the opportunities for aligning the goals of CCDF with the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership program. CCDF grantees – that is states, territories, and tribes – have flexibility in

many areas that can help support partnerships. For example, CCDF grantees set income eligibility rules that can be aligned with Early Head Start and set policy on how often to redetermine a family's subsidy eligibility. Most families who receive child care assistance through CCDF are required to pay a copayment, which CCDF grantees can waive for families below poverty, such as families eligible for Early Head Start.

While the majority of CCDF services are funded through certificates or vouchers linked to individual eligible children, CCDF grantees also have the option of awarding grants and contracts to provide a stable source of funding for child care programs. Grants and contracts are effective in building a new supply in areas where there are gaps and can contain accountability mechanisms to promote higher quality services. Regardless of the funding mechanism, whether voucher, grants, or contracts, child care subsidies used in combination with the partnership funding provided under this FOA will allow the partnership grantees to improve the quality of environments and services for a greater number of low income children.

For the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees we are expecting a certain amount of funding to come from subsidies. Project budgets should reflect federal funds, projections for child care subsidies, and any other funds that currently support children in the child care center or family child care site. Project budgets for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership application should also reflect child care subsidies for no less than 25 percent of the proposed number of slots, including a description of how grantees plan to recruit, enroll, and retain children and families with child care subsidies in those slots.

Note, this 25 percent subsidy requirement does not apply to the American Indian and Alaska Native or migrant and seasonal FOAs. ACF recognizes that there are states where this may be challenging because of state subsidy policies. Applicants must demonstrate knowledge and awareness of their state's subsidy and CCDF policy landscapes in their proposed service area to guide their program and fiscal plan and effectively leverage available resources.

Applicants whose project budgets reflect child care subsidies for less than 25 percent of the proposed number of slots must also provide a detailed justification in their narrative explaining the barriers and challenges involved and their plans for increasing the percentage of slots with children and families who use child care subsidies over time. Grantees must ensure that children whose families experience job loss or the loss of child care subsidies will continue to be served. ACF expects partnership grantees, including those adopting a combination approach, to direct a significant portion of funding to their child care partners.

And this slide just highlights the three options, again, for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership. The first is a center-based option, which is the full year center-based program. The family child care option includes all Early Head Start with family child care as primary delivery with some structural differences like ratios, space, and class size, and a combination of center-based and family child care.

We know that child care is provided through a broad array of public, private, for-profit, and not-for-profit programs and providers. Family child care is an important part of the child care system, especially for infants and toddlers who are more likely to be cared for in home-based settings compared to older children. In addition, family child care is an important child care option for children whose parents work non-standard work hours or schedules, and it is particularly important in the many rural areas where there are few child care centers.

I'll turn this back over to Shawna to say a few words about the Head Start Performance Standards in the next few slides.

Shawna Pinckney: We wanted to draw everyone's attention to a very important set of federal regulations that all of our grantees in Head Start, Head Start grantees and Early Head Start grantees, certainly our Early Head Start Partnership grantees as well, must comply with. So we included here the citing for where folks can find our federal regulations. We also have them available online at our grant applicant support toolkit which we'll reference in a little bit here. But as a reminder, all grantees are required – these regulations are mandatory for folks to comply with. Some folks participating in this webinar may be familiar with the fact that we are currently in the process of reissuing our Head Start Program Performance Standards. At the time that you apply for this funding opportunity, you should write your application to comply with the current Performance Standards that are issued and not for what is to come.

We wanted to highlight a few, only a few places where our Performance Standards really guide our grantees in terms of how they are supporting and operating their program. The Performance Standards includes regulations on recruitment, eligibility, child health and safety, early childhood education and development, nutrition, disabilities, family partnerships, transportation, and facilities, again, just to name a few. And you can read more about them online.

We also wanted to draw folks' attention to some key Early Head Start requirements for group size and ratios when we're thinking about center-based options or family child care options. As you are planning your application, thinking about how you'll respond to each Funding Opportunity Announcement, I ask you to carefully consider the staffing requirements for Early Head Start around your teacher-child ratios and your group sizes.

