**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities Initiative, Round Three, Potential Applicant Webinar**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that, let me get myself right out of the way. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's "Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities Initiative, Round Three, Potential Applicant Webinar." And I am going to turn things over to your moderator today, Charlotte Harris, the unit chief with the Partnership and Innovation Unit, with the Office of Workforce Investment, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Charlotte, take it away.

CHARLOTTE HARRIS: Thanks, Laura. And welcome everyone to today's potential applicant webinar for the WORC program. And we'll talk more about that in a second. Today we'll cover from a fairly high level the major elements of the funding opportunity announcement for the third round of the work opportunities for rural communities – or WORC – grant initiative.

We are providing this webinar in conjunction with other technical assistance sessions developed by the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority, our partners in the WORC initiative to support potential applicants. We will also try to answer questions that you may have during this webinar. But because this is an open grant competition, there are many questions we are prohibited from answering. However we will do our best to answer as many of your questions as possible.

Before we move on I'd like to introduce the presenters from whom you'll be hearing from throughout today's event. We'll have Kinsey Walker, a program analyst from the Appalachian Regional Commission; Aury Kangelos, program manager from the Delta Regional Authority; and Jenifer McEnery, the grant officer from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.

We will start today with some background on the WORC initiative, including why we created this grant opportunity and what we hope it will achieve. But first let's learn a bit about the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority, our partners on this program. I'm going to turn it over to Kinsey.

KINSEY WALKER: Good morning, everyone. As Aury [sic] mentioned, my name is Kinsey Walker. I'm a program analyst with the Appalachian Regional Commission. And Appalachian Regional Commission is a unique organization that partners federal, state, and local governments for economic development in the Appalachian Region. It covers 13 states and 420 counties, and it was started in 1965.

We have 13 governors, a federal chair who is Gayle Manchin this year, and was just appointed recently. And then we have ARC staff that provides technical assistance and management of all the grants and programs that we work with. And our purpose is to serve the economic development needs in our region. Thanks. That's it. I will turn it over to Aury.

MS. KANGELOS: Thanks, Kinsey. And good morning, everyone. My name's Aury Kangelos, program manager with the Delta Regional Authority. Like ARC, DRA is a federal state partnership governed by a board comprised of the eight governors of our member states and a federal co-chair who's appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate. Much younger than ARC, we were established in 2000, and serve many of the same purposes as ARC.

You can see here we're comprised of 252 counties and parishes of the lower Mississippi River delta and Alabama black belt regions. If you need more information on DRA, you can visit our website at www.dra.gov. And with that I will turn it back over to Charlotte to provide some more background on the WORC initiative.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Aury. What is the WORC initiative? As we've mentioned, the WORC initiative is a partnership between the Employment and Training Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Delta Regional Authority.

The WORC initiative provides grant funds to enable impacted communities to develop local and regional workforce development solutions aligned with existing economic development strategies and community partners, to promote new, sustainable job opportunities, and long term economic vitality. While there are many potentially eligible applicant organizations, all WORC grants must serve participants who reside in the Appalachian or Delta regions.

This is the third round of WORC grants offered by ETA in partnership with ARC and DRA. And because the Appalachian and Delta regions have been particularly hard hit by industrial downsizing and closures, and continue to face economic and employment challenges, congress included language in the 2020 appropriations for the Department of Labor reserve funding to create a grant program that aims to bring economic and workforce success to these underserved areas.

What is the goal of the WORC initiative? The WORC initiative aims to achieve a specific and important goal which we expect applications will aim to address. The goal is to create economic prosperity and gainful employment opportunities for eligible residents in impacted ARC and DRA regions, enabling them to remain and thrive in these communities. WORC grants must demonstrate that as well as how your proposed projects align workforce and economic development strategies for short term positive outcomes and long term economic success for residents, businesses, and communities, in the areas covered by your proposed project.

OK. So that's a brief overview of the WORC initiative. Now let's turn to a discussion of what the funding opportunity announcement lays out with regard to the grants themselves, including with regard to eligibility, grant activities, and more. For this we'll hear from Kinsey and Aury. I'll turn it over first to Kinsey.

