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MA Community Mediation Center Grant Program

Applicant Briefing for FY 2025-2027 Grant Application Request (GAR)

Answers to questions posed by email and on briefing call (answers shown in italics)

All 12 of the Pre-qualified Centers were represented at the June 14, 2024 briefing, required as a condition of the GAR process. The representative(s) who participated in this briefing must be listed at the bottom of the Center's FORM #1 grant application cover sheet. These questions and answers have been posted on MOPC CMC Grant Program website and emailed to pre-qualified Centers.

Center Operating Grant Application

Part 2 Twelve-Point Model Adherence

1. How do we provide evidence that we offer mediation/conflict resolution services at multiple stages of a dispute?

The evidence is included in Center MADtrac reports. By entering conflict level, case type, and referral source, this information will be shown in your report.

2. In the 12-point adherence narrative, under #9, MOPC asks: "Describe what systems are in place at the center for managing and supporting other types of practitioners and volunteers?" I am wondering what you're looking for in this question.

The reference to other types of practitioners and volunteers is intended to reflect practitioners of conflict coaching and other non-mediation processes, as well as how volunteers who deliver services are observed, recognized, etc.

Part 5 Cash match section

3. Can the MOPC Bonus Grant be used as part of the Matching requirement for the Youth Grant? For the Center grant? For both?

No, because the match is supposed to come from other sources of funding outside of the funds provided through the CMC-GP.

4. Can the same funding source be used as part of the match for the Center Grant and for the Youth Grant?

Center operating grant match must be separate from youth matching funds.

Part 6 Budget and staffing section

5. Section A.2 Center Operating Grant – Requirements (pg. 7) talks about the requirements for CMCs around managing finances under the grant. We are working with a bookkeeper to develop better infrastructure to

manage our finances holistically and are hoping that MOPC could provide a template that we can customize according to our needs. Can you help us with that?

MOPC does not get involved in Center operations. If operational guidance is needed, MOPC suggests asking other Centers.

6. How detailed do the timekeeping records need to be for tracking staffs' allocation of time towards specific programs? Do you have a template we can use?

MOPC does not ask for Centers to account to us for staff time on programs, but we ask that Centers commit to monitoring this themselves and ensuring that the time commitment requirement of the grant is being substantially fulfilled. MOPC does not have a template for tracking staff time and recommends asking other Centers about their tracking practices.

RAM Award

7. Are there specific reporting requirements and/or timelines that Center will need to meet under the RAM funding?

The RAM award is a flat amount for Centers to use as needed to support the RAM roll out. No dedicated reporting requirements are tied to that award.

Additional Questions

8. I have a question about the funding levels associated with the Operating Grant. If I am reading it correctly, if a center received the absolute highest funding on all 4 components for the Operating Grant, it would still be a lower amount than our total award in FY24. In a prior call, we were informed that if the state funding was level, then centers could expect to receive approximately level funding for the Operating Grant (assuming similar levels of achievement.) Can you please clarify why the proposed FY25-27 funding levels appear lower than the FY24 award?

The operational funding awarded in FY24 included increases for salaries given out proportionately based on each center's percent of the total of all CMC grants (in other words, if a Center received a total of 10% of the total of all grants, then they received 10% of the increased funding allotted for salary increases). For FY25, because this is a new grant-making process, the distribution of funds to Centers will be across several operational components based on funding ranges rather than proportionate percentages.

Follow-up question: If centers were trying to increase staffing before and now will receive less, will this be made up in the other programs people are applying for? We don't want to decrease staffing or start paying people less.

Each category of the operational grants can differ from year to year, depending on meeting the criteria and performance level. Further, how many Centers apply for program grants and how Centers perform under the grant criteria will determine funding levels for each program and/or Center. MOPC cannot guarantee level funding from grant cycle to grant cycle. It is possible program funds will make up the difference for your Center, but it cannot be guaranteed.

Follow-up question: To confirm, in FY24 there was a specific award for staff salary expenses, which is now being wrapped into the total funding available and redistributed through across the grant?

Yes, the FY24 funding used for staff salary increases has been redistributed throughout all operating grant components for FY25-27.

9. For this 3-year grant cycle, is it possible to receive different amounts each year?

In the Grant Award letter, MOPC will outline the funding level we are committing to for your Center. This funding level is subject to funding each year because of the nature of the annual legislative funding cycle. If funding is increased or decreased for the CMC Grant Program in the annual state budget, the awards adjustments will be proportionate to each Center's portion of the grant funding. This amount of funding is also subject to changes in program participation by Center grantees. If everything stays the same, the award stays the same.

DEI Organizational Grants

10. We would like to use a portion of the DEI operations grant to provide training to our mediators (paid and volunteer) on implicit bias, microaggressions, and other facets of anti-oppression work. We think this training is necessary to establish a baseline literacy for mediators who are otherwise at risk of perpetuating harm with the unconscious exercise of power and privilege. Can you please talk about whether this is an appropriate use of funds under the DEI operations grant?

