



## Request for Proposals: *A national partnership to develop an approach and plan to advance peer-support models for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device users*

### Background

An estimated five million people in the United States experience disabilities or other conditions that impact their ability to rely on speech alone to be heard and understood. Some are born with limited speech or no ability to speak, and some experience speech limitations at later stages of life.

People who cannot rely on speech alone to be heard and understood experience widespread bias and discrimination from not being seen, heard, or counted, regardless of the cause or age of onset of their disability or condition. A wide variety of AAC device users, tools, and technologies (from no-tech to high tech) enable more than two million children and adults in the United States to gain access to their human and civil right to communicate.

While a wide range of AAC technologies exist alongside evidence-based studies demonstrating the positive impact and benefit of AAC, overall, issues related to access, uptake, and cultural competence remain that serve to further marginalize already multiply marginalized communities (MMCs). Current models, approaches, and activities in the field indicate the need for the advancement of peer support models to ensure that individuals with disabilities and their families participate in the design of, and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life.

Major growth and advancement in peer support models and related research has occurred in the past decade, from the development of new specializations to training, certification, reimbursement mechanisms, competency standards and fidelity assessment. As the field continues to evolve and develop, peer support is emerging as a standard of practice in various, diverse settings with the potential to significantly improve quality of life for AAC users.

### Purpose

The Administration on Disabilities (AoD) collaborates with states, communities, and partners in the disability network to equip individuals with disabilities of all ages with opportunities, tools, and supports to lead lives of their choice in their community. Under the provisions established through various [authorizing statutes](#), AoD seeks to improve opportunities for people with disabilities to access quality community services and supports, achieve economic self-sufficiency, and experience equality, equity, and inclusion in all facets of community life.

The mission of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is to advance policies and practices that improve the health, education, social, and economic well-being of all people with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their communities by supporting our members in research, education, health, and service activities that achieve our vision. Our vision is a future in which all people, including those living with developmental and other disabilities, are fully included, participating members of their communities. This vision includes equitable access to supports and services that reflect the preferences and values of diverse communities and that lead to self-determination, independence, productivity, and a healthy and satisfying quality of life.

AUCD is seeking proposals for a contracted entity to fulfill a scope of work central to an effort federally funded by the AoD, Administration for Community Living (ACL) that will seek to co-create a nationwide comprehensive, consensus-based peer support model to advance the use of AAC. This one-year planning project is anticipated to yield a rich source of recommendations for peer support models anticipated to improve the lives of AAC users.

The contractor will work alongside AUCD to create a national partnership consortium to develop the proposed approach and plan to advance peer support models for AAC users. This consortium will play an active role in the project, providing guidance and general direction in the design and implementation of the project. The partnership must include individuals that use AAC, potential users of AAC, nonprofit community-based service-provider organizations, direct support professionals, self-advocacy organizations, youth and adults with ID/DD, families, related service providers, educators, and others in their support system. The partnership must include individuals from MMCs. In collaboration with the consortium and AUCD, the contractor will conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of peer-to-peer models, including any that support the use of AAC, as a basis to inform the development of the plan. This analysis will identify current peer-to-peer models, projects, approaches, and activities.

The Contractor will use a consensus-based process in developing the proposed approach and plan that provides for the full participation of all subject matter experts and partners and includes methods to ensure that input from all individuals is sought, received, and considered within the timeline as outlined below.

At the end of the planning year, the project is expected to have a comprehensive plan and specific recommendations for establishing a nationwide resource for developing peer-to-peer models that promote and enhance the use of AAC. The plan and proposed approach will address criteria determined by the partnership group for ensuring a comprehensive and culturally competent approach for sustained and life-changing impact at the individual level.

The Contractor will create a report for AoD/ACL with recommendations and an action plan. The action plan should identify promising practices, perceived barriers, commitment to core principles, and a full range of methods to advance the implementation of a culturally competent peer-to-peer model for supporting the use of AAC in a manner that supports positive changes in daily life activities. The contractor will also develop an external report for other groups (such as hospitals, universities, public service agencies) that may be able to use the information to develop peer support models. The contractor will develop and implement a dissemination plan that specifies how the reports will be shared with relevant groups.

The primary convener of the activity will be AUCD, and the success of the planning year is anticipated to be driven by the established track record and expertise of the entity that successfully competes for

the contractor role described in this RFP.