So for center-based option, we require there to be one teacher for every four infants and toddlers and a maximum group size of eight. For family child care one provider can have a maximum group size of six with no more than two children under the age of two. The provider can have an assistant with a max group size of 12 with no more than four infants and toddlers with only two under the age of 18 months.

Additional highlights on the Early Head Start requirements around staff credentials. We wanted to make sure that folks knew that the requirement for when you are applying for this Funding Opportunity Announcement, you want to ensure that the staff you are proposing meet the Early Head Start requirements and/or you have a plan to have those staff meet the Early Head Start teacher requirement.

So in Early Head Start our teachers are required to have a minimum of a child development associate credential or commonly known as a CDA or have been trained or have the equivalent coursework in early childhood development, and all teachers have been trained or have the equivalent coursework in early childhood development that focuses on infant-toddler development.

I'll now turn it back over to Melissa.

Melissa: Thanks, Shawna. On the next slide we just wanted to say a few more words about the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership roles and responsibilities because these are very specific areas that are outlined in the FOA. It's described in more detail in the program overview in section one, program description of the FOA, but the key points to really highlight are that the partnership grantees must ensure that all children receive services as set forth by the Head Start Program Performance Standards, which Shawna just spoke about, whether that's done by the grantee or through support or financial assistance to the child care partner.

The partner sites are responsible for meeting all the direct education and health and safety requirements, and then grantees will ensure that all other comprehensive services will be provided either by the grantees or partners or through referrals. And all of this, as Linda mentioned in the very beginning, has to be set forth in detail in the partnership agreement.

So we wanted to call your attention because, based on the lessons learned from the first year and a half of implementation, there is an additional section on start-up and the implementation period in this description section that provides an overview of the types of activities that would be part of that start-up.

And there's a separate section just related to the partnership that we wanted you to be aware, and some of those key activities include conducting self-assessment and partner assessment activities, including applicants assessing their own capacity to provide technical assistance to partners to meet the standards or whether they're going to need to contract with other entities and that whole decision with the partners around the needs related to facilities, referral enrollment protocols, environments, staffing, and professional development.

The other important activities are really identifying the viable partners and jointly developing those contracts that really specify the sites of services, roles of responsibilities, the selection of the sites and that really underscoring these contracts should be individualized to address the unique needs of each partner.

An important element of this is establishing the payment terms and conditions to ensure the partners have access to sufficient funds to accomplish the goals and objectives established in the contract, and we also highlight that partners should be paid on an enrollment basis rather than on an attendance basis because there would be other costs associated with fully preparing partnership staff and the environment to meet Head Start Performance Standards that must be calculated into the payments made under the agreement and timing of these are also critical. These budgets must also anticipate the loss of child care subsidy or other funding and must recognize, as we spoke of earlier, that the loss of funding is not a basis for disenrolling a partnership child already enrolled in the program.

Clearly an important element of these start-up activities are also developing the plans for staffing coverage that allows for primary caregiving relationships and continuity of care for partnership-enrolled children. And as Shawna spoke earlier about the ratios, there's a lot of considerations that will need to be done to provide the adequate coverage for the full hours of operation. And then finally, really developing plans to support professional development of staff over time and the strategies to ensure that wages of partnership caregivers are also on par with similarly qualified Early Head Start teachers that would be part of those agreements.

The next slide talks about the project period and just to let everyone know that the period will be up to 54 months with an initial budget period of up to 18 months and then three subsequent 12-month budget periods. We just wanted to note that partnership grantees awarded funds under this authority shall not be subject to the requirements of the system for designation renewal as defined by Section 641 of the Head Start Act for activities funded under this award until 18 months after the date of the award. This is a similar provision for the first round of grantees that we've put into the second FOA as well.

And then in terms of the non-federal match, as you can see, grantees must provide at least 20 percent of the total approved costs as match, and this non-federal share may be met by cash or in-kind

contributions. There is a note in the FOA that grantees may request a waiver or reduction of non-federal share, and this request can be submitted with a grant application or during the budget negotiation period. But we do want to note that the approval for this request is not guaranteed.

