TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Investigation and Analysis of Assets for Independence (AFI)

Program Application Barriers and Challenges

List of Appendices

- **Appendix A- Verbal Consent Script for Interviews**
- **Appendix B- Written Consent Form for Triads**
- Appendix C- Facilitator's Triad Discussion Guide
- Appendix D Facilitator's Interview Guide -Financial Institutions
- Appendix E Facilitator's Interview Guide Funders
- Appendix F Facilitator's Interview Guide Executive Directors/CEOs
- Appendix G- Email to Segment 1-2 Respondent Pool
- Appendix H- Email to Segment 3-5 Respondent Pool
- Appendix I Email to Segment 8 Respondent Pool
- Appendix J Email to Segment 9-10 Respondent Pool

Appendix A - Verbal Consent Script for Interviews

ICF International (ICF) is conducting telephone interviews on behalf of the Office of Community Services (OCS) to improve the Assets for Independence (AFI) grant application process. As someone who has experience with the AFI grant application process, we value your feedback.

Procedures

- This telephone interview will last up to 60 minutes.
- You will be asked questions about your experience with the AFI grant applicant process.
- This interview will observed by ICF staff and will be recorded.
- This interview will not be observed by OCS staff.

Privacy

- Only ICF staff will be present during the interview, and only ICF will have access to the recording and notes taken during the interview.
- Your name and any other personally identifiable information will not be used in any reports; however, participants cannot be offered anonymity because of the small respondent pool.

Voluntary Participation

- You can choose not to answer any question and you can stop the interview at any time, for any reason.
- Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Re-contact

- We will be using the information we gathered today and from talking with other
 organizations to develop recommendations to improve the AFI grant application process.
 Within the next six months, would you be willing to talk with us again to provide feedback
 on our proposed recommendations? Your willingness to be re-contacted will not affect your
 participation today.
- [If yes] Thank you. I will reconfirm your willingness to be re-contacted at the end of the interview.

Appendix B - Written Consent Form for Phone Triads

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

AFI Grant Application Process Focus Group Phone Triads

ICF International (ICF) is conducting small group discussions via the phone on behalf of the Office of Community Services (OCS) to improve the Assets for Independence (AFI) grant application process. As someone who has experience with the AFI grant application process, we value your feedback. You have been invited to participate in a 90-minute phone conversation with other participants like yourself who has experience with the AFI grant application process. A report of the results from the discussions will be prepared by ICF for OCS. Before you agree to join in this discussion, please review and consider the conditions listed below:

- Participation in this group discussion is completely voluntary.
- Any questions you have about this study will be answered before the group discussion begins.
- The discussion will be audio taped.
- The discussion will not be observed by OCS staff.
- Only ICF staff will be present during the interview, and only ICF will have access to the recordings and notes taken during the interview.
- Your name, your organizations' name, and/or any other personally identifiable information will not be used in any reports.
- You may choose not to answer questions that you do not want to answer.
- You may choose to leave the group at any time for any reason.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions stated above and agree to participate in this group.

Signature		
Date		

Appendix C - Facilitator's Triad Discussion Guide

Welcome/Introduction (5 mins)

Welcome and thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this group discussion.

The Office of Community Services, or OCS, asked us to organize this discussion. OCS is the government office that administers the Assets for Independence, or AFI, grant program.

Our goal today is to hear about your experiences with the AFI program, especially the AFI grant application process. While I am familiar with the application process, I do not work on the AFI grant program and have never applied to be part of the grant program. I appreciate the chance to talk with you to learn about the process from an applicant's or potential applicant's perspective.

[For organizations that have applied only] As we discuss your experience with the AFI program, consider all the times you have applied for AFI grant, but primarily focus on the most recent time you have applied.

Throughout the discussion, I will refer to "AFI Program Representatives." When I say that, I am referring to AFI Resource Center staff, AFI Help Desk staff, OCS officials and staff, and anyone else that you may have interacted with who is acting on behalf of the AFI program.

As we talk over the next hour, please let me know if there are others you recommend we speak to as part of our information gathering process.