MS. WALKER: Thank you. OK. So the FOA lists the entities eligible to apply for the WORC grant. Because this is a competitive grant program, we cannot make determinations as to whether your organization is eligible prior to your submitting an application. If you believe your organization is eligible, you should submit an application. And a determination will be made after the closing date. Please note, just a reminder, your organization may be located anywhere in the U.S. But all services must be provided to eligible participants who live and work in the Appalachian and Delta regions. Your application must demonstrate that you commit to this requirement. And now I'll turn the next one over to Aury.

MS. KANGELOS: Thanks. So applicants may choose to provide services to three types of eligible participants, dislocated workers as defined in WIOA's Section 315, incumbent workers or individuals who are currently working, and new entrants to the workforce. Applicants have discretion on defining the term new entrants more specifically to include a wide range of individuals such as those receiving public assistance, high school dropout, high school or postsecondary students, individuals enrolled in adult, basic, and other education programs, individual with disabilities, veterans, Indian and native Americans, and individuals with limited English proficiency.

MS. WALKER: And some additional considerations for eligibility include serving individuals who reside in economically distressed counties and parishes. And applicants are also encouraged to serve individuals affected by substance abuse disorder. And while grants may serve any parts of the Appalachian and Delta Regions, this is still just a strong encouragement for your application. And we'll cover this in more detail shortly.

AURY KANGELOS: Thanks, Kinsey. And as a part of this program, applicants must demonstrate strategic alignment and impact with various state and regional economic development plans. So applicants must ensure that planned activities will achieve outcomes that are aligned with the strategic plans identified in the FOA. Applicants must demonstrate that their plan aligns with at least one element of the relevant ARC or DRA federal plan, one element of the relevant ARC or DRA state plan, and demonstrate that their plan aligns with the relevant WIOA state plan. The FOA provides information on how you can find each of these relevant plans.

And applicants must demonstrate that their plan specifically addresses the current or future workforce needs of at least two local employers. You will be expected to demonstrate how your project will achieve positive outcomes, and demonstrate long term economic and workforce benefits to the communities served in the grant. You will also be expected to demonstrated how your proposed project will achieve the goal of the WORC initiative.

MS. WALKER: As Aury mentioned, there are four plans with which you must demonstrate alignment in your proposal. We are really looking for long term economic transportation that is sustainable over a long term program. You will be expected to present a coherent strategy that truly aligns with the strategies proposed with existing demonstrated need of employers and with the broader economic development strategies of the community. We recommend that this alignment is integrated into your full application and is not only addressed in passing in one section. Think about how all aspects of your project will help achieve the goals of the broader economic development or strategic plans for your location.

MS. KANGELOS: These grants are designed to be flexible and promote innovative solutions to specific challenges, and therefore have a wide range of allowable activities. The FOA discussed allowable activities in the following categories. We won't get into the details on these, but the FOA provides more context for you. And we recommend you read these sections carefully as you design your proposed project.

Allowable activities in the following categories include delivering training or other workforce related services, development other innovative approaches such as virtual or remote models of service to meet specific challenges, providing a wide range of support services to participants, serving and partnering with employers, and equipment purchases and facility renovations.

MS. WALKER: Just to go in more detail on addressing SUD impacts, one of the priorities of this initiative, as I mentioned before, is to provide services to individuals struggling with substance use disorder. An applicant proposing to specifically address the workforce impacts of substance use disorder are encouraged to consider the following when framing the project.

Projects that address the substance misuse crisis should focus on creating a recovery ecosystem that will lead to workforce reentry, including support for the proposed treatment to employment continuum, which could support the training and recovery of professional and recovery focused job training programs, as well as initiatives designed to coordinate or link recovery services and training that support the reintegration into the workforce of eligible SUD affected individuals.

The recovery ecosystem is a complex linkage of multiple sectors, including but not limited to recovery communities, peer support, health and human services, faith communities, criminal justice, public safety, housing, transportation, education, and employers, designed to help individuals in recovery access the support services and training they need to maintain recovery and successfully obtain sustainable employment.

Initiate or expand programs designed to eliminate or reduce the harm to the workforce and economic growth of the region that results from substance misuse; attract and retain relevant healthcare services, businesses, and workers. Contributing to those ecosystems is crucial. And will turn the next one over to Aury.

MS. KANGELOS: Thanks, Kinsey. So we want to provide a bit more information with regard to the role of employers in the WORC grant. Employers play two roles in this grant initiative. So first, describing the workforce need, so to ensure that your project is addressing specific workforce needs of local employers, you must include letters attesting to this from two employers. Employers may also be partners in the grant program. Applicants must also demonstrate collaboration with a strong and diverse community wide coalition that must include engagement with at least two employers or industry partners.

