

Family Support Center Request for Proposals
Submitted Questions and MFN Responses
October 27, 2021

This document is a comprehensive compilation of questions as submitted both by email (in advance or after the Pre-bid conference through 10/27/21) as well as those posed during the Pre-bid conference and their respective answers. The questions are not categorized by subject matter as many questions cover multiple subjects, so please read this document fully

How many Centers do you anticipate funding?

We have the capacity to fully fund up to seven new FSCs with this funding (\$335,000 x 7). We are determining the total number of planning grants which will be funded. Overall determinations will be predicated on the total number of proposals received and our conversations with our funder (MSDE)

In addition, for anyone who is not quite ready yet, will we have future opportunities?

Yes. We are planning to put out another RFP based on the volume of applications we receive, maybe this Spring, and every year we will issue an RFP for the next ten years.

What is the cap on the allowable indirect?

MSDE allows for either the de minimis rate of 10% or the federally negotiated indirect cost rate.

For both tracks, is funding available for just one year?

No. Full Operations Grants will be funded on an ongoing yearly basis if the grantee remains in good standing. A Planning Grant, however, is a single grant that can be used to build the capacity to move into a Full Operations Grant.

Are there specific requirements around match funding?

There are no specific match funding requirements. Current FSCs have operating budgets which range from around \$450,000.00 to \$1.8 million dollars. These ranges reflect regional and programmatic differences. You can presume that there is a need for funds outside of the MFN grant to ensure the maintenance and sustained operation of an FSC. There is a section in the contract that states the continuation of funding must meet the general federal assistance requirements apply as set forth in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's OMB 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance, as well as those included in the Maryland State Department of Education Notice of Grant Award, and all other portions of the Maryland State funding agreement

Do you have to have a nonprofit to apply?

The mandatory applicant requirement is to be a public or private nonprofit organization. A Track I applicant must have a DUNS number and be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM) website and must not be debarred from doing business with the federal government.

If a nonprofit has all the community connections and has a relationship with the parents in the community, in-kind, etc., but does not have audits, can you still apply for Track I?

An applicant without prior audits, should apply for Track II. For a Track I grant, MFN would follow uniform guidance related to the requirement to review the last two certified, annual, entity-wide financial audits.

Does an applicant need to identify a specific community to partner with when submitting a grant for planning, or can that be part of the planning activities?

We do expect that an applicant has identified a specific community and assessed its needs.

Does an applicant's space have to be in the community in which the applicant is partnering?

A sponsoring agency's main office may be outside of the community in which the FSC is actually located (ex: a county's DSS office as the sponsoring agency may be housed in a central location but oversee the functions of an FSC located in a specific community). The FSC space itself must naturally be in the identified community.

If an organization applies for a planning grant, does that organization have to remain the lead? Or, if an organization applies for planning, could this be on behalf of an eventual different Family Support Center lead?

The goal of a planning grant is to build the organizational capacity for the actual identified program lead which will then cultivate relationships and maintain that role & function.

For planning grant - what if it doesn't work out in that community...is the expectation that an applicant still then request full funding?

We are aware that there is risk with a planning grant re: the ultimate opening of a center. But - our goal for applicants receiving a planning grant award is provide technical assistance and support to ensure the eventual successful opening of a Family Support Center.

Just to confirm the Planning Grant has the maximum length of time is one year.

Yes. A Planning Grant will not exceed one year.

CDS and Service Coordinator have to work exclusively on the FSC program? Or can they be shared with other programs?

Required & dedicated full time positions are as follows: Director, Child Development Specialist, Service Coordinator, and In-Home Interventionist

When looking at the map presented earlier, it appears that Baltimore City was in blue, meaning that that jurisdiction already has support centers. Will more sites be funded for Baltimore City through this grant?

Yes. If you are interested in operating an FSC in Baltimore City or any region, you must describe the targeted community and the needs to be served by the Center. Paint the picture of why it is needed in the community.

Are van drivers required?

Typically, yes (see question below). Providing and/or ensuring transportation for participants is mandatory and removes barriers to families participating in the Center regularly. A van driver can have a dual position in the Center or a shared position.

Likewise, for transportation - can the Center utilize the department's Transportation Services?

Yes. Some Sponsoring Agencies have a fleet of vehicles and transportation specific staff. In some circumstance, center staff like Home Visitors and Service Coordinators may have access to a sponsoring agency's fleet of vehicles or the center itself may own a dedicated vehicle.

Van Driver - Is liability insurance costs included in the grant? In this time of Covid, would public transportation with passes or Uber/Lift tickets be considered instead of Van services?

