

**NYS Department of State
Office for New Americans
ONA Opportunity Center Grant**

Request for Applications # 18-ONA-32

Questions & Answers

The responses to questions included herein are the official responses by the State to questions submitted by potential applicants and are hereby incorporated into RFA # 18-ONA-32 issued on November 5, 2018. In the event of any conflict between the RFA and these responses, the requirements or information contained in these responses will prevail.

1. Page 1: Important Dates is hereby amended to read:

RFA Release Date:	November 5, 2018
Questions Due:	November 19, 2018
RFA Updates Posted:	December 4, 2018
Application Due Date:	January 15, 2019 Revised

2. Section I. Introduction, third paragraph is amended to read:

Please note that eligible organizations applying to host an ONA Opportunity Center are not restricted from applying to other ONA network grants. Eligible organizations applying to host an ONA Opportunity Center are also not restricted from applying to host more than one ONA Opportunity Center, however, multiple ONA Opportunity Centers cannot be in the same zip code. **For zip codes within counties where there are multiple applications, the highest ranked applicant will be awarded. The second highest scoring applicant within the same zip code will have 10 days from notification to identify an alternative service delivery location in a different zip code within the county.** Further, if an organization wishes to host more than one ONA Opportunity Center, the organization must submit all required application documentation separately for each proposed ONA Opportunity Center and these applications cannot reference each other.

3. Section VIII Completing the Application, E. Program Description, #1 found on page 10 of the RFA is amended to read:

Describe how the proposed ONA Opportunity Center will provide naturalization and DACA application assistance by DOJ accredited representatives or an immigration attorney in order to best accommodate the needs of the new American communities in the applicant's geographic area. The applicant should describe how they will achieve at least 100 **N400, and/or N600, and/or DACA, and/or DACA renewal** applications a year.

4. Section X Evaluating the Application, B. Experience #1 found on page 13 of the RFA is amended to read:

Applicant fully described the organization's experience working with new American populations. Applicant has five or more years of providing naturalization and DACA application services within the proposed service region. Applicant provided data showing at least 100 N400, and/or N600, and/or DACA, and/or DACA renewal applications were completed in the last year.

5. Section X Evaluating the Application, D. Program Description, #1 found on page 14 of the RFA is amended to read:

The applicant fully demonstrated that the proposed ONA Opportunity Center will be able to provide naturalization application assistance by DOJ accredited representatives or immigration attorneys to best accommodate the needs of the new American communities in the applicant's geographic area. Applicant fully demonstrated that they will be able to achieve at least 100 N400, and/or N600, and/or DACA, and/or DACA renewal applications a year.

6. Attachment C Sample Program Work Plan, first section under Outcome is amended to read:

Outcome – 100 N400, and/or N600, and/or DACA, and/or DACA renewal Applications annually per Opportunity Center

Questions & Answers:

Q1: The Asian American Federation (AAF) is currently a lead agency for a consortium of partners running an Opportunity Center in Brooklyn. We plan to re-apply with one of our current partners, Council of People's Organization (COPO), whose office the Opportunity Center is currently run out of.

For the current contract, AAF completed a 40-hour DOJ training in 2018 to demonstrate that our organization is moving toward recognition and accreditation, which was sufficient for us to fulfill the contract requirement. COPO, our subcontractor, currently has DOJ recognition. We plan to submit as the lead agency, with COPO as our subcontractor, because of the key role that we play in coordinating the program and the reporting requirements. Would AAF be eligible to apply under the new grant guidelines?

A1: The lead applicant must be DOJ recognized and in active status at the time of submission.

Q2: Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS) is currently an ONA opportunity center and I had one follow up question for the "Minimum Qualifying Criteria". It states that "all applicants must submit proof of current active DOJ recognition", KCS recently moved our headquarter's to a new location in Queens and is planning to resubmit our DOJ recognition sometime this month. Would we still have a shot to apply for the new ONA grant while our DOJ recognition application is in progress?