Employer or industry partnerships increase the likelihood of establishing work based learning programs, and ensure that training and workforce development efforts are relevant to and evolve along with the need of the employer community. Employers provide valuable insight into the development of innovative training approaches, as well as leadership in aligning or enhancing existing strategic plans for the economic diversification and development of the region or community. Applicants should include information in their application about how they will access the leadership and support of the employer community. And with that, I will turn it back over to Charlotte.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Aury and Kinsey. Continuing on – let me turn back. Continuing on, we're going to talk about promoting racial equity. The department encourages applicants to propose strategies that address and promote racial equity through adjustments in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services that aim to provide equitable access and outcomes to communities of color, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. Applicants must also include partnerships with a range of organizations that support the applicant's ability to outreach to and deliver equitable services, or improve data collection and analysis that allows the applicant to identify and address program impacts on these targeted groups in order to improve performance outcomes.

Supporting energy communities. The department is interested in supporting energy communities that have been or may be affected by changes in energy markets or other factors. Applicants must identify those energy communities that they will serve in their proposed project. Two types of communities may be included here. Energy communities that have high employment concentrations, for example location quotient over 10 in energy extraction, as demonstrated by the 2020 3rd quarter data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Or communities that historically have had high concentration of employment in energy extraction or related industries, where economic transition has substantially reduced or eliminated employment in these industries to a location quotient below 10, and new employment opportunities are limited. See the FOA for a full list of industries included in this definition.

Grant performance. Part of the review and scoring of your application will be focused on the outputs and outcomes of your grant. We recognize that these grants may take many shapes and approaches, and have different measures of success. Applicants must indicate in their application the performance measures they will collect and share as part of their proposed project.

Performance elements may consist of metrics or data that the organization already collects. The application must also demonstrate how these performance measures are reflective of the overall goals for the project and for the regional strategy. The WORC grants will submit a quarterly report consisting of narrative descriptions according to a template that will be provided. In addition, there is a unique data collection requirement, and we will discuss on the next slide.

ETA is also interested in learning the employment outcomes from WORC projects through the existing metrics for the workforce system. Applicants should be aware that once awarded, WORC grants will partner with the workforce system in the local or state government to report these outcomes.

Grantees will be required to provide state or local workforce agencies with the necessary information to register those participants who receive employment related services or classroom training as described in the FOA. These participants can be registered in the Wagner-Peyser employment services program, where they can access additional services as appropriate. The department will provide technical assistance to grantees post-award on this process.

Let's turn now to a discussion of the application requirements, deadline, and process. To do that, I'll introduce Jenifer McEnery, who is a grant officer in ETA for the WORC program. Jenifer, take it away.

MS. MCENERY: Thank you, Charlotte. To start out, let's just talk about the application deadline because I think that's probably at the forefront of everyone's mind. It is July 21, 2021, at 4 p.m. Eastern Time. That is a hard deadline. We will not be accepting any applications submitted later than 4 p.m. Eastern Time on July 21st. There are no exceptions. We are not accepting hard copy submissions.

Any applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered. We recommend that applicants plan for potential technology issues and submit well before the deadline.

So the FOA – please read the FOA carefully. And you can find the FOA in full on these sites, grants.gov, the ETA website, ARC website, and DRA website. As this is a competitive funding opportunity, guidance outside the FOA is not provided on an individual basis. We do not accept phone calls or provide evaluative information outside the FOA during the open period.

Amendments to the FOA and additional resources are posted on grants.gov. We recommend you subscribe to receive FOA notifications on grants.gov. Please note that ETA does not administer grants.gov. So if you encounter a problem or have a question pertaining to registration, submission errors, and so forth, you should contact grants.gov directly by email or phone, which is provided on this slide.

The checklist provided in Section 3.C.1 is used to screen applications and determines whether the application will move forward to the merit review process. These application screening requirements are very specific. And these requirements are how we determine which applications move forward and will be considered during the merit review process. We mentioned timeliness earlier, but it is worth mentioning twice, there are no exceptions. All applications must be received in full by the submission deadline and not a minute past.

