

## RFP 2014-1 Developmental Disabilities Policy Fellows Questions and Answers

The following list includes questions submitted and answers provided regarding RFP 2014-1. Questions are organized by topic. Questions are in bold; answers follow below each question. Some questions and answers may be included under more than one topic.

### Eligible Organizations

**I founded a new non-profit that is in the process of getting a 501(c)(3) status. Can I still apply for this grant if I don't have 501(c)(3) status yet? If I need the 501(c)(3) status, can my non-profit work under another non-profit that is already the 501(c)(3) status?**

TCDD can only award grants to organizations that are legal entities, including public agencies, private for-profit organizations, universities, colleges or other organizations. Your organization could apply while you wait for approval as a 501 (c) (3), but if you are recommended to receive a grant TCDD could not award funds until the 501 (c)(3) status is approved. This could cause a delay in starting the project.

If your organization is not an eligible entity, you could collaborate with another organization that would submit the proposal and serve as the grantee of record if funding is approved.

**I have a business that is a sole proprietorship with a DBA, EIN, and SAM registration. Would that suffice for an "organization"?**

Yes, a business that is a sole proprietorship with a DBA, EIN and SAM registration may apply for a grant, as long as the requirements for separate & unrelated people serving as the Authorizing Official, Financial Administrative Authority, and Project Director are met.

### Fellows and Mentors

**Our mission is heavily focused on public policy. We operate with volunteers and contractors right now. Would I be able to hire myself for the Fellow position?**

TCDD expects the organization approved for these grants to have a recruitment process to solicit applications for Fellows and an objective selection process to select the Fellow.. If you were interested in applying to be a Fellow, you would need to step aside from the recruitment and selection process so that it is fair and objective. You could not "hire yourself." TCDD also expects that a Fellow will not have a position of authority over the person who supervises either the Fellow or the Fellow's mentor.

Please also note that TCDD grants require at least three different, unrelated people in various administrative roles: Authorizing Official, a Financial Administrative Authority, and the Project Director. For this grant, the Fellow would need to be a fourth person not in any of the other three positions.

**Can this opportunity be used to fund an existing employee?**

No. Because the purpose of the grant is to bring new professionals into the field, it cannot be used to fund an existing employee as a Fellow. A portion of the salary of an existing employee who serves as a mentor may be paid through the grant.

**The requirements note the fellow should have graduated from a graduate program with the last 24 months. Would the 24 months be from the project start date? In other words, must fellows have graduated AFTER May 2012, or would May 2012 graduates be eligible?**

We do not expect that the project will start before June 2014, and there will need to be a recruitment and competitive application process through which Fellows are hired, so May 2012 graduates would not be eligible. The 24 month period would start when Fellows apply for the position.

**Would someone who does not have work experience be eligible to be selected as a Fellow?**

There is no requirement that Fellows have any work experience prior to being selected. TCDD does expect that an objective selection process will be used to hire Fellows, and the RFP notes requirements for the level of knowledge Fellows should have.

**Would a Fellow job description and/or a posting for the position require TCDD approval?**

The current application process requires the organization to identify each project staff and other key project personnel, and to include "to be hired" position descriptions. Therefore, as a part of the application process, TCDD would approve the position description as a budgeted line item. We would not need to approve the job posting.

**Please clarify the activities you are requiring Fellows to participate in. The RFP notes these include the Quarterly TCDD Council meetings, but also notes the expectation of one to two days per month. Do we need to worry about including travel costs in our grant application for these additional activities?**

TCDD has not yet determined the exact activities in which the Fellows will be expected to engage, although we do expect Fellows to attend at least a portion of TCDD Council meetings as well as some meetings in Austin. However, TCDD will not require participation by Fellows more than 1-2 days a month in total. TCDD will provide additional funding to pay for travel for any activity required by TCDD.

**Is the Fellow's work to be exclusively on DD? Or can it be broader if the grantee organization's mission is to work on cross disability issues? For example, would the Fellow be permitted to work on policy concerning community attendant wages, which would affect people with a range of disabilities, including DD?**

The majority of the Fellow's work should be on issues that are important to people with Developmental Disabilities. TCDD uses the federal definition of Developmental Disabilities, and this definition by nature includes a wide range of types of disabilities. Thus, TCDD expects that some of the issues on which the Fellow works will be cross disability issues.

**The RFP states that "mentors and Fellows receiving financial assistance through this RFP may not engage in activities that would require registration with the Texas Ethics Commission as a lobbyist." If the mentor is a registered lobbyist for other purposes of his/her job, is that acceptable?**

TCDD recognizes the possibility that a mentor may be a registered lobbyist for portions of his/her job that do not involve the Fellow. You will need to make a clear delineation between those aspects of his/her job that involve lobbying and other job duties; it must be 100% clear that he/she is not conducting any of the lobbying activities while being paid by TCDD funds. If you receive the grant, you

would work this arrangement out with your TCDD grant specialist, and she would help you determine what kind of documentation you would need to provide.