A2: The lead applicant must be DOJ recognized and in active status at the time of submission.

Q3: What is the reasoning behind the drastic reduction in the ONA RFP? Also, why is this a 2 year cycle not 3?

A3: This grant opportunity has a more limited scope of services compared to the current grant; the funding for this grant takes that into account. The two-year cycle allows ONA to be responsive to changing needs within the immigration landscape.

Q4: Is there a checklist? Can you please provide one?

A4: There is no checklist, however instructions in Completing the Application can be found in *Section VII. Completing the Application*, beginning on page 8 of the RFA.

Q5: Is preference given to organizations that provide matching monies?

A5: No preference is given to organizations that provide matching funds under this grant.

Q6: a-Is the requirement that there be 8 to 10 people in each Citizenship Preparation class? Or do you require that the same cohort of 8 to 10 people attend the class throughout the quarter?

b-Page 5 of the RFA states that each citizenship class must have a minimum of 8 to 10 students. Do these have to be the same 8 to 10 students, or can they vary from class to class? Will students have to enroll from the beginning of the quarter, or can they join the class mid-quarter?

c-On page 5 of the RFA, you discuss the requirements to offer at least one Citizenship Preparation class per quarter for at least 8-10 students. Do these have to be the same 8-10 students for the entire quarter? And are all 8-10 students required to attend all 10 weeks? If students participate in only some of the classes and then take the test, would that meet your requirements? If so, can another student then be enrolled in as slots open during the quarter (as students take their exams)?

A6: Each quarter citizenship preparation class must be offered to the same cohort of 8-10 students. This cohort of students is expected to attend all 10 weeks of classes. Students who are successful mid-way through the class meet the requirements and are not required to continue in the class. Students may be added mid-way through the class at the discretion of the grantee and in consultation with ONA.

Q7: Is there an expectation that the not-for-profit organization's Board of Directors represents the county it serves? (For example, would you expect that a majority of the board of an organization serving the Bronx resides in the Bronx?)

A7: There are no residency requirements for Board of Directors under this grant.

- Q8: a-The application instructions state that we have to submit a MWBE Compliance Certification Letter. Do we have to submit any other MWBE forms with our application? You included other MWBE forms as Appendix F of the RFA.**
- b-Page 9 in the RFP states, “All applicants must submit Form D-1 MWBE Certification Letter (found in Appendix F-MWBE Forms) with their application. The form should be submitted as Attachment 5: MWBE Compliance Certification Letter. Do we also have to submit Form A, Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises-Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement; Form B, Work Force Employment Utilization; and Form D, M/WBE Utilization Plan, to be compliant with the RFA?**
- A8: Section XVII on page 18 of the RFA addresses the MWBE requirements. As stated in this section, Forms A, C and D are required to be submitted within 10 business days of notice of grant award. Forms E and F are attached for reference. Form B will not be required due to the dollar amount of the contract.
- Q9: When I looked at the RFA, I did not see information regarding the Naturalize New York Lottery program. I was wondering whether the budgeting for the Naturalization Lottery is included in the budget we were provided on the application or if the budgeting will be separate?**
- A9: The NaturalizeNY program will conclude on December 31, 2018 and therefore will not be incorporated into this grant. Proposed budgets should not include NaturalizeNY funding.
- Q10: On page 2 of the RFA, you indicate that subcontractors must be not-for-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) IRS status. Does this mean that we cannot subcontract to a college which, although public, does not have 501(c)(3) status?**
- A10: All subcontractors must have 501 (c) (3) status. If the proposed subcontractor is a public institution without this status, they cannot be a subcontractor under this grant.
- Q11: On page 2 of the RFA, you indicate that any subcontractors to be used in this contract must be DOJ recognized at the time of submission. Is this for the organization, its staff, or both?**
- A11: The subcontractor organization must be DOJ recognized at the time of submission. Subcontractor staff do not need to be accredited at the time of submission, however, if awarded a grant, the grantee must ensure that appropriately qualified staff are in place at the subcontracting organization (either DOJ accredited or an immigration attorney) to review citizenship applications on May 1, 2019.
- Q12: a-On page 3 of the RFA, you phrase the outcome in this way: "each ONA Opportunity Center must recruit and assist enough clients with naturalizations and DACA applications to enable the Opportunity Center to submit at least 100 total applications to USCIS per year." Can you clarify what applications are counted toward the outcome? Similarly, Attachment 3, Page 2 (the first page), identifies Required Activities as N400, N600 and DACA applications, but only lists 100 Naturalizations as the outcome. Is this correct? Are there no required outcomes for anything but N400s?**