Procedure

Before we start, I would like to explain about how the group will work:

- Participation in this conversation is completely voluntary. If at any time for any reason you wish to leave the discussion, you may.
- I want to hear your honest opinions about the topics and materials we discuss. If you have something negative to say, that is alright. Sometimes the negative things are the most helpful. I did not develop any of the processes or materials we are going to discuss, so there is nothing you can say that will offend me.
- You may choose not to answer any question.
- The discussion will last no longer than 90 minutes.
- We will record the conversation to help us take complete notes and capture all your ideas. My colleague will be taking notes while we talk. We will not use your names on any of our notes. When we write our report, we will report on what was said, but not on who said it.
- Because we are recording, it is important that you try to speak up and speak one at a time. I may occasionally interrupt you if two people are talking at once in order to be sure everyone gets a chance to talk and that responses are accurately recorded. Sometimes I may need to move the

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Investigation and Analysis of Assets for Independence (AFI)

Program Application Barriers and Challenges

discussion along to make sure we cover everything, and I may ask those people who have contributed a lot to the discussion to give others a chance to speak.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Discussion Opener (10 mins)

Experience with AFI Grant

- Tell me a little bit about your organization and your role in the organization.
- Please briefly describe your organization's association with AFI grants.
- How did you support your organization in applying for or considering applying for an AFI grant?

Questions by Phase (50 mins)

Awareness

- How did you or your organization become aware of the AFI grant program?
- Describe how your organization went from awareness to interest in applying for an AFI grant program.
 - Who was involved in this process?
 - How long was this process?
 - Was it championed by a person or group of people?
 - Did you use any materials internally to increase internal interest in the AFI grant program?
- How does the AFI grant application process differ from other grants you are aware of?
- What is the reputation (good or bad) of the AFI program?
- What made you want to apply for an AFI grant?
 - What factors made your organization decide to move forward with an application?
- What made you not want to apply for an AFI grant?

Inquiry/Ongoing communication

- What, if any, AFI resources have you used? (e.g., online resource center, help desk, Coaching cohorts, technical assistance center, webinars, 1-on-1 help)
 - [For each resource mentioned] How helpful was this resource?
 - [For each resource mentioned] How can this resource be improved?
 - What resources are missing? What other resources would be helpful?
- Tell me about the types and frequency of communication you have had with AFI Program
 Representatives regarding the grant application.
 - When did you reach out?
 - What were your reasons for the contact?
 - How did you reach out?
 - How long did it take to resolve your questions/issues?
- How can AFI Program Representatives improve communications with applicants or potential applicants?
- Besides AFI Program Representatives, what other resources assisted you in understanding Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), the AFI program, or the application process?

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Investigation and Analysis of Assets for Independence (AFI)

Program Application Barriers and Challenges

Application Preparation

- [For those who did not apply] How far into the process did you go before making a decision not to apply? Why did you decide not to apply?
- [For those who applied or were funded]
 - At any point, did you decide not to move forward with an application? If so, why?
 - Please describe the decision process. How did you keep the AFI grant as a priority in the interim?
- Describe how you gathered matching funds.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What AFI resources did you use to help you receive matching funds? Were they helpful?
 - Were there other resources that you used?
- Describe how you recruited financial institution partners.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What AFI resources did you use to help you recruit financial institution partners? Were they helpful?
 - Were there other resources that you used?
- Describe how you put together your AFI grant application.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What AFI resources did you use to put together your AFI grant application? Were they helpful?
 - Were there other resources that you used?
- How long did it take you to go from deciding to move forward to completing your application?
- How could AFI Program Representatives or resources have better supported you during this process?
- What had you wished you had known that you did not when putting together your application?

Submit Application (if applicable)

- Describe how you submitted your application(s).
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What had you wished you had known that you did not when submitting your application?
 - How could the application submission process be improved?
- How could AFI Program Representatives or resources have better supported you during this process?

Notice of Award (if applicable)

- How long did you wait to be notified if you were [awarded/not awarded] the grant?
 - Was this amount of time how long you expected it to take?
- How were you notified?

- What types of communication took place during this process?
- How could AFI Program Representatives or resources have better supported you during this process?

Program Implementation (if applicable)

- How has the process of implementing your grant influenced how you feel about applying again?
- Based on your experience, would you change the way you go about completing the application process?

Closing (10 mins)

- In general, where do you think most applicants need more support during the grant applicant process?
- Is there any other part of the applicants' experience that we have not discussed that you feel we should?
- As we talked, did you think of any others that you recommend we speak to as part of our information gathering process? We are interested in speaking with current and former AFI grantees, those who considered or did apply for the grant, and representatives from partners on AFI grants, such as funders and financial institutions.

Re-contact (if agreed during verbal consent)

• We will be using the information we gathered today and from talking with other organizations to develop recommendations to improve the AFI grant application process. Are you still willing to talk to us again and provide feedback on our proposed recommendations?

