

**Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
2009 Expanding Opportunities Evaluation Competition**

Background

History of the Expanding Opportunities Initiative

Young children with and without disabilities benefit from inclusive programs and community activities. While there has been much progress to assure that children have these opportunities, challenges still exist. Given the complexity of federal, state and local programs and services that touch the lives of children with disabilities, cross-agency dialogue is an effective mechanism for identifying strategies to address these challenges.

In 2004 the Child Care Bureau, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) held two policy forums in Washington, DC, to discuss strategies for including young children with disabilities in community-based settings and activities. These forums included parents, service providers, researchers, federal, state and local administrators, and technical assistance providers. Recommendations from the forums included the creation a comprehensive, cross-systems approach to inclusion and the bringing together of national-level stakeholders to create and implement a shared vision.

In response to these recommendations, the Child Care Bureau, the Head Start Bureau, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, and OSEP invited states to send cross-agency teams to a strategic planning initiative in the summer of 2005 known as “Expanding Opportunities.” The goal of the four participating states was to increase inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities and their families and to make their findings available to other states.

Since then, 13 state teams have participated in Expanding Opportunities. At these Expanding Opportunities meetings, state-level representatives from each of the coordinating federal agencies, parents, and others met with their federal colleagues in Chapel Hill, NC. Working in teams, they develop strategies for increasing young children with disabilities’ access to quality early care and education programs and services in their communities. The teams have continued their efforts to further develop and implement these strategies upon returning to their home states. OSEP, the Child Care Bureau, and Office of Head Start through their national and regional technical assistance projects continue to support the state Expanding Opportunities teams. Expanding Opportunities is coordinated by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) in collaboration with the OSEP Preschool LRE Community of Practice.

Previous Evaluation Efforts

Several evaluative efforts to date have documented the benefits of Expanding Opportunities. A formal evaluation conducted by NECTAC examined the impact of the first state teams to be involved with Expanding Opportunities. Other evaluative efforts have included the collection of data on progress, accomplishments, and perceived outcomes. In some states; the teams have been successful in making progress towards greater opportunities for early childhood inclusion, and 4

states in particular have been able to maintain momentum and can identify specific accomplishments related to early childhood inclusion: Florida, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

Purpose of this Funding Opportunity

AUCD intends to fund one project with a 6-month project period and a maximum budget of \$8,000 to conduct an evaluation using a case study approach that provides an in-depth analysis of the experience and outcomes in four states (Florida, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin) which have implemented initiatives to increase the inclusion of young children with disabilities in community-based settings and activities.

The expected products of this project are: (a) 4 written “stand alone” case studies (one per state) that are suitable for distribution to provider, state, and federal audiences within a technical assistance context and (b) one brief (i.e., 10 pages or less) summative report that outlines the methodology and primary findings of the evaluation project.

Each case study is expected to examine and describe:

- The impact on state systems and inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities in community-based settings and activities as a result of the state’s participation in Expanding Opportunities
- The processes that contributed to successful implementation of work supported under Expanding Opportunities
- The challenges that were encountered and how they were addressed

Eligibility

This opportunity is limited to staff and faculty of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) or Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and other Disabilities (LENDs). The award may be made to an individual, team, or the Center itself.

Proposal Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

The proposal must be submitted with the format and content described below. Maximum scores for each section are provided; the narrative is limited to 6 double-spaced pages. The cover page, budget, and budget narrative, and attachments may be single spaced, and are not included in the 6-page limit. A letter of support from the applicant’s UCEDD or LEND Director is required.

Cover Page (0 points)

Provide contact information for the applicant (or if a team is applying, the lead contact), including name, address, phone, and email.

Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative should not be longer than 6 double spaced pages with margins that are not less than 1 inch and font no smaller than 12 point. In this section please describe:

1. Background and Experience (25 points)

This section should describe the applicant’s qualifications to undertake this evaluation project and experience in early childhood inclusion.

2. Description of Project Plan (50 points)

This section should describe the anticipated approach, including assurances that the applicant will finalize the design in consultation with NECTAC and AUCD, include NECTAC staff among key informants, solicit a variety of perspectives in each state, and participate in brief monthly monitoring calls throughout the life of the project. The project plan should incorporate a timeline with the following milestones:

Month	Milestones
1	Develop and finalize evaluation design Conduct key informant interviews with NECTAC staff Review existing documentation Participate in brief monthly monitoring call
2—5	Conduct interviews with key informants in states Deliver draft case studies for feedback Participate in brief monthly monitoring calls
6	Deliver final case studies and summative report

3. Assurance of Deliverables (10 points)

This section should describe the applicant’s capacity to create the desired deliverables within the project’s time frame and include assurances of the applicant’s understanding of the intended purpose for those deliverables.

Budget and Budget Narrative (15 points)

This section should provide a 6 month budget with a justification for line item amounts. The maximum amount available for funding is \$8,000. Matching or in-kind funds are not required. AUCD anticipates that telephone, rather than in-person interviews, will be utilized in the conduct of this project.

Required Attachments

- Vita or Biosketch of key staff (each vita/biosketch is limited to 3 pages)
- Letter of support from Director of the UCEDD or LEND

Submission Process and Timelines

Submission Instructions

Applications will **only** be accepted through via email. Submit proposals to Dawn Rudolph at drudolph@aucd.org.

Proposals submission date: August 15, 2009 by midnight EST.

Complete proposals must be submitted by that time; completed proposals include the cover page, project proposal, budget and justification, vitas/biosketchs of key staff and letter of support. ALL materials must be submitted electronically through the above vehicle, and only complete proposals will be considered.

Timeline

Request for Proposal Available: July 13, 2009
Proposal Due: August 15, 2009 by midnight EST
Amount of Award: \$8,000
Project/Budget Duration: 6 Months
Expected Start Date: September 1, 2009

Questions

Contact: Dawn Rudolph (301) 588-8252, drudolph@aucd.org