b-Under the Naturalization Assistance component of the program, what other types of citizenship applications qualify under this service (in addition to N400, N600, and DACA)? Do DACA renewals qualify?

c-Naturalization Assistance - On page 3 of the RFA, under the sub-heading Naturalization Services, the RFA states that the Opportunity Centers will assist new Americans with citizenship applications, including N400 and N600 applications, and DACA applications. The RFA goes on to state, on page 3, that the Opportunity Center will be expected to submit at least 100 total applications per year. Conversely, on page 10 of the RFA, Subsection(E)(1) requires the applicant describe how they will achieve at least 100 naturalization applications per year , but does not also reference DACA applications. Because DACA applications are not naturalization applications, will ONA kindly confirm that the 100 applications per year goal represents a combination of both naturalization and DACA applications?

A12: N400, N600, DACA, and DACA renewal applications are included in applications counted towards the 100 total requirement. As noted on the first page of this Q&A, the RFA has been amended to reflect this.

Q13: On page 5 of the RFA, you say that Citizenship classes should be taught by "highly qualified individuals, either paid or volunteer." Can you provide further information on what constitutes as highly qualified?

A13: A highly qualified individual is an individual knowledgeable about the Citizenship test and its contents to the extent that they can provide the target population with proper information and preparation.

Q14: a-When you mention that for Citizenship Preparation classes we need a highly qualified individual, does this individual needs to be a NYS certified teacher? or does the curriculum needs to be certified by the Department of Education?

b-For the citizenship test preparation classes, are there any specific teacher qualifications (e.g., years/type of teaching experience, level of education, certification, etc.)?

A14: The individual does not need to be a NYS certified teacher and the curriculum does not need to be certified by the Department of Education.

Q15: On page 6 of the RFA, direct costs include salaries. Do you require that staff included on the budget be assigned full-time to this project?

A15: Staff included on the budget do not need to be assigned full-time to this project.

Q16: On page 10 of the RFA, you require that staff assigned to the project "become DOJ accredited." What is your timeframe for staff to become accredited?

A16: The applicant must be U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) recognized and in active status at the time of submission. If awarded a grant, the grantee must ensure that appropriately qualified staff are in place (either DOJ accredited or an immigration attorney) to review citizenship applications on May 1, 2019.

Q17: On Attachment 3, page 4, you ask that we document follow-up with clients to verify that they took the US citizenship exam and identify whether they passed. We have found this information difficult to obtain in the past. Would you accept a good faith effort to get this information? What type of documentation would satisfy this requirement? And would ONA's attorneys be able to assist in tracking the status of applications?

A17: Good faith efforts are sufficient. Documentation will include a record and/or log of contacts with individuals to determine if they took the Citizenship exam and passed. ONA attorneys will not be available to assist in tracking the status of applications.

Q18: On Attachment 3, page 5, you ask that we keep "records of clients referred to ESOL services." What type of documentation do you seek?

A18: Records and/or logs containing the name of client, date of referral, and the referral source.

Q19: If there is already one agency in the indicated Zip-code, are you looking for a second agency or the first agency will also compete for the same spot?

A19: As this is a new procurement, applications will be considered based on the merits of the application and the evaluation criteria listed in the RFA. Appendix A lists the number of proposed opportunity centers in each eligible county. It should be noted that multiple ONA Opportunity Centers cannot be located in the same zip code. For counties where there are multiple awards and multiple applicants for one zip code, the highest ranked applicant will be awarded. The afforded the first choice in operating locations.

