



Date: May 14, 2018

To: Members of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging

From: Mary Kay Browne, Director of Special Projects and Shari Cox, Fiscal Manager

Re: Announcing Direct Grant Opportunity from MCOA Purchasing Assistive Listening Systems at a Deep Discount to Ensure COA Activities are Accessible for Hard of Hearing Visitors, Staff and Volunteers

We are reoffering the opportunity for Councils on Aging (COAs) to purchase assistive listening systems at a deep discount to ensure COA activities are accessible for hard of hearing visitors, staff and volunteers. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to purchase at a steeply discounted price assistive listening systems that will help you purchase ALS equipment at 25% of the retail cost. Funding from the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs via the Service Incentive Grant of FY18 is making this large subsidy possible.

MCOA is committed to helping Senior Centers make their centers Welcoming Places for All – including adults who are hard of hearing. To that end, MCOA is reoffering the opportunity for Councils on Aging to buy assistive listening systems (ALS) at a steeply discounted price. With this equipment, you can significantly improve the hearing ability of people who are hard of hearing in a variety of situations – during large group events, small group classes, and 1:1 conversations -- where they may have difficulty distinguishing speech from other noises. Equipment descriptions are provided below.

We aim for all Councils on Aging to incorporate assistive listening systems to ensure participants in senior center activities can hear the main speaker, be it during a face to face encounter with the outreach worker in the elders home or in the outreach worker's office, or during an art or exercise class with an instructor, or during large

group events wherein 1 key speaker or movie audio track is featured. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local entities to offer services that are accessible. If you do not yet have the capacity to ensure communication access, then take advantage of this opportunity!

Grants will be made from funding MCOA has received under its Service Incentive Grant from Elder Affairs for FY18. Grant opportunities are available to all eligible COAs, with preference to COAs and senior centers that have not yet purchased any of this type of equipment for use in their centers. COAs must use the equipment to improve access to the Centers services and programs, whether these are delivered in the senior center, during an outing, during a home visit, or in another venue in town.

Deadlines: Applications are due by June 15, 2018. Go to the www.mcoaonline.com website to apply. Awards will be announced by June 19, 2018.

FAQs -- Here are answers to a few frequently asked questions:

1. Eligibility COAs are members of MCOA with an up to date status on annual dues. Eligibility questions regarding your center's status may be directed to Shari Cox via email at Shari@mcoaonline.com or via phone at 413-527-6425.
2. Contracting
 - a. MCOA will send an invoice to your Center if you are approved for funding. Once we receive payment, shipment will be made directly to your center.
 - b. Send payment directly to: MCOA, Attn: Shari Grant, Grants Manager, 116 Pleasant Street, Suite 306, Easthampton, MA 01027.
3. Funding Contingencies:
 - a. These MCOA Direct Grants are made possible through funding from the FY2018 Service Incentive Grant from Elder Affairs.
4. Training in Use of Equipment
 - a. The equipment vendor can provide instruction to one of your staff in how to use the equipment after you have received it, if you need assistance.

Also, please do not hesitate to contact Shari Cox, via email at shari@mcoaonline.com if you have any questions or need more information before applying.

Why Assistive Listening Systems Are Needed

According to a 2011 report from the Johns Hopkins University and the National Institute on Aging found **nearly two-thirds of American adults over age 70 have hearing loss.** Often in a noisy or crowded room it is almost impossible for an individual who is hard of hearing to distinguish one voice among many. Two solutions to help people who are hard of hearing are 1) amplification via PA system and 2) delivering sound more clearly via an ALS. Assistive Listening Systems help people hear the voices of instructors, the audio within a movie broadcast, and to improve hearing the sounds that come through a PA system.

An assistive listening system (ALS) uses a **microphone** to capture the voice/audio source near its origin and re-broadcast it via the ALS **transmitter**. The person who is listening uses a **personal receiver with attached earphones** (or ear buds) to tune into the signal and listen at his/her preferred volume. (Or, for people who have hearing aids with a "T-switch" (not many aids do), the listener can use a **neck loop receiver** to capture the sound and transmits it to their ear via their hearing aids.) The use of an ALS with personal receivers reduces the effects of reverberation from poor room acoustics, bypasses the sounds between the speaker and the listener, and eliminates the background noise in the area.

Equipment Descriptions:

MCOA is offering COAs the opportunity to purchase 3 types of ALS:

1. For COAs that have a PA system with an available output port: You may apply for a **stationary base transmitter plus personal receivers**. The base transmitter is plugged into the PA system via an output port, so the transmitter can send the audio sound directly to the personal receivers worn by individual group members. These systems will be provided with both types of receivers: neck loops for people who have hearing aids with a "T-switch" and individual receivers, worn on a lanyard, with headphones or earbuds.

With the MCOA discount, your cost per unit will be: \$219.

2. For all COAs: You may apply for a **portable multi-channel system with 2 microphones and 10 receivers that will permit you to run two groups at once**, using separate transmission channels. So, an art class could run in

one room and a SHINE presentation could run in another room simultaneously, with no interference or cross talk, by using separate channels (frequencies). This type of system is also terrific for use during group tours, such as visiting a museum.



With the MCOA discount, your cost per unit will be: \$749.

3. For all COAs: You may apply for a **portable “pocket talker”** which is a system that 2 people use when having a 1:1 conversation. The speaker talks into the microphone; the listener uses earphones to hear the speaker. These are very useful for supporting conversations during a home visit or while talking in an office with a person who has hearing loss and does not use a hearing aid, as are true for 80 percent of older adults with a hearing loss!!



(Earphones, not pictured here, will also be included)

With the MCOA discount, your cost per unit will be: \$32.

How to Apply: Go to the www.mcoaonline.com website’s “Grants” section to apply. The due date for applications is June 15, 2018.

Buying Assistive Listening Systems with MCOA Discount Pricing

**Application Questions – Please complete online at
www.mcoaonline.com**

1. Full Name of Applicant Entity:
2. Name of COA, if different from the Applicant Entity:
3. Name, phone and email address of the Lead Contact within the applicant entity,
4. Is your COA up to date on its FY18 MCOA dues?
5. What equipment do you want to buy AND how many units?

	Units	Cost to COA
Base Transmitter System @ \$219/unit:	_____	_____
Multi-channel Portable System at \$749/unit:	_____	_____
Pocket Talker System @ \$32/unit:	_____	_____

6. Has your COA already purchased one or more of the 3 components listed in this RFA?
7. Do you have a public address system at your center in the large event room that amplifies the voices of speakers and sound from a movie or video source? If yes, does the PA have an output port that can be dedicated to the stationary ALS base transmitter?
8. Have you hosted a hearing loss assessment clinic in your center? If yes, please provide the date of the event and identify the hearing loss provider.
9. Do you already require closed captioning on all television sets?