The goal is to remove barriers to participant's abilities to reach the center. If you have a proposal that includes a creative way to support transportation, like the utilization of Uber or Lift, we will consider it. Applicants should consider the

issues related to barrier removal for travel and transport and suggest what works and how much it costs. Liability insurance is an allowable cost for the grant funds. Uber/Lyft tickets are allowable costs provided the expense supports the programmatic objectives.

Do you know of any partnerships between Early Head Start and Family Support Centers?

There have been different types of partnerships co-located in the same space and operating collectively. There are programmatic and fiscal challenges when it come to partnerships and to blended State and Federal funds. Example: Maryland Family Network has 18 Early Head Start centers within our network. In the past, a sponsoring agency was operating a Family Support Center, and they were successfully able to garner Early Head Start monies and open an Early Head Start Center. Both EHS and FSC services were open to the same population of participants. An EHS center is a licensed program, and parents do not have to be in attendance. In this example, parents then chose the EHS instead of the FSC program and the FSC program could not maintain the required participants, which resulted in the FSC closing. We encourage partnerships and **also** recommend full consideration of any programmatic consequences of co-location or collaboration.

For the Full Operation grant, does the 5K required space (square footage) exist in the same area, or can they be adjacent to each other?

The operations of a Family Support Center ideally- and in the current model - include a seamless approach to program deliveries- not fragmented supports. The designated areas for Child Development should be at least 2000 square feet of contiguous space (usable floor space). Given that a Family Support Center is a parent-child program, we do look for the participants to consistently be in the space together.

About how many square feet (average) do we need in space?

The requirement is 5000 total square feet, 2000 square feet for the Child Development room, and 3000 square feet dedicated to other program functions to deliver the core services.

Is there a daily time frame for the program to run? We were thinking of the hours from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Would that be accepted?

Yes, if the applicant has clearly described how the operating hours will meet the needs of the community and ensure provision of all core services. Please refer to the FSC Manual which states that FSCs should be open 35 hours weekly, to include both direct programming as well as administrative operations. Evening programming is encouraged.

Would a program to develop Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) into licensed childcare providers be allowed to be included?

Yes, the target population for Family Support Centers is children birth to three and their parents and primary caregivers.

How many families are we expected to serve?

Service expectations are outlined in the RFP and Manual. Also, in summary: Center-based participant monthly requirements are 32 families with children from birth through 47 months of age (0-3 years). For home-based participants supported by the In-Home Intervention program, the Family Support Center is required to serve 35 additional families a year, maintaining a caseload of 15 at any given time.

FSCs are required to serve at least 32 families "intensively" each month (100 per year). Intensive is defined as an average of five or more visits per month. Is there a time limit on those visits? In other words, what constitutes a visit?

If a family member/participant is receiving a core service, it is considered a visit. We do encourage centers to accurately report what constitutes a core service and to report on meaningful & impactful contacts. For example a quick, passing conversation with a Service Coordinator may not constitute a contact which should be included. Centers will get support

and feedback from their Program Consultants as to how to report on the core services delivered.

Can a current Family Support Center apply to create a secondary/satellite center with another partner? It wouldn't be a full-time center, but some funds would go to creating the 2nd location, and some funds would go to the current Center for expansion?

We are open to new ideas and possibilities and we suggest that the applicant proposing a satellite or secondary site submit an "alternative proposal" which outlines how the core services will be delivered, given that the standard parameters related to operating space or service delivery may not be fulfilled.

In looking at Jennifer Iverson's Center and United Way of Excel, can the Center have multiple location spaces to accommodate the totality of the program? If the Center does not have a dedicated 5000 sq feet to house the program?

See notation above about an alternative program proposal. We want to ensure the core services are delivered to the target population. In the current FSC model, a Center may have several rooms in close proximity to one another under the same roof. As at Adelphi/Langley Park (Jennifer's Center), the spaces/rooms are not necessarily contiguous. However, the available space must be a minimum of 5000 sq feet.

Will you support linking the existing Center with a new candidate during the application process and explore how best we can help each other? Can we visit an existing center (in person or virtually)?

Yes. Feel free to reach out to a Center Director yourself (MFN's website lists all centers) and MFN can also assist in brokering a connection. Please review MFN's website to make note of which center(s) you'd like to be connected to and reach out to Melanie Martin mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org to request an email introduction to a particular program director or directors.

For planning grants, capital improvements are an allowable cost, correct?

No. We envision that capital improvements would likely in the start-up phase cost in any core funding grants for investment for something permanent, and the planning grants are about building programmatic infrastructure. Capital expenditures have a life longer than a year.