Q20: If our office provides services out of one main location but also serves 20 other locations in two counties, can this information be included and will this help?

A20: See evaluation criteria is found in Section X of the RFA. This is the only criteria that will be used to score applications.

Q21: Page 3 of the RFA states that citizenship and DACA applications must be prepared by a qualified DOJ accredited representative or immigration attorney. Subsequently, page 5 states that volunteers can assist with completing citizenship applications. Does this mean that only volunteers who are DOJ accredited can assist with completing citizenship applications, or can non-accredited volunteers assist if under the direct supervision of an immigration attorney?

A21: Page 5 of the RFA states that “volunteers can assist in completing citizenship applications *to the extent that they are allowed*...”. Only volunteers who are DOJ accredited can assist with completing applications required under this grant under the direct supervision of DOJ accredited staff or immigration attorneys at the grantee organization. Volunteers who are not DOJ accredited cannot assist with completion of applications under this grant.

Q22: Page 10 of the RFA requests that the applicant describe how it will ensure the privacy of clients coming to the center. Beyond basic legal confidentiality, can you please elaborate?

A22: The applicant should describe how basic privacy concerns including safeguarding of identifying information will be maintained so that a client’s participation in any of ONA services will be kept confidential.

Q23: The RFA indicates that applicants need to prove that at least 100 N-400 or N-600 and or DACA applications have been filed during the last year, how do we provide this information without violating clients privacy? would a certified letter from the agency satisfy this request or partial Alien number?

A23: In order to respond to question C1 found in Section VII of the RFA, an aggregate number of the total applications filed provided by the applicant within their program description is sufficient.

Q24: Is there a page limit for the proposal?

A24: There is no page limit for the proposal.

Q25: Is there a particular form of proof to include in the proposal to show good standing with DOJ?

A25: A letter from DOJ or any documentation indicating that the applicant is DOJ recognized as of the date of submission is sufficient.

Q26: If we have any workshops we currently provide that are funded by another government contract/private foundation requirement and that can also fulfill ONA's requirement in this proposal, may we count those workshops for this grant? I.e. our SNAP funding provides for us to offer a workshop on public health and nutrition and access to SNAP. May we count this for the SNAP grant and also for ONA community workshop? Or should we run two separate workshops to be counted separately?

A26: No, workshops currently funded by another sources cannot be counted to fulfill the requirements of this grant.

Q27: If our proposed headquarter region is located in Manhattan/NY county, may we outstation at our other community centers located in Kings and Queens counties? Similarly, are we allowed to service clients from any borough who comes to the proposed Manhattan site? Or only people from Manhattan/NY county?

A27: The grantee must operate within the service region in which they are awarded. However, at their Center, grantees may provide services to new Americans who live and work outside of that service region.

Q28: For volunteers with a legal background, may we leverage existing in-kind on-site volunteers who are at CPC through an in-kind grant? These people are paid through another agency, are BIA certified and either pre-law or in law-school, and are on site at CPC offering naturalization and other legal supports. May we leverage them for the requirements of legal volunteers for this ONA grant? Can we count them towards the BIA certification requirement?

A28: Volunteers paid for through different funding sources may be counted under ONA, provided that services delivered under the ONA grant are separate and distinct from deliverables counted under other grants. Individuals completing applications at a grantee agency must be DOJ accredited with the grantee agency or volunteers who are DOJ accredited working under the direct supervision of DOJ accredited staff or an immigration attorney at the grantee organization.

Q29: May we count naturalization assistance outcomes and citizenship test outcomes as well as other metrics as part of our ONA outcomes if they are funded by another agency or grant?

A29: If these services are funded by another entity they cannot be counted towards required deliverables.

Q30: Can the state share what specific job titles are required for this ONA grant and the qualifications and job responsibilities for each position?