**Would it be acceptable to propose a project for the Policy Fellow to work on issues of dual diagnosis: developmental disability and mental illness?**

Yes.

**We are looking to support a doctoral student as a policy Fellow on this grant, to assist us with creating a graduate certificate in special education advocacy. Is a doctoral student Fellow something that TCDD is looking to fund? Consistent within the guidelines of the RFP, we would make the position competitive within our pool of doctoral students.**

A doctoral student who has masters' level expertise in a relevant area (per the RFP) would be eligible for the Fellowship funded under this grant, and a proposal for a Fellow to do the type of work you are proposing would be eligible for review and possible selection, assuming that all the other requirements or the RFP are met.

However, the primary focus and the majority of the Fellow's work should be public policy, not academic work. It's important that you understand that when reviewers evaluate how well the proposal addresses TCDD's goals, they will be looking at the public policy work the Fellow will do and the quality of the mentoring around public policy issues that the Fellow will receive.

**Does TCDD expect that the Fellow will have a single mentor or might there be different mentors who provide guidance on different topics?**

One person should be identified as the mentor for a Fellow. However, it would be appropriate for the Fellow to consult with people who have expertise on different topics.

## **Completion of the Proposal**

**Are letters of support accepted, and if so, are they counted toward the overall application page limit?**

Yes, letters of support will be accepted with your proposal. They do not count toward the overall application page limit.

**The instructions for "Section A. Mission Statement & Organizational Structure" say to "briefly explain how your organization's mission statement and goals are related to this project and indicate who will have oversight." When you say oversight are you referring to those the Fellow will report to within the organization or do you mean those who will oversee that we reach our goals as related to the project, like our board?**

TCDD is referring to oversight of both the Fellow and the project in general. For this section, many applicants attach an organizational chart that shows the position(s) funded by the grant and the levels of supervision all the way up to the board.

**What are the page limits (if any) on Part II, G. (Continuation Information) and all of Part III?**

Page limits are as is dictated in the application packet. If no page limit is given in a section, none exists. Therefore there are no page limits for Part II G or Part III.

**Is it possible to submit a Microsoft Excel document as the Budget document?**

No. All proposals submitted must use the same forms, including the budget form provided. You may certainly do your calculations on a spreadsheet, but you must transfer the numbers to the form provided.

**Do organizations need to supply any financial papers? If so, and you are an organization that has not been required to have their financials audited in the past few years, are there financials that may serve in their place?**

You are not required to submit any financial papers other than those specifically included in the application (ie., the questionnaire) if you have not been required to have an audit in the last 12 months.

**The RFP states that "The organizations receiving the grants must use the grant funds to cover the salary of a full-time Fellow (expected to be approximately \$35,000 – \$45,000 per year); benefits equal to those of the other organization's employees; mentoring; and professional development. The organization may use grant funds to cover overhead costs not to exceed \$10,000." Could you explain this note in some more detail, with examples?**

The organizations that receive these grants are expected to pay the Fellow a reasonable salary and benefits that are roughly in line with what other staff of that organization are paid. In addition, we expect that organizations will also use grant funds to pay for mentoring, training, or for other opportunities that will help the Fellow grow professionally as is described in the RFP. None of these costs are considered overhead costs.

The statement regarding overhead costs is simply to make it clear that up to \$10,000 of the grant may be used to pay for other costs – such as HR services, office space, utilities, support staff, etc. - that organizations typically incur as a part of doing business. People sometimes refer to these as administrative costs or indirect costs. If you estimate that the portion of your overhead costs (as defined in the previous two sentences) that are necessary to support the Fellow will exceed \$10,000, you will not be reimbursed for more than \$10,000 through the grant for that overhead. Anything above that might be eligible to be claimed as match, provided it meets the other requirements for match. You also have the option of not using grant funds to pay for overhead and claiming the portion of the overhead costs that your organization pays to support the Fellow as match if it meets the other requirements for match. If you request reimbursement for these costs or propose to use them as match, you will need to provide documentation that supports the costs.

**Financial Issues (Including Match)**

**Can the entire match be in-kind?**

Yes, it may.

**Is there a list of what can be considered in-kind match? If not, can you give examples?**

TCDD does not list specific items that can be used as in-kind match. The guideline is that match may include expenses that are:

- allowable expenses under Federal guidelines and our policies;

- necessary for the project;
- not paid by federal funds (ours or those of another agency); and
- not already being used as match for another federal grant.

Examples include: office space, utilities, volunteer time (including members of the Project Advisory Committee), printing costs, consultants (if not paid through the grant), or staff not paid for through the grant.

