May 19, 2015

Dear Grant Applicant:

Enclosed for your review and response is the FY2016 Request for Proposals (RFP) for Adult Basic Education (ABE) Continuation Grants. This RFP is intended for grantees currently funded by the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) unit of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). The grant programs and fund codes included in this RFP are listed below and on the Executive Summary page. This continuation application package is for use by the following grant programs:

-Community Adult Learning Centers – Fund Codes: 340 (Federal) and 345 (State)
-Supplemental Funding – Volunteer Tutoring Component
-English Literacy and Civics Education - Fund Code: 359 (Federal)
-ABE Instructional Program for Incarcerated Adults - Fund Codes: 285 (Federal) and 563 (State)
-ABE Transition to Community College – Fund Code: 668 (State)
-Primary Instruction by Volunteers - Fund Code: 287 (State)
-ABE Distance Learning Instructional Hub – Fund Code: 669 (Federal)
-Adult Career Pathways – Fund Code: 541 (State)

To be considered for refunding, programs must meet the requirements and intent of the authorizing state and federal legislation and regulations governing the program and must have conducted a successful program based on the ABE Performance Standards in FY2015.

Applications for state-funded projects are due by Friday, June 19, 2015.
Applications for federally-funded projects are due by Friday July 31, 2015.

Applicants should refer to Table 1 – Funding Allocations – for funding amounts. It is important to note that funding levels are subject to performance and the approval of state and federal appropriations. Programs will be notified of any changes in funding levels. Please note that no expense may be charged to the grant until ESE has approved the budget. State and federal regulations require that separate and auditable records be maintained for each grant program that is funded.

Highlights of the Transition from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA): Reform for Adult Education

FY 2016 is a transition year for Adult Education. During FY 2016, ACLS and the field will transition from the current federal legislation, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) which since 1998 has served as the guiding legislation for the ABE system, to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The WIOA was signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014 and will be in effect until 2020. The WIOA represents the first major reform in the U.S. workforce system in over a decade.

This continuation application will assist ACLS-funded programs in the transition to WIOA and therefore signals some WIOA-required activities. WIOA will become effective July 1, 2015 and full implementation is required for FY 2017. Note: Some WIOA provisions, however, do not go into effect until July 1, 2016, such as the performance accountability system. See more about WIOA here: http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/wioa.html
A. WIOA strengthens alignment between adult education, postsecondary education, and employers
   - Emphasizes services to increase an individual’s ability to transition to postsecondary education and obtain employment.
   - Promotes the integration of adult education with occupational education and training, as well as development of career pathways.
   - Authorizes use of funds for “integrated education and training” and “workforce preparation.”
   - Encourages activities provided in collaboration with employers, e.g., workplace education.

B. WIOA encourages establishment of a high-quality local adult education delivery system
   - Aligns activities with regional needs identified in local workforce and one-stop local plans.
   - Emphasizes instructional activities based on rigorous research and effective use of technology.

C. WIOA promotes integrated English Literacy and Civics education (IEL/CE)
   - Emphasizes services designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.

D. WIOA adds a new definition of “workforce preparation” that includes “digital literacy” and promotes integration of “digital literacy skills” in instruction.
   - The skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information. (the Museum and Library Services definition used by US ED)
   - Digital literacy encompasses the knowledge, and skills used in a broad range of digital devices such as smart phones, tablets, laptops and personal computers all of which are used in everyday life. As students develop technology skills they learn to locate and access information and to evaluate it critically. Whether applying for jobs online, reading the news, banking and paying bills, and transitioning to higher education, digital literacy is a basic literacy.

Guidance for agencies operating grant-funded adult education programs:
Agencies are advised to read Grants for Schools: Getting Them and Using Them, A Procedural Manual, available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/procedure/manual.html, and to seek counsel from their own auditors to ensure that multiple funding sources are handled appropriately. Personnel funded by the ABE grant must dedicate all grant-funded time to work under the ABE grant, and to provide services to students funded by the ABE grant. Administrators must inform program staff what portion of their time is funded by the ABE grant, and for how many hours per week they must provide services to grant-funded clients.

For non-personnel resources charged to the ESE grant, the agency must provide a rationale and methodology for how costs are charged to the grant, and for how costs are allocated across programs that use the resources. When space is shared between the ABE grant-funded program and programs supported through fees, foundation grants, or other funding sources, only the percent of space and percent of time that the space is used by the ABE grant-funded program may be charged to the ABE grant.

The agency must maintain separate auditable financial records which adequately identify the source and the application of individual grant funds, and which include source documentation (i.e., time and attendance records, payrolls, contracts, purchase orders, checks, and paid bills).

We look forward to reviewing your grant application and continuing our work together in providing highly effective services to undereducated and limited-English proficient adults in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Jolanta Conway
ABE State Director