A30: ONA does not have specific staffing requirements for this grant, however, each staff performing work under this grant must be qualified to do so as described under Section V. Scope of Services in the RFA.

Q31: Are there any specific curricula the state wants us to utilize in offering citizenship test prep?

A31: There are no specific curricula the State is requiring. All classes must include United States civics, history, and government and focus on preparation for the 100 questions on the naturalization exam. Classes should be taught by highly qualified individuals, either paid or volunteer and should also include time for practice for the citizenship interview.

Q32: Are there any metrics the state would like us to utilize to show outcomes for the citizenship test prep activities?

A32: Grantees will be measured on number of students enrolled, number of hours attended by students, number of classes held in a quarter, and client satisfaction. Additionally, grantees will be expected to follow-up with clients to verify they took the United States Citizenship exam and identify whether they passed the United States Citizenship exam and if they became a US Citizen.

Q33: Are signed community partnership agreements required for this application? If so, is there a template we should use to create the agreement?

A33: No. Letters are only required if an applicant is applying with a subcontractor.

Q34: Do we have to submit a completed Attachment C: Sample Program Work Plan with our response to the RFA?

A34: Attachment C: Sample Program Work Plan does not need to be submitted at the time of application.

Q35: For page 9, B2, do we submit the proof of DOJ recognition for the overall nonprofit organization, or the individuals who are certified or both the agency and the individuals who are certified at the proposed site? Do we include staff only or volunteers who are certified?

A35: The applicant should submit proof of DOJ recognition for the overall organization only.

Q36: Can an organization host the ONA office while a second organization in a different zip-code host the Citizenship Preparation Classes?

A36: Yes, provided both organizations are located in the same service region. For counties where there is more than one award, successful applicants will be required to work together to coordinate services in any expansion efforts.

Q37: With respect to each Opportunity Center's obligation to submit not less than 100 applications per year, will ONA kindly confirm that submission of an application will be deemed complete upon the submission itself, regardless of whether or not the application is accepted and/or rejected and/or returned for modifications or additional information?

A37: Yes. For purposes of this grant, the application is considered complete upon submission to USCIS.

Q38: In addition to the foregoing, will ONA kindly clarify what constitutes one (1) submission for purposes of the 100 goal? For example, is one (1) submission considered each separate and distinct application, regardless of whether multiple applications are submitted for the same individual? Or will the 100 number be counted on an individual-by-individual basis such that a client for whom we submit multiple applications will only be counted once towards the 100 goal?

A38: No. One submission in each separate and distinct N400, N600, DACA, DACA renewal application, for a total of 100 applications.

Q39: As ONA is aware, there are instances when considerable preparatory work is necessary in order to determine/pursue the most appropriate path for each client, whether it be a naturalization application or DACA application. This may include Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain the applicant's immigration record in order to assess appropriate next steps. This preparatory work is paramount to ensuring accurate advice is provided. Sometimes, upon receipt of such information, it is concluded that the best application for submission is something other than a naturalization application (ie. an I- 90). There are also many instances when legal permanent residents are eligible to naturalize but cannot afford the filing fee. As ONA is aware, the rules around fee waiver requests are about to become more stringent, as applicants will no longer be allowed to support these requests with evidence of receipt of means-tested benefits. As a result, preparing fee waiver requests will become more time-consuming. Given that ONA is implementing a 100 application submission target for successful applications, in light of the foregoing, will ONA kindly revise the RFA so that the 100 application goal number includes naturalization applications, DACA applications and I-90 applications and fee waiver applications?

A39: I-90 applications will not be counted towards the 100 application goal number under this grant. Fee waivers are considered to be part of the naturalization application review and cannot be counted separately. Changes to the naturalization application process were taken into account when determining this goal, the 100 application goal represents a 25% reduction from current Opportunity Center contracts.

Q41: Will ONA kindly revise the RFA to include applications that are prepared but ultimately not submitted because of missing evidence, adverse information revealed by FOIA, arrest(s) or other good moral character issues disclosed/arising during the application preparation process?