## Eligibility

Institutions of Higher Education, Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than Institutions of Higher Education

## Scope of Work/Deliverables

1. Partnership Group
2. Comprehensive Review and Analysis
3. Developing Recommendations and Plan
4. Reporting and Dissemination
5. Project Management and Evaluation
6. Monthly Reports

|            | <b>Objectives<br/>O.1 to O.4</b>          | <b>Activities and Goals</b>   | <b>Anticipated<br/>Timeline<br/>(Year 1)</b> |
|------------|---|---|--|
| <b>O.1</b> | Establish Partnership Consortium          | A.7 Partner with AUCD to establish partnership consortium with significant representation of people who use AAC, potential users of AAC, and people from multiply marginalized communities<br>A.7a Partner with AUCD to develop equitable and inclusive governance structure for consortium   | Months 1 & 2                                 |
| <b>O.2</b> | Develop Governance and Management Plan    | A.8 Partner with AUCD to draft partnership management plan with shared decision-making model<br>A.9 Partner with AUCD to plan for and facilitate monthly meetings of partnership consortium   | Months 2 & 3                                 |
| <b>O.3</b> | Conduct Comprehensive Review and Analysis | A.10 Engage AUCD, consortium and AoD in the development of a plan for the comprehensive review and analysis (CRA) of peer-to-peer models, with specific focus on models, projects, approaches, and activities with strong potential for positive life changes at the individual level.<br>A.11 Identify current peer-to-peer <i>models</i> , including any that support the use of AAC.<br>A.12 Identify current peer-to-peer <i>projects</i> , including any that support the use of AAC.<br>A.13 Identify current peer-to-peer <i>approaches</i> including any that support the use of AAC.<br>A.14 Identify current peer-to-peer <i>activities</i> , including any that support the use of AAC.<br>A.15 Identify existing partnerships/organizations that use peer-to-peer models to support AAC use with the goal of positive impact on activities of daily living for the individual.<br>A.16 Analyze legal frameworks and funding supports<br>A.17 Identify barriers and action steps to address these barriers, particularly those faced by people from multiply marginalized communities<br>A.18 Identify themes, promising approaches and practices, and areas of need to develop the plan, working alongside the partnership consortium to ensure attention to diversity, equity, inclusion | Months 3-9                                   |

|            |   |  |                |
|------------|---|--|----------------|
|            |   | A19 Partner with AUCD, consortium, and AoD to develop an initial list of resources and information to inform and develop a proposed approach and plan  |                |
| <b>O.4</b> | Endorse a Nationwide Comprehensive, Consensus-Based P2P Model for Advancing AAC | A.20 Share and discuss the report with the consortium<br>A.21 Collaborate with AUCD and the consortium to develop recommendations and action steps that include special consideration for those that would advance equity, diversity, and inclusion<br>A.22 Develop with the partners and use criteria for adopting final recommendations<br>A.23 Partner with AUCD and the partnership consortium to deliver to AoD and all stakeholders a comprehensive recommended plan and proposed approach for establishing a nationwide resource for developing peer-to-peer models that will promote and enhance the use of AAC devices as well as the overall quality of life of people who use AAC | Months 10 & 11 |

### Period of Performance

January 8, 2024 - September 28, 2024

\*Two option years will be built into the contract, contingent upon contractor performance.

### Budget and Payment

The maximum budget for this project is \$300,000. The indirect cap on this award is 28.25%.

### Type of Contract

A cost-reimbursable sub-award will be executed through AUCD as the prime recipient of the federal funding supporting this project through AoD/ACL.

### Evaluation Criteria

#### Scoring

Proposals will be scored according to the following points criteria:

- Conceptual and philosophical framework 15 points
- Consultant qualifications and capacity 15 points
- Understanding of scope of work 20 points
- Technical approach 35 points
- Timeline 10 points
- Budget and budget justification 5 points

#### Qualifications

AUCD invites applications from collaborative teams that reflect a range of perspectives and that include the following capacities:

1. **Context:** Knowledge and experience in peer support models and/or AAC. Competitive applicants will have demonstrable track records of success in developing and implementing ‘real-world’ actionable peer support methods and/or models that have resulted in tangible changes for the individual.
2. **Research:** Experience with gathering data within the disability community, through a variety

of modalities (survey, focus group, literature review, etc.).

3. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** Knowledge and experience in the research, literature, and implementation of large scale (nationwide) projects aligned with the values of diversity (representation or composition of various social identity groups), equity (the opportunity for all people to attain their highest potential through the elimination of avoidable or remediable differences among social, economic, demographic, or geographic groups), inclusion (affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences), [cultural and linguistic competence](#).
4. **Relationships:** Influence through strong relationships; ability to manage a complex set of stakeholders, ability to facilitate coalition discussions and assist participants to reach consensus.
5. **Information Dissemination:** Experience utilizing culturally responsive approaches in interacting with stakeholders and developing materials.
6. **Project Management:** Coordination and completion of projects on time within budget and within scope. Oversee all aspects of projects. Set deadlines, assign responsibilities, and monitor and summarize progress of project. Prepare reports for leadership regarding status of project.

## How to Submit a Proposal

Proposals must be submitted in PDF format and include the elements noted above in Evaluation Criteria. All questions and proposals should be submitted electronically to [urc@aucd.org](mailto:urc@aucd.org).

Deadline to submit a proposal: December 18, 2023.