And if we go to the next section, we just wanted to spend a few moments highlighting the evaluation criteria and the distribution of points for each of the review criteria. This is in Section 4.5 and 5.1 of the Funding Opportunity Announcement, and I think an important element to note is, because of the emphasis on the importance of really assessing the community need and identifying the program that best meets those needs, that section has been awarded 30 points in this Funding Opportunity Announcement.

And then the approach section has awarded 30 points, and there is a number of other subcriteria in the announcement that I won't go into detail here, but we really want to underscore that you should review each of those criteria and the subcriteria very, very carefully. The organizational infrastructure and management systems will be allocated a maximum of 15 points, and then as you can see, staffing is also another 15 points as well as the budget for 15 points. We have some bonus point criteria that I'll go over in the next slide, but just to let you know that we have an unusual point structure in this Funding Opportunity Announcement. It's going to total a little bit more than 100 – it's 105. And then if an applicant applies for all the bonus points, there's a possibility of 114 maximum total.

So in the next slide, just to share a little bit about the bonus points, we know that having high-quality infant and toddler care is particularly important and often lacking in areas with high concentrations of poverty and in rural areas. So we're providing bonus points for the following. The first, applicants that propose services in high areas of poverty identified by zip codes listed in our appendix will receive three bonus points, and for purposes of this Funding Opportunity Announcement, we defined high-poverty zip codes as areas where at least 30 percent of the residents live below the poverty level and in which 120 children younger than age five reside.

So again, in the appendix will specify each of those zip codes that are eligible for those bonus points. In the second bonus point category applicants that propose to serve children that reside within a federally designated promise zone – and we have them all listed in the appendix; there have been three rounds of promise zones that have been designated and there is a certification that needs to accompany that designation – will receive three bonus points.

And then finally, applicants that propose to serve children in rural areas, specifically those in rural non-metropolitan counties listed in the appendix. And the way we define those rural geographic areas is specified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Urban Continuum, if you want to get technical, but it's basically a completely rural county or a county with a very small urban population, less than 2,500, and there's counties where there's at least 120 children younger than five that are residing. Those rural counties are highlighted in the appendix and would be able to receive those bonus points as well.

So finally, we have a number of resources. I know we went through a lot of information in a short amount of time, and we want to really remind everyone that there are many, many resources available to help you as you think about applying. First of all, Shawna already mentioned there is a grants toolkit on our Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center – ECLKC as we call it – for all prospective applicants and all the steps that are needed, including links to prior technical assistance webinars that we did this first go-around.

It includes all the information you need to know about how to apply, about registering to apply. We've also highlighted specific resources for the partnerships around getting started, how to create partnership agreements. There's links to the standards and regulations. There are links to administration and fiscal resources and other tools for professional development. And as I mentioned, several informational webinars that are still relevant for those applying will be available there.

We also have the National Center on Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership that has a number of resources that we've been providing to existing grantees that are also available to everyone. And then for those interested in Early Head Start expansion, there is a tremendous amount of resources available on that website for Early Head Start specifically.

The Office of Head Start has also pulled together a number of resources and helpful tools around the CCDF reauthorization, and there are also a number of webinars about the various provisions of the new law that states will be implementing. And this will help applicants really learn more about the policies and the context in your states. And then I also wanted to point out, just because we want to give you all sorts of resources, Section VIII of the Funding Opportunity Announcements also includes these links as well as other websites for additional background information around these funding announcements.

So a final note is that we do want you to read the entire Funding Opportunity Announcement again. Please read the whole thing for all the requirements for submission, and we do really want to receive your questions. We look forward to receiving them. The best way is probably to e-mail so that we have your exact question. And then the ACF and our team here in central office will be reviewing all those questions and posting responses for everyone to review through the grant application support website as soon as they're available.

So we really look forward to hearing from you. Good luck on these new announcements and thank you so much for joining us.

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