Applicant eligibility information is reflected on the SF-424 under type of applicant, section 9. This information should reflect information verified through SAM registration. Electronic files submitted through grants.gov must be readable and not corrupt. If we cannot read the files, we will not consider the application complete. Total funding requests of less than $150,000 or more than $1.5 million will not be considered. The total amount requested for the full period of performance, three years, is reflected on the SF-424, Section 18 A and G.

Applicants must have a current SAM registration before submitting an application. This can be a lengthy process, so should be completed as a first step in the application process and as soon as possible. Again, SAM.gov is not administered by ETA. And you must contact SAM.gov directly with questions regarding this process.

Continuing applications screening requirements. By now you've probably concluded the SF-424 is a critical document and must be included as part of the application. There are instructions in Section 4 of the FOA to help complete this form. While not requirements that would eliminate your application from review, there are a few tips that will make it easier to screen your application.

Your legal name and address must reflect the information listed in SAM.gov. This includes the nine digit zip code. The contacts identified in Section 8F and authorized represented signing the SF-424 in Section 21 should be different to ensure we have at least two contacts for the application. Please note, only the authorized representative is allowed to make requests or decisions regarding the application or award should the application be selected.

The project budget includes two components, the SF-424A, not to be confused with the SF-424, and the budget narrative. The SF-424A should reflect the total funding request and align with the budget narrative. Likewise the budget narrative must reflect the same totals for each cost category identified on the SF-424A. The project budget requirements are explained in Section 4, page 14 of the FOA.

Applicant designation is a requirement. Applicant designation must be a separate attachment that clearly identifies which region, ARC or DRA, you wish to be considered under. And include a map that clearly reflects the service area is located in the ARC or DRA regions. Applications that do not include the applicant designation attachment will not be considered. In past WORC competitions, this was the primary reason applications were screened out and not considered.

So moving on to the project narrative, what is it? It is a comprehensive description of the proposed project, demonstrating applicant's ability to implement in accordance with the provisions of the FOA.

The project narrative includes your statement of need and strategic alignment, project description inclusive of the project design, project partnership, and project results and sustainability. It also includes organizational, administrative, and fiscal capacity, and the budget and budget narrative. The project narrative is limited to 10 double-spaced single-sided pages, with Times New Roman 12 point font, and one inch margins.

We will not read or consider any materials beyond the specified page limit in the application review process. The page limitation does not include required attachments requested – attached – required attachments or requested attachments to the project narrative as described on pages 27 through 29 of the FOA.

Continuing, the project narrative must be organized using the following subheadings provided in the FOA, all of which are reviewed against the scoring criteria provided in Section 5A. Organizing the project narrative using these established subheadings is recommended as it makes it clear – easier to align applications with the FOA during merit review.

Project narrative requested attachments include the project abstract, project timeline, two letters of engagement from employer/industry partners, key staff resumes and job descriptions, and the financial system assessment information. Each of these requested attachments is considered in the merit review and do not count towards the page limitation.

If you will be contracting with a separate fiscal agent, include their information in the financial system assessment form or the key staff resumes and job descriptions and budget narrative. And again, don't forget to attach the ARC DRA designation, screen out results from omission of this document. So I want to keep saying that because I think that's something that everyone who gets screened out kicks themselves for later in the application process.

The application review and award process. A technical merit review panel evaluates the applications against the selection criteria in Section 5A of the FOA and based on information outlined in the FOA. The final scores which may include the mathematical normalization of review panels serve as the primary basis for selection of applications for funding. However the panel results are advisory in nature and not binding. Other factors such as geographic distribution of funds, risk review, and availability of funds, are also considered.

If you have questions regarding the grant writing process, submit them per the FOA to dol-eta-dwg@dol.gov. All questions received including those submitted in today's webinar will be addressed in an FAQ posted to grants.gov, benefitting all prospective applicants. Once posted, a notification is sent to subscribers.

If you haven't done so already, please subscribe for notifications at grants.gov. To reiterate, we can only answer questions related to the application process or to help clarify the requirements of the FOA. We cannot discuss the content of your application, your eligibility, or provide any other support as you develop the application. Additionally, we do not accept phone calls during the open period of competitive funding opportunities.

Here are examples of common questions received that we cannot answer and then how we respond. So first one, I am with a public school system, are we eligible? And our response is the standard, thank you for your questions, please review the FOA, Section 3A, eligible applicants to determine your eligibility.

