

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Below are some frequently asked questions regarding the Support for Ombudsman and Beneficiary Counseling Programs for States Participating in Financial Alignment Model Demonstrations for Dually Eligible Individuals notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) CMS-1J1-19-001. This document was last revised on April 3, 2019.

### **What is the purpose of this NOFO?**

Since the start of the Medicare-Medicaid Financial Alignment Initiative, CMS has provided participating states with funding to support demonstration ombudsman and one-on-one counseling programs – most recently through a 2016 NOFO entitled “Support for Ombudsman and Beneficiary Counseling Programs for States Participating in the Medicare-Medicaid Financial Alignment Initiative”.

CMS has released a new NOFO to provide states participating in the Medicare-Medicaid Financial Alignment Initiative with the opportunity to apply for up to 45 months of additional funding for these two programs. It is consistent with CMS’s commitment to provide ongoing funding for these beneficiary support programs. The NOFO can be accessed by using the following link: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html> and searching for CFDA 93.634.

### **Why does the NOFO cover funding for both ombudsman programs and one-on-one counseling programs?**

The programs provide different, but related, supports for demonstration-eligible beneficiaries.

One-on-one counseling activities enable informed decision-making by beneficiaries in eligible states by delivering information and counseling on options for health coverage. Ombudsman services empower beneficiaries and support their engagement in resolving problems. CMS wants to encourage greater coordination between these programs. In addition, as in the previous funding opportunity, under this NOFO, states have the option (but are NOT required) to have one agency apply for both programs under a combined application. Experience has shown that this creates some greater budgetary flexibility and can simplify grants management for the recipient.

### **Do states have to apply for both programs?**

No. States can apply for either or both programs, as long as they are eligible for the program(s) for which they apply. Different state agencies can apply separately for each program if they wish. Or, if a state wishes, one state agency can apply for both programs in one application. Also, a state may designate a separate non-profit organization to apply on the state’s behalf. See Section C1 of the NOFO for details.

### **Is a state that is pursuing funding for both programs required to use a combined application?**

If one state agency administers the ombudsman program and a different agency administers the one-on-one counseling program, then the two agencies may apply

separately. They also have the option to submit a combined application with the ombudsman agency as the prime applicant, but a combined application is not required. However, if one state agency administers both programs, then it should submit a combined application.

### **Which states are eligible to apply?**

For both the ombudsman program and one-on-one counseling programs, eligible applicants must: 1) have received funds for that program under the prior NOFO (CMS-1J1-17-001); and 2) have a Financial Alignment Initiative model demonstration or a related model authorized under Section 1115A of the Social Security Act that will operate beyond the end of the award under the prior NOFO. Please contact Latonya Phipps ([Latonya.Phipps@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:Latonya.Phipps@cms.hhs.gov)) with any questions about whether your state is eligible.

### **Why is the project period up to 45 months?**

The project period of up to 45 months will allow the funding periods for ombudsman and one-on-one counseling activities to align more closely with the timeframes of the overall financial alignment model demonstrations, which run on a calendar year basis. The project period is not to exceed the timeframe of the state's demonstration plus up to a three-month close-out period.

### **When should states apply?**

There will be three rounds of applications and awards, as listed in Section B3 of the NOFO. The application deadline for the first round is May 30, 2019. States with current funding for either ombudsman or one-on-one counseling should plan to apply towards the end of their current grant period. Ombudsman programs in particular should apply in time to prevent a lapse in funding. Please contact Latonya Phipps ([Latonya.Phipps@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:Latonya.Phipps@cms.hhs.gov)) with any questions about application cycles.

### **Will there be flexibility to use the funding in this NOFO to serve all dually eligible beneficiaries enrolled in Financial Alignment Initiative model demonstrations, or to include dually eligible beneficiaries enrolled in other integrated products, such as Fully Integrated Dual Eligible Special Needs Plans (FIDE-SNPs) and the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)?**

Funds under this NOFO are made available as a component of the Medicare-Medicaid Financial Alignment Initiative, which is tested under section 1115A of the Social Security Act. As such, they may only be used to serve beneficiaries who are eligible for a Financial Alignment model demonstration or a related model authorized under Section 1115A. The funds may be used to counsel or assist beneficiaries who are eligible for a Financial Alignment model demonstration but who are enrolled in other types of coverage; however, such counseling or assistance must be related to the demonstration. For example, educating demonstration-eligible dually eligible beneficiaries about their coverage options, including the demonstration, is permissible; assisting a beneficiary with a non-demonstration Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP) coverage issue would

not be.

**How much funding is available to each grantee?**

Through the NOFO, CMS anticipates making up to \$22.5 million available to support ombudsman and one-on-one counseling services over the entire period. Specific funding amounts for each state will be based on the number of people eligible for the demonstration(s) in that state, and geographic considerations. Applicants should apply for the amount of funding necessary to operate their programs. Grantees are eligible to receive a level of annual funding similar to that which was awarded under the previous funding opportunity. The funding would be for up to a 45-month project period, with 12-month budget periods (the final budget period may be shorter depending on the date of the award and end date of the demonstration).

Applicants that submit a combined application will have some flexibility on how to distribute funding between both activities.

**How much funding has previously been awarded for these programs?**

Since the start of the Medicare-Medicaid Financial Alignment Initiative in 2013, CMS has awarded \$19,651,940 to support ombudsman programs and \$7,499,137 to support one-on-one counseling programs.