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**Where can I find the list of federal poverty areas?**

Data can be found here: [U.S. Census information](https://www.census.gov/popest/data/totals/states/tx.html). You can determine if a county is a federal poverty county by entering the name of the county (or counties) in the box at the top left. Another resource that may be helpful is: <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/texas/percent-of-people-of-all-ages-in-poverty#chart>

**What if the policy Fellow is working with a statewide organization and not just a particular county?**

Roughly 25% of all counties in Texas are poverty counties. If you are a statewide organization and will serve all counties, you may use that percentage in the match formula for projects that serve both poverty and non-poverty counties. This formula is found in the instructions portion of the application.

**Will TCDD pay for PAC travel?**

Yes, TCDD grant funds may be used to pay for PAC travel. Travel reimbursement must follow the regulations and guidelines in the [State of Texas Travel Management Program](#).

**If an accommodation is required for a qualified applicant, would TCDD assist in the process? If the accommodation has a cost associated, would TCDD fund the accommodation--separate from awarded grant funds?**

TCDD expects that accommodations will be paid through the TCDD grant or by the organization.

**Project Advisory Committee**

**What is TCDD's definition of a Project Advisory Committee?**

PACs are committees of 8-12 people who provide input for the duration of the project by reviewing and commenting on project activities, and recommending strategies for accomplishing project goals. PACs review and comment on drafts of all materials, reports, publications and other items produced for dissemination by the project. The PAC's goal in reviewing drafts is to help the project produce materials that meet the highest professional standards. For additional information, please see the [TCDD Grants Manual](#), Section 2.1.

**Is the formation and management of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) the responsibility of the grantee organization or TCDD?**

The formation and management of the PAC is the responsibility of the grantee organization. Please see the [TCDD Grants Manual](#), Section 2.1, for more information about requirements related to the PAC.

**Will TCDD pay for PAC travel?**

Yes, TCDD will pay for PAC travel. Travel reimbursement must follow the regulations and guidelines in the [State of Texas Travel Management Program](#).

**Is the first PAC meeting required to be within 30 days of PAC approval or project approval, if those differ?**

The first PAC meeting must be held within 30 days after the PAC is approved.

**Products**

**What is the definition of a "product" that requires TCDD approval? Would it be possible to get an exemption from approval for products that are time sensitive (press releases, action alerts, etc.)?**

A product is anything you create that is about the project itself or that is produced to educate people about the project (examples would include fliers, programs, marketing materials, training curricula, CDs, DVDs, videos, or websites/web pages). Whether or not something other than these types of materials would be considered a product that needs to be reviewed may depend in part on the content. For example, if a Fellow has been working on a specific issue for your organization and drafts a press release about that issue as a part of their job, it would be unlikely that we would require TCDD approval on that

(assuming the position taken is consistent with TCDD positions). However, details on the specific situation you have in mind might need to be negotiated if you are awarded a grant.

Please note that the Fellow cannot engage in any activity that might require him or her to register as a lobbyist. Additionally, while he or she may educate and inform, issuing an “action alert” might be a problem, depending on what the action is.

**Would a Fellow job description and/or a posting for the position require TCDD approval?**

The current application process requires the organization to identify each project staff and other key project personnel, to include "to be hired" position descriptions. Therefore, as a part of the application process we would approve the position as a budgeted line item. We would not need to approve the job posting.

## Project Timeline

**Does the notification of TCDD's decision count as the signal for the grantee to start their recruiting efforts of the Fellow? Does TCDD expect applicant organizations to begin working on recruiting Fellows before there is a signed contract?**

TCDD does not expect you to begin recruiting as soon as you receive the notification.

You may choose to start recruiting efforts for the Fellow at the time that you are notified the Executive Committee has recommended your organization for funding contingent on successful negotiation of a final plan. However, if you are unable to negotiate a final agreement with TCDD you will not receive a grant award, and any expenses incurred would not be reimbursed by TCDD. We recommend that you do not engage in any activities for which you expect to be reimbursed until you have a signed Notice of Grant Award (NGA) or have otherwise reached an agreement with TCDD.

**How soon after the notification of the decision should grantees expect a signed contract?**

The length of time between being notified and having a signed NGA rests entirely on how quickly you and the assigned TCDD Grants Specialist are able to meet, discuss recommended changes, make required changes, have these approved by the Grants Specialist, and obtain signatures from both your organization’s Authorizing Official and TCDD’s Executive Director or designee. We estimate that this process takes about a month.

**When will TCDD make a decision about a Policy Academy?**

We are unable to answer this question at this time. TCDD has not determined if we will fund a “new” Policy Academy or facilitate the participation of Fellow in one that may already exist.

## Miscellaneous

**If TCDD does a policy academy, would an organization that has been awarded a fellow grant also be able to apply for the Academy grant?**

We are unable to answer this question at this time. TCDD has not determined if we will fund a “new” Policy Academy or facilitate the participation of Fellow in one that may already exist.