Next question, I've attached a project summary for your review, can you provide feedback on whether we should submit? Response, thank you for your question, please review the FOA, Section 3C, allowable activities to determine whether your project meets the FOA requirements. That should give you an idea of how those responses will be addressed – or how those responses usually go for qualitative feedback.

Common questions and responses and that we can answer. The FOA states equipment purchases require prior approval from the grant officer. Who do I need to contact for prior approval? Response, thank you for your question, prior approval from the grant officer occurs post-award for selected award recipients proposing specific activities such as equipment purchases. Once the award is made, selected award recipients will be provided with technical assistance for submitting required prior approval request.

Another common question, I cannot submit an application on grants.gov. Can I email it to you instead? Response, thank you for your question, all applications must be submitted through grants.gov. If you encounter problems with submitting your application, please contact grants.gov directly to speak to a customer support representative.

So again, if you have questions, please do email us at dol-eta-dwg@dol.gov. While we can only answer questions related to the application process or to help clarify the requirements of the FOA, we will be submitting or posting the responses to commonly asked questions on grants.gov. So again, please subscribe for notifications. And that concludes my portion of the presentation. Back you, Charlotte.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Jen. And before we get to the Q&A portion, and again to the questions that we can answer as you heard Jenifer's description of the questions that we can and cannot answer. Before we do that, we're going to hear a bit about the technical assistance that ARC and DRA are providing to prospective applicants. Kinsey?

MS. WALKER: Thanks. We have a series of recorded webinars that happen between May 17th and May 21st. This is the link. You can directly access them. They are in a YouTube playlist, so it should be compatible with almost any device. And I will turn it back to Aury.

MS. KANGELOS: Thanks, Kinsey. And like ARC, DRA is providing recorded webinars and section by section analysis of the FOA. You can find those on the link here. Or you can check out dra.gov/workforce. And with that, I will turn it back over to Charlotte.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir. OK. Well, we'll look at some of the questions that have come in. And it's looking like the majority of them are for Jenifer from the grant office. And I'll read the question, and Jenifer I'll let you know – and you can answer the ones that you can that apply to you.

JENIFER MCENERY: OK. Thanks.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Question one, "If a community received a grant from the first two rounds of the WORC initiative, can they apply again for new funding?"

MS. MCENERY: Yes. The only eligibility requirements are laid out in the FOA. And there is nothing stated in the FOA that restricts it to new applicants.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

MS. MCENERY: So the answer is, yes, they may.

MS. HARRIS: Yes, you may. Question number two, "May the employer be any type of employer? For example, may the employer be a governmental organization?"

MS. MCENERY: OK. Well, referring back to the FOA, there aren't restrictions in the FOA pertaining to the types of employers you include in your application. So as long as they are employers and they are in your – identified in your application, there's no restriction.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next question, "When will the deadlines be for this application? Also will this funding come around again in the future?"

MS. MCENERY: So July 21st at 4 p.m. Eastern Time is the deadline. Not a minute past. And regarding future funding opportunities, at this time we have nothing to share. Those too will be posted on grants.gov should they become available.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next question, "Can the funding serve participants in both the DRA and ARC service area?"

MS. MCENERY: Yes. Per the FOA, they may serve eligible participants living in either DRA or ARC service area. And while we ask that you designate a specific region to be considered under, you may serve participants living in either area or both areas.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Thank you. Next question, "If you are not serving an energy community, will you not be an eligible applicant?"

MS. MCENERY: All of the eligibility – all the eligibility requirements are outlined in that section of the FOA. There are no restrictions regarding whether you – I'm sorry, let me look at the question again. There are no restrictions –

MS. HARRIS: (Inaudible) – community.

MS. MCENERY: Right. There are no restrictions preventing other applicants to meet the eligibility requirements from applying.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Thank you, Jen.

MS. MCENERY: So yes, you will be considered.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Number six, "Can a vendor partner appear and be considered on applications by different eligible applicants from both ARC and DRA to provide services for both regions? Will only one application be considered for award?"

MS. MCENERY: So we don't have restrictions on partners. And partners may appear on multiple applications. We only accept however one application per applicant. So the recipient or legal entity submitting may only submit one application at a time.

MS. HARRIS: Gotcha. OK. Next question, "Can this grant work for a startup business?"

