



Date: April 8, 2019

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 for 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. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to purchase assistive listening systems at 25% of retail cost.

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 have difficulty or cannot distinguish speech from other noises.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local entities to offer services that are accessible. 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 elder's home or in the outreach worker's office, during an art or exercise class with an instructor, or during large group events wherein 1 key speaker or movie audio track is featured. If you do not yet have the capacity to ensure communication access, then take advantage of this opportunity! Longer equipment descriptions are provided below.

Grant opportunities are available to all eligible COAs, with **preference to COAs and senior centers that have not yet purchased this type of equipment for use in their centers.** COAs must use the equipment to improve access to the Senior Center's services and programs, whether these are delivered in the senior center, during an outing, during a home visit, or some other venue in town.

Deadlines: Applications are due by May 1, 2019. Go to the www.mcoaonline.com website to apply. Awards will be announced by May 19, 2019.

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 arranged.
3. 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 the PA system and 2) delivering sound more clearly via an Assistive Listening System that helps people hear the voices of class instructors, presenters, the audio within a movie broadcast, and sounds coming 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.

2. You may apply for a **portable multi-channel system with 2 microphones and 10 receivers.** **With 2 microphone units, you can run two groups at once** using separate transmission channels. For example, the teacher in an art class could use 1 microphone in her room and a SHINE presentation could use a second microphone 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.



3. You may apply for a **portable “pocket talker”** system for 2 people to use when having a 1:1 conversations. 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 (*true for 80 percent of older adults with a hearing loss!!*)



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

How to Apply: Go to the www.mcoaonline.com website’s “Grants” section to apply. The due date for applications is May 1, 2019.