Can the Director of the FSC also serve as the Director of our Center overall?

Center Director positions are required to be Full Time & dedicated to FSC programming

Can we count our paying clients towards the number we're required to serve as an FSC if we're providing all the necessary services? Family services co-exist with another programmatic aspect where people pay for some of the services.

No, one key to FSC programming is that the core services are free to participants. Those services are what count toward the deliverables.

Infant/Toddler Program - Can we meet these requirements by providing drop-in services in our regular classrooms, or do we need an exclusive space for FSC clients?

Some of this depends on what the questioner means by 'drop-in' services. Our current model includes particular core services and the associated required staffing. Children & parents/caregivers are expected – in our current model – to attend the center at least five times a month. The intensity and duration of services have a big impact on participant gains. One current center provides an auxiliary service (in addition to & outside of the FSC core services) the MOPS (Mother of Preschoolers) program, where parents can visit the center whenever they like. Those parents do not receive all the core services however. If your proposal includes a description of how all of the core services will be provided to Infant/Toddlers and their parents, then submit it as a standard proposal. If you are intending to vary the approach, please submit an alternative proposal.

What would the funding level/range be for a satellite site if there were a satellite or second site?

We are not dictating a funding level or range, and we are requesting that you submit a proposal that will include what you think the need will be. If it is a second site and provides all required deliverables and the number of participants in a standard program, then the funding would be identical. If you are suggesting something different, submit as an alternative program proposal and outline its cost.

What is the expectation of a funding match for a satellite site?

We are not dictating any particular match. You tell us how and where the core services will be delivered to the targeted audience and the additional resources which will be provided to support programming.

Is there an expectation for specific positions and/or a certain number of staff to be included?

We have our standard approach & model, and we presume the applicant will submit a proposal that fulfills those requirements, including the numbers of staff, participants, square footage, etc. and core services. Please refer to the RFP and Manual. If you're envisioning a different approach or model, submit an alternative proposal and tell us how you will ensure that the core services are delivered and who will provide them.

Would we have to lease/rent a dedicated space? Or could we partner with childcare programs or other programs in the community to utilize their space?

If all the core services are being delivered and there is no space encroachment or limitations on the ability to provide those services based on the partnership and any shared space, then we encourage the exploration of such a partnership. We encourage you to propose a partnership and include in the program proposal a description how the FSC will use the space during FSC program hours and how the RFP's outlined space requirements will be fulfilled.

For either track, 100% documentation for expense reporting is required, correct?

That is correct

(Question from an existing sponsoring agency)

Would it be possible for us to submit two applications, one for a satellite expansion and a planning grant to open an FSC in a different jurisdiction in the future?

The Planning grant track is not a good fit for existence sponsoring agencies because due to their expertise and experience, they are inherently prepared to programmatically and fiscally meet the requirements. We would encourage them to submit the full operating grant or alternative proposal. The planning grant is truly for capacity building for agencies that cannot meet the full operation expectations.

(Question from existing sponsoring agency)

We are interested in planning ahead to have [a specific site] rehabbed to MFN specifications so that we would be ready to go in 2 years; the sponsoring agency would pay for the rehab. We're trying to decide whether we should apply and which agency should put in the letter of intent.

As an existing sponsoring agency, you should apply for a full operations grant. As part of the start-up process, consider which funds would come from already identified resources or from the Family Support Center funding opportunity. We suggest that programs ready to operate within the next year to apply for this round of funding. There will be future funding opportunities.

Being a private company, would fiscal sponsor work?

Yes, a fiscal agent would be allowed, but the monitoring is different. The sub-recipient must be a non-for-profit organization. The not-for-profit organization can be a private non-profit or a public non-profit. The use of a fiscal agent is allowable and compliance with 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance is required of both the sub-recipient and fiscal agent. Fiscal monitoring for a sub-recipient with a fiscal agent is modified in this arrangement, i.e. MFN will monitor the financial statements of the fiscal agent as well as the program operator.

Can a virtual /hybrid model be used as an alternative model due to the pandemic?

We would like for you to write the proposal as if you will provide in-person supports. We are aware that adaptations may be needed to ensure that families still getting support virtually during crises like the pandemic. Feel free to describe how you might service families virtually in addition to providing in-person support options.

Thank you for the response about a satellite or a partnership, I know they [a particular program] has a waiting list, and I also know we have cultural and language capacity to help their program, I would like to be a partner or "sister center" We have several health and human services project that can enhance and support our families together—looking forward to the conversation.

We are eager for unique creative partnerships and lots of community support for FSCs.