MS. MCENERY: Again, we don't make qualitative judgments regarding these. Please review the FOA to determine whether you are eligible and whether your project is eligible per the FOA.

MS. HARRIS: Yes. Next question, "Is the budget narrative part of the 10 page limit?"

MS. MCENERY: No. It is not. It's considered a required attachment. And therefore it does not count toward the 10 page limitation for the project narrative. Additionally, just to reiterate, the requested attachments also do not count towards the 10 page limitation.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Next question, "Will large employers be considered significantly more favorably than small employers? Is there a benefit to finding more than two employers vis a vis needs alignment?"

MS. MCENERY: So the selection criteria that's reviewed is outlined in the FOA. I suggest you take a look at that criteria as it is the only criteria that is considered when reviewing the applications along with the FOA requirements.

MS. HARRIS: Great. Next question, "Résumés would include just the individuals working on the application, or vendors as well?"

MS. MCENERY: So there is information regarding resumes and the requirements in the FOA. And it is up to the applicant to determine which are the most appropriate for the project. So again, review the FOA and determine what is the most appropriate for your application.

MS. HARRIS: OK. That makes sense. Next is, "We have more than two employer partners; should we obtain letters and attach as well?

MS. MCENERY: Again, please refer to the FOA and the requirements, and make determinations regarding what would be the best approach for your application.

MS. HARRIS: OK. "Can a workforce area and educational curriculum partner to jointly submit with one as a lead?"

MS. MCENERY: There are no restrictions on who you include as your partners. Please review the partner section of the FOA and determine the best approach for your application. I think that there's a rhythm here. I keep referring back to the FOA.

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

MS. MCENERY: Any qualitative or judgment call, we cannot provide outside of the FOA.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Next question, "Please provide info on how to apply for the grant."

MS. MCENERY: OK. So the FOA outlines the application process. And you must register at grants.gov and you must submit your application through grants.gov. So it's an electronic submission. The link is provided. And the FOA provides detailed instructions on how to submit through grants.gov.

MS. HARRIS: OK. "Can you define new entrants again?"

MS. MCENERY: OK. I'm going to hand this back to Aury. Aury, you covered that section, correct?

MS. KANGELOS: I did. Thanks, Jenifer. So new entrants to the workforce, for the purposes of this FOA new entrants are defined as those who have never worked before or who have been out of the workforce for a long enough time to make it as if they were entering the workforce for the first time. As we mentioned, applicants have discretion on defining the term new entrant more specifically. And as listed in the presentation, there are a wide range of individuals that could be classified as new entrants. And as Jenifer mentioned, I would refer to the FOA under the eligible participants section for more information.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Aury. Next question, "Is the energy community documentation required for all applicants whether they are applying under a DRA region or an ARC region?"

MS. MCENERY: So this is Jenifer. The energy community documentation pertains to applicants that choose to submit under projects specifically geared towards those activities. Again we're going to have to refer to the FOA and let you decide what best fits your project and supports your application per the merit review criterion.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah. The FOA review of that section.

MS. MCENERY: Yes.

MS. HARRIS: Next question, "Are participants served by a proposed program limited to rural communities only?"

MS. MCENERY: So this is Jenifer. Please refer to the eligibility requirements for participants. We don't have specific requirements pertaining to whether it's urban or rural. But for more information regarding participant eligibility, you will find the requirements, additionally the criterion relevant to eligibility, eligible participants, in the FOA. We really do not have any additional requirements outside. So if there's a specific community that's not addressed in the FOA, it's not explicitly eliminated, or ruled out, or determined ineligible. If it doesn't address that, then we don't introduce new criterion post-FOA. So does that make sense?

MS. HARRIS: Yes. To me.

MS. MCENERY: Hopefully it makes sense to everybody. If it's not in the FOA –

MS. HARRIS: (Inaudible) – the question – or right.

MS. MCENERY: Yeah.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Next question, "Just for clarification, can our agency apply? Our headquarters is in New York City, but we serve this specific region."

MS. MCENERY: So yes, your agency may apply as long as the participants serve, live, and reside in the ARC DRA region, per the map included in the beginning of the presentation, then they may apply.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you. "Could you clarify that the definition of local employer mentioned on this call doesn't exclude a national employer hiring in one of the regions, so long as the people being hired stay in the region?"