As with the DEI Operations Grant in FY23-24, the funds are to be used for organizational DEI assessments, for developing a DEI plan based on a report from that assessment or MOPC's DEI report, and/or for strategic implementation of the DEI plan. The aim of this grant is to build organizational capacity so that DEI is integrated into the organization. If the DEI training you are planning for mediators meets these criteria it can be funded by the DEI organizational grant.

DEI Expansion Grants

11. Is it appropriate to get letters of interest and commitment from organizations in the Center's target region we want to expand into, or are you more interested in the Center's plan to assess and connect with potential partners?

Commitment letters from partners you have already identified are welcome along with your application but are not required.

Follow-up question: There is no partner commitment form for this program grant – do you want general letters of interest from partners?

As this is an expansion of the Center's work, MOPC did not wish to limit this to working with existing partners. Centers can propose new organizations they wish to cultivate partnerships with in their expansion grant proposal. If Centers already have partnerships, they can provide a letter of commitment for the Center's proposed project. Letters of commitment from partners are not a requirement for this grant application, but developing partnerships will be required for carrying out the grant once awarded.

12. The recommended percentage of need is relatively high. How rigid is MOPC about the required percentage of highest/high challenges in the census tract?

MOPC is prioritizing the highest challenge and high challenge census tracts and targeting at least one of these in your proposal is required. However, surrounding tracts with lower needs can be included, so long as there are high/highest tracts in the selected geographic area as well.

Follow-up question: How should Centers hold to these specific identified tracts in the provision of services? Should Centers only serve those identified tracts?

Centers do not need to limit services to only populations in the specific tracts identified in the application. Targeted outreach and efforts will be undertaken by Centers to reach these populations. However, if other surrounding populations seek services, you are encouraged to serve them as well.

MOPC Note: *The purpose of this expansion grant is to focus on serving the most marginalized, or those who are facing significant challenges. The GIS map and census tract are a means to identify where Centers are more likely to encounter such populations. MOPC encourages Centers to outline the strategies that verify that individuals in the target population are being reached.*

13. Can Centers specify which services they are offering to the tracts identified?

Yes. Centers should specify the services they intend to focus on in this grant. Centers should provide an explanation of what they plan to do and why. Any questions or clarifications can be addressed in the mid-review meeting.

Youth Program Grants

14. Do we need to have a partnership letter for every Youth Grant partner or just one partner letter? Do partners only refer to schools for peer mediation programs, or do they refer to courts?

Partnership Commitment Forms are required from at least one key partner, and ideally two or more. These should be ongoing partners committed to continuing to work with the center's youth program during the grant period. The key partner(s) may be school districts representing multiple involved schools, schools alone if not involved via district support, and/or community organizations working with the program (e.g. youth group, local library, community nonprofit, etc.).

Follow-up question: In the past our Center was told we could not have a court-based youth program. Can you clarify whether court-based youth work can be included?

Court-based youth services can be a part of the Center's youth program for which the Center is seeking grant funding. However, since the Trial Court funds court-connected services for juveniles, court-based youth services cannot comprise the entire youth program for this grant application.

Re-entry Program Grants

15. Regarding re-entry mentors, we wanted to find out if we could add a mentor mediator either now or at some point during the grant period?

Centers can propose a name in their grant application if they want to add mentor mediators, which will be subject to MOPC approval. A Center can have a maximum of only two mentors. MOPC will be developing a process for adding new mentors to the group and will make decisions accordingly.

Follow-up question: If someone left or retired in the middle of the cycle, and/or a Center adds a new facility, is there a process for adding mentors – it sounds like, yes?

Each year at grant renewal, if there are changes like what has been described, please inform MOPC so that we can take this into consideration and adjust funding if appropriate.

16. When would the next re-entry mediator training be planned?

At this time no re-entry mediation training is planned. The Program currently has a lot of mediators and not enough activity to warrant further training. MOPC will continue to monitor this. There is sometimes a possibility of sending mediators to train through the Maryland program, but they are currently at capacity.

17. On the re-entry grant form, in regard to selecting the grant amount requested: Are these reference ranges based on participation, or should the Center describe in the narrative where we think we should fall?

The re-entry grant is a flat amount with an additional amount for mentor mediators. The reason for the range in the application is because the amount of available state funding for the CMC Grant Program is pending the final outcome of the FY25 state budget process. The only variable in re-entry is the number of mentors.

Follow-up question: If our Center would like to add another mentor, do we check off two mentors in the application form and explain who we would like to add?

Yes, if the Center would like to propose a second mentor, check that off on the form and indicate who you would like to add, subject to MOPC approval.

Housing Grants

18. On the HMP application what do we select in “Grant amount request” box in section a, if we have two part-time coordinators?

If a Center has two part-time coordinators which add up to a full-time equivalent, they should select the full-time option on the Housing Program Grant Form. If not, select part-time.