Could we offer different 2-gen programming like LENA Start in place of some of the core services?

MFN is interested in exploring new ideas that will meet any given community's needs, but right now, the 2-Gen FSC program model is what we intend to fund. An alternative proposal could include details about programming which falls outside of the current model.

Is it possible to propose only the home visiting program?

We will consider alternative programmatic proposals if they follow the definition of Family Support centers and deliver the eight core services.

Regarding the alternative programs, are those eligible for a full grant?

Yes, please paint the picture of what you propose and how much it will cost, and it can be up to the full grant amount.

Does everyone need to do a Letter of Intent or just for the Planning Grant?

We do request that all agencies interested in and intending to submit a proposal in response to the RFP complete the Letter of Intent. We are collecting contact information so that we can send targeted communications and updates to prospective applicants as well as using the data from the Letters of Intent to start estimating the total fiscal 'asks' so we can communicate with our funder.

Are the centers listed on your website?

Yes

I am wondering if applicants proposing a planning grant need to include a floor plan with their application? I know this is a requirement for Track I applicants but was not sure for Track II applicants.

A planning grant application may have missing content areas which are related to the areas specifically targeted as being funded by the planning grant, but otherwise should include all elements. Ex: A planning grant application might not include 2 years of financial reports and independent audits, because an agency is reporting that they have not previously had an independent audit, so they might be proposing that their planning grant pay for an audit and for implementing any recommendations that result from it. An agency looking to use a planning grant to explore real estate & space options and subsequently develop a renovation plan might not include a floor plan, because they will be using funds for space

identification purposes. Any 'missing' areas in the overall application should have a clear tie to what a planning grant is intended to fund.

If an organization is considering a planning grant, do they still need to note the number of participants to be served and provide a breakdown of the participants to be served or would this be something an applicant would note as they shift from planning to implementation? I know these are components that would be included in the transmittal letter for implementation but was not sure about a planning grant. *Planning grants should still include information about the population to be served/numbers. While an applicant may outline current programmatic or fiscal infrastructure gaps/deficits which would impede immediate delivery of service, the expectation is that there still be a full description of how services will ultimately be delivered and to whom, once those 'gaps' are filled through planning grant supports.*

We are interested in learning more about what is considered permitted with regard to space. We have a 3,000 square foot building we could use for child development area and some parent education classrooms. Is it possible to propose use of other space for other specific family support in order to arrive at the 5,000 square foot requirement? We have several community rooms and head start classrooms which could offer easy access to high quality family support programs as satellites to main center.

As noted in response to other questions, the currently model of Family Support Centers are spaces where parents and children are together in a common location and have ready access to one another to participate in joint activities and to promote the child and parental bond. In addition, Family Support Centers are not licensed facilities and therefore parents are be required to be on-site at all times. Creating satellite or separate locations for parents and their children is not the current model but an alternative proposal could be submitted which outlines how core services will be delivered and the spirit & intent of Family Support is met in an alternative type of space.

A planning grant will help us prepare for administration of the grant, as well as give us time to pin down space options. Is this an allowable use of planning grant?

Only certain administrative costs are allowed. As such, the nature of administrative costs will need to be considered in making the determination of allowability. If applicants include un-allowable costs in their proposals, but the proposals are strong overall, MFN will work with applicants to adjust the budgets. Expenses associated with identifying viable space for a Family Support Center are an appropriate use of planning grant funds. Developing administrative capacity, especially in building currently absent fiscal or programmatic infrastructure, is an appropriate use of planning grant funds.

Are letters of support/MOUs required for a planning grant?

Yes. Please seek Letters of Support from community partners who will help ensure the success of a program once fully launched.

Will there be an FAQ document posted as a follow-up to the Pre-Bidders Conference?

Yes. It will be posted soon and applicants who submitted a Letter of Intent will be notified of its posting and any updates. MFN will not accept questions after 5 pm on Friday October 29th.

How/where should this proposal be submitted?

Proposals are due on/by November 5th at 5 pm. Submit them to Melanie Martin at: mmartin@marylandfamilynetwork.org

Can the Executive Summary be single spaced or does it have to be doubled spaced like the rest of the narrative?

The Executive Summary can be single spaced

Can an outside playground or play space be included in the 2,000 square feet required for the childcare area?

No. Playground space is in addition to the educational space

In the manual it suggests that the kitchen area be large enough to accommodate 10-15 people. Is this a requirement that kitchen be this size?

The recommendation of the space needed for a kitchen area is a suggestion, not a mandate. A shared eating space, wherever it is, is a wonderful way to promote relationships.