A41: No. Only finalized applications which are submitted will count towards the 100 application outcome.

Q42: Scope of Services - Section V of the RFA states, in part, that each ONA Opportunity Center will be permitted to provide services to new Americans regardless of where in New York State the client resides. Later, in the same section, the RFA states that each county is “service region” and awarded applicants will be required to identify a region and service individuals who live or work in that region. For purposes of clarification, will ONA kindly confirm that a successful applicant will be permitted to service clients residing in any area of New York State, regardless of the service region identified in such applicants RFA response?

A42: Applicants are required to identify a service region in which they are applying and, if awarded, must service individuals who live or work in that service region. However, grantees may also provide services to new Americans who live and work outside of that service region.

Q43: Naturalization Assistance - With respect to the requirement that all Opportunity Centers must provide information to clients on resources to finance naturalization applications (i.e. microloans), will ONA kindly confirm that its office will be responsible for providing that information to each Opportunity Center for distribution?

A43: ONA will provide this information on resources to finance naturalization to each grantee for distribution.

Q44: Naturalization Assistance- Will ONA kindly confirm that for each successful applicant who already possesses its own software program for electronic application processing, such applicant will not be required to utilize Citizenship Works?

A44: Use of CitizenshipWorks is optional on the part of the grantee.

Q45: Naturalization Assistance - We applaud that ONA is requiring agencies to be recognized by the Department of Justice in order to be eligible for funding under this RFA and respectfully request that recognized agencies that also have attorneys on staff be allowed to waive the requirement that the ONA Legal Counsel review all applications prior to submission, as we feel strongly that review by an attorney employed by another agency would be duplicative when all applications are reviewed in-house by CCCS attorneys and DOJ accredited representatives prior to submission with a G-28 Notice of Appearance and are covered by CCCS’ malpractice insurance.

A45: ONA Legal Counsels will not be responsible for reviewing individual applications, however the ONA Legal Counsels will perform a legal review of the process for reviewing applications at each Opportunity Center. This requirement cannot be waived.

Q46: Naturalization Assistance - Will ONA kindly confirm that each Opportunity Center will be permitted to provide applicable services to all residents of New York State regardless of a client's (1) English proficiency level and/or (2) income level (household and/or individual)?

A46: Applicable services should be provided to all residents of New York State regardless of English proficiency level and/or income level.

Q47: Community Workshops - we respectfully request that ONA (i) amend the RFA to remove the requirement that a minimum of eight (8) individuals must attend each workshop in order for the workshop to be counted towards the grant; and (ii) confirm that any workshop where at least one (1) attendee is present shall be deemed compliant for purposes of the grant.

A47: Workshops with fewer than eight participants will not be counted as fulfillment of the Community Workshop outcome under this grant.

Q48: Community Workshops - The RFA requires that not less than eight (8) community workshops are held per year. This applicant's experience has been that attendance to such workshops tends to be highest at certain times of the year. Given that this program term does not run on an ordinary calendar and/or fiscal year, will ONA kindly confirm that the successful applicant shall have sole discretion to host workshops throughout the term at any time during the year that it deems, in its professional and experienced opinion, are the best times of year to ensure maximum attendance?

A48: All workshops must be pre-approved by ONA prior to being held. ONA encourages seminars to be held throughout the year, not held within the final quarter of the year, however, the applicant may host workshops at any time throughout the year to ensure maximum attendance.

Q49: Eligible Expense - Section VI states that Administrative Expenses will be permitted, and are "those expenses that are allowable pursuant to applicable agency regulations, contracts, or other rules...". In order to ensure applicants have sufficient, credible information on which to build a budget, kindly provide the agency regulations, contracts or other rules that define allowable administrative expenses related to this program.

A49: For budgeting purposes, administrative costs are limited to 10% of direct program costs. Administrative costs are those agency support costs which can be documented and support direct costs. Examples include allocable costs such as space and phone for direct staff and administrative support. Further information will be provided to successful applicants.