Follow-up question: If staffing does not come to an exact full-time employee, for instance .8 or 1.1 FTE, should we be checking the level that best matches our assessment of the level of service, or based on the coordinator salary?

The criteria for Housing Grants will be reviewed holistically. Centers should check off the funding level that matches their assessment of the level services being provided, not the amount of salary they are paying. The Center narrative should demonstrate how it fits together in an overall picture.

Follow-up question: So, if the Center is able to achieve full-time level of programming with less than a full-time staff member, we should treat it as full-time?

Yes, but only if the staffing level is close to full-time.

General Process Questions

19. Can you help me understand about the [program] grants – if we don't apply for Youth, for example, now does that mean we cannot apply for it next year?

Centers must apply for a program grant now if they would like to be considered for grants during the three-year grant cycle. If a program grant is not awarded in FY25, Centers can request reconsideration at the renewal point for FY26 and/or FY27.

Centers must make their best effort to demonstrate their capacity for this program now. If there is a component that is not ready or a requirement that is not yet met, explain what the Center is doing to get ready to meet the requirements in the future.

20. Do the signature pages/match pledge parts of the application need to be typed or can some of it be handwritten? For the narratives, do you have preferences about font, font size, double spacing, etc? For some grants, would a chart or spreadsheet be acceptable?

Signature pages, match pledges, and partner forms can be handwritten. Single spaced is fine. There is no required font-type or font-size. Please use a font that will enable the reviewers to read your responses (generally 10-12pt). Centers are welcome to include charts or spreadsheets as needed or helpful for sharing your plans or information.

21. Our organization has gone through a lot of staffing changes over the past two years. If our FY25-27 grant application is strong, will any deficits in programming or reporting from the past 2 years be held against us, or will MOPC understand that we are finally positioned to fulfill all aspects of our programs holistically now that we are finally fully staffed?

MOPC will focus primarily on the grant application. However, if there have been issues of concern (staffing, reporting, data, etc.) in the past and MOPC has not been informed of how they have been addressed/resolved, then we will likely ask about them during the mid-review meeting.

Follow-up question: When it comes to operations grants (performance criteria) there is more likelihood of an impact from past years challenges versus program grants, which are future focused. Is that correct?

Yes, the operations grants are impacted by case numbers in the prior year and SMART goal progress in the prior two years, and therefore past deficits or challenges may impact those award amounts.

Additional questions

22. I wanted to inquire about the PMP Program and see if my Center would be able to qualify. How do we get involved in other MOPC programs that are not under the CMC-GP?

This FY25-27 GAR process is for the CMC Grant Program and related state-funded programs. Centers interested in partnering on MOPC programs that are not under the CMC Grant Program should contact the appropriate MOPC program staff to discuss requirements and eligibility. For the Parent Mediation Program (PMP) contact Deepika Madan. For the Agricultural Mediation Program, contact Courtney Breese.

Follow-up question: What is the timing for being considered for these programs?

The Parent Mediation Program has received level funding for FY25, and Center participation will be determined over the next several months. Contact Deepika to discuss the requirements if you are interested in being considered.

The Agricultural Mediation Program operates on a Federal fiscal year (October through September). Centers who are interested in being considered for this program can reach out to Courtney at any time, but consideration will be made for involvement starting in October 2024 at the earliest as will continuation of contracts with current partnering Centers.

23. Do you have a template you recommend we use for tracking outreach across various programs?

MOPC does not have a template for tracking outreach and recommends asking other Centers about their tracking practices.

Summary of next process steps

- Deadline for submission of complete applications is July 15 electronically. There will be no paper submissions.
- Applications will be checked for completion and any omissions and necessary corrections made. At the same time Centers will be notified of the date for a potential mid-review meeting.
- The Operating Grant applications will be sent to the Grant Review Committee for review and the program grant applications will be sent to MOPC staff reviewers.
- After the review by the reviewers, Centers will be notified if a mid-review meeting is necessary, and if so, of the topics to be discussed. Meetings may cover any of the grant applications.
- If additional information is requested during the meeting, it must be submitted by 5:00pm the following day.
- In mid-August, final grant determinations will be made after phase 2 review by the Executive Director.
- Notification letters will be sent out by the end of the third week in August.
- Grant acceptances will be collected, and contracts will be executed.

Reminder: Please include copies of any letters of reference you wish to send (not required by MOPC) with your complete application package rather than submitting them separately.

Reminder: Please use the checklist in the FORM #1 application fully to make sure your submission is complete before sending it to MOPC.

The question-and-answer period with MOPC for the FY25-27 GAR is now closed. If you find further questions during the process of completing grant applications, MOPC suggests that you explain any confusion or uncertainty in your application narratives, and how you have taken this into account in your responses, so that MOPC can consider this during the grant application review or address them in the mid-grant review meetings. Centers may also confer with CMC colleagues.