MS. MCENERY: So this is Jenifer. The – for clarification, local employer means an employer local to the region, someone who's employing people in the region. So there is no exclusion of a national employer who is hiring and employing individuals in the ARC DRA regions. And Aury or Emela, do you have anything to add to that?

EMELA HALILOVIC: Hi, Jenifer. This is Emela Halilovic from ARC. Correct. So you defined it correctly. We are, as you mentioned, a local employer means that it could also mean a national employer, but the national employer has local based businesses. And that business is employing individuals that – participants that live and work within the ARC region. So that's specific to ARC and I'm not sure if Aury has anything else to add.

MS. KANGELOS: Yes. Thanks, Emela. And one of the things that I would also note is that the FOA specifically mentions that the terms of employment for them to be an eligible employer partner would not necessarily require those served under the program or under the project to relocate as a term of their employment. I'm sorry, and to relocate – to relocate outside of either the ARC or DRA region in terms of the employment.

MS. HARRIS: OK. Well, thank you all. The next question, "What is the match requirement for this opportunity?"

MS. MCENERY: There are no match requirements for this opportunity. The partnerships that we require are not for a match requirement, although of course that may be – leveraged resources are encouraged and should be included if you intend to do so. However it's not a requirement for this particular opportunity.

MS. HARRIS: OK. "Can the subsidiary of a business count as a second employer towards the grant's two employer requirements?"

MS. MCENERY: Again, we don't have any restrictions on the types of employers that you include. And you could include letters that support your application per the FOA.

MS. HARRIS: "Are there restrictions on vendors from out of the service region, so as long as they" – I was reading it, I missed the question. Let me read that – "so as long as they appear under an eligible applicant?"

MS. MCENERY: Again, if the applicant is eligible per the FOA, then their application will be considered. So outside of the FOA requirements, we do not have additional restrictions.

MS. HARRIS: OK. "Will this grant have a repayment process or plan?"

MS. MCENERY: We do not have a – I'm not sure if this pertains to how the grants are awarded if selected or if this is how the funds are distributed. But currently we fund grants as lump sum should an application be selected. Again, the amount and award process is determined after the review of the grants and the selection process.

MS. HARRIS: OK. "Can a local employer include a company out of the region that is hiring remote workers to stay in one of the regions?"

MS. MCENERY: I think this is similar to the prior question, as long as the job opportunities allow for residents, people living in the ARC DRA regions, to remain there and find employment. Then we don't have restrictions on where the applicant is located.

MS. HARRIS: Right. Yeah. That was the same. OK. And the last question, "What kind of programs are not funded or have received past funding?"

MS. MCENERY: So there is a link to prior awards. And we will provide it in the FAQs that will be posted to grants.gov. However we don't have a specific type of organization or information regarding unsuccessful participants. So everyone who passes the prescreening criterion, everyone goes through the merit review process outlined in the FOA. And that should give you an idea of what the requirements are for being selected. Hopefully that helps answer the question.

MS. HARRIS: And for those previously awarded, those can be found on the website, the DOL dislocated worker grant website –

MS. MCENERY: Correct.

MS. HARRIS: Go ahead, Jenifer.

MS. MCENERY: Correct. And we'll post that website as part of the FAQ responses following the webinar. So please subscribe to grants.gov.

MS. HARRIS: Well, thank you for answering all those questions. And a couple of people had asked questions about this PowerPoint presentation. You can download now in the file share a copy of today's PowerPoint. So if you need that, it's readily accessible and available to you now. Thanks for all the questions. Thanks for all the presenters, ARC, DRA, and Jenifer, for presenting and answering the questions that came through. And hopefully the applicants received the information that they needed to submit their applications or consider submitting an application. From ARC, DRA, or Jenifer, any last comments that you guys have?

MS. MCENERY: No. Thank you for participating in this. And hopefully we have addressed most of your questions. And again, please reach out if you have a question. We may not be able to provide you with the answer that you're thinking. But hopefully we can direct you to where to find the information in the FOA.

MS. HARRIS: Yes. Again, the questions, all of the questions we had today, there will be some other questions, will be posted on grants.gov soon. So just keep – as Jenifer said, subscribe and continue to look out there for any updates or amendments to this grant.

Well, thank you all. And that concludes today's webinar. I'm going to turn it back over to Laura to do some last housekeeping. So thank you, Laura. And thanks, everyone else.

(END)