Q50: Eligible Expenses - Section VI(1) states that “timesheets demonstrating actual time spent on grant activities are required by grantees.” As you are aware, Master Contract Section VI(E)(2) states that a Contractor’s costs must be made according to a cost allocation plan that meets the requirements of an applicable OMB Circular, in this case, OMB Circular A-122 for Non-Profit Organizations.

OMB circular A-122 states, in relevant part, that the distribution of activity should represent a reasonable estimate of the actual work performed by the employee during the period covered by the reports.

In order to ensure consistency for all successful applicants, and to maximize efficiency and proper timekeeping practices during the term of a resulting contract, will ONA kindly confirm the following:

ONA and its associated fiscal department(s) shall accept the submission of any time keeping records from a successful applicant that reflect a reasonable estimate of actual time allocated for each Program for which payment is being claimed under an applicable invoice and/or voucher; and

Time sheets shall not reflect budgeted or forecasted estimates of time and shall be signed by the applicable employee or such employee’s supervisor who has firsthand knowledge of the employee’s performance; and

Time sheets shall be accepted by ONA in any form that is ordinarily and customarily used by the applicable successful applicant as part of its standard internal operations processes.

A51: Time distribution will not be evaluated as part of the application process. DOS reserves the right to require reporting on forms developed by DOS.

Q52: Hotline- Will ONA kindly describe the process it would like each Opportunity Center to employ for sharing contact information, citizenship preparation class schedules, and scheduled legal consultation days with the ONA Hotline?

A52: ONA will coordinate with grantees and the hotline to provide forms to be submitted by the grantee with contact information, citizenship preparation classes, and legal consultation days. Information will be expected to be kept current by the grantee.

Q53: Ineligible Expenses - In order to ensure services are made available within the constraints of the life/work realities of our client base, many of our services and workshops are offered during evening hours and on weekends. As a result, this applicant has found that offering food and beverages to clients who have no alternative but to receive our services during meal times is an important benefit to ensure our Opportunity Center is an understanding and open environment that does not disregard the complexities of each individual client’s time, work and family commitments. Based on the foregoing, we respectfully request that ONA delete #10 of the ineligible expenses list and allow each Opportunity Center to be reimbursed for costs associated with food and beverages for both clients and staff/volunteers.

A53: The list of ineligible expenses is not negotiable. Successful applicants may choose to provide client support such as food but cannot submit to DOS for reimbursement.

Q54: Budget - Given that the budget for this program cannot exceed \$80,800 for the first year, will ONA kindly confirm that all 20 evaluation points will be awarded to every applicant whose budget does not exceed \$80,800? If not, will ONA kindly advise as to how the 20 points allocated for Budget evaluation will be prioritized/distributed?

A54: The criteria to be used to evaluate the budget are detailed on page 15 of the RFA.

Q55: MWBE Participation -Notwithstanding New York State's commitment to promoting maximum feasible participation of New York State Certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE's), it is well known that MWBE vendors and similar small businesses often cannot offer the competitive rates for goods and services that non-MWBE vendors can provide.

Given the significant funding cut for this year's program, each successful applicant will be tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that all available funding dollars are maximized in order to ensure services can be delivered judiciously and responsibly. As a result, it may not be fiscally responsible to purchase goods/services from more expensive MWBE vendors when the same goods/services can be purchased from a non-MWBE vendor for a more competitive price.

Accordingly, and in order to ensure that the funding allocated for this program is maximized to the greatest extent practicable, we respectfully request a waiver and/or material reduction in the MWBE spending goals for this program.

A55: A blanket, pre-contract waiver cannot be entertained. All successful applicants will be required to document their good faith efforts to provide meaningful participation by MWBEs as subcontractors and suppliers in the performance of contracts resulting from this solicitation. Waiver requests, whether full or partial, submitted with sufficient justification will only be considered on a case by case basis.