Thank you again for your time today. Your feedback is extremely valuable in helping to improve the AFI grant application process. If you have further feedback at a later time, please feel free to follow up with me via e-mail.

Appendix D - Facilitator's Interview Guide - Financial Institutions

Welcome/Introduction (3 mins)

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. My name is _____ and I work for ICF International. The Office of Community Services, or OCS, asked us to organize this interview. OCS is the government agency that administers the Assets for Independence, or AFI, grant program.

Our goal today is to hear about your experiences working with [name of AFI applicant/grantee] on their AFI grant and application. While I am familiar with the application process, I do not work on the AFI grant program or for a financial institution. I appreciate the chance to talk with you to learn about the process from a partnership perspective.

Procedure

- Read Verbal Consent (attached)
- Confirm Informed Consent
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Throughout the discussion, I will refer to "AFI Program Representatives." When I say that, I am referring to AFI Resource Center staff, AFI Help Desk staff, OCS officials and staff, and anyone else that you may have interacted with who is acting on behalf of the AFI program.

Discussion Opener (5 mins)

Experience with AFI Grant

- Tell me a little bit about your financial institution and your role in the financial institution.
- Please briefly describe your financial institution's role with [name of AFI applicant/grantee] and their AFI projects.
- How did you participate in the process of partnering with [name of AFI applicant/grantee]?

Questions by Phase (15 mins)

Awareness

- How much experience did your financial institution organization have with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) before you partnered with [name of AFI applicant/grantee]?
- How did you or your financial institution become aware of the AFI grant program?
- Describe how your financial institution became a partner on the AFI grant with [name of AFI applicant/grantee].
 - O Did this partnership happen during the application process or after the grant was awarded?
 - Who was involved in this process?
 - How long was this process?
 - Was it championed by a person or group of people?

- Did you use any materials internally to increase interest in the AFI grant program?
- How does the AFI grant process differ from other grants you are aware of?
- What is the reputation (good or bad) of AFI program?
- What made you want to partner on an AFI grant application or with an AFI grantee?
- What made you not want to partner on an AFI grant application of with an AFI grantee?
- Did you visit the AFI Resource Center website for more information?

Application Preparation

- Describe how your financial institution had to document your commitment to partner with an AFI grantee.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
- Did you assist in writing the application?

Program Implementation

- How does your financial institution engage with IDA account holders?
- Aside from holding the accounts, do you have any other roles in the grant?
- What unexpected challenges did you encounter since the program was implemented?

Closing (5 mins)

Is there any other part of the financial institutions' experience that we have not discussed that you feel we should?

Thank you again for your time today. Your feedback is extremely valuable in helping to improve the AFI grant program. If you have further feedback at a later time, please feel free to follow up with me via email.

Appendix E - Facilitator's Interview Guide - Funders

Welcome/Introduction (3 mins)

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. My name is _____ and I work for ICF International. The Office of Community Services, or OCS, asked us to organize this discussion. OCS is the government agency that administers the Assets for Independence, or AFI, grant program.

Our goal today is to hear about your experiences working with [name of AFI applicant/grantee] on their AFI grant and application. While I am familiar with the application process, I do not work on the AFI grant program and have not funded an AFI grantee. I appreciate the chance to talk with you to learn about the process from a funder's perspective.

Procedure

- Read Verbal Consent (attached)
- Confirm Informed Consent
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Throughout the discussion, I will refer to "AFI Program Representatives." When I say that, I am referring to AFI Resource Center staff, AFI Help Desk staff, OCS officials and staff, and anyone else that you may have interacted with who is acting on behalf of the AFI program.

Discussion Opener (5 mins)

Experience with AFI Grant

- Tell me a little bit about your organization and your role in the organization.
- Please briefly describe your organization's association with [name of AFI applicant/grantee] and their AFI projects.
- How did you support your organization in committing to fund an AFI applicant or funding an AFI project?

Questions by Phase (15 mins)

Awareness

- How much experience did your organization have with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) before you funded [name of AFI applicant/grantee]?
- How did you or your organization become aware of the AFI grant program?
- Describe how your organization moved from learning about AFI to committing funding for an AFI grant application.
 - Who was involved in this process?
 - How long was this process?
 - Was it championed by a person or group of people?
 - Did you use any materials internally to increase interest in the AFI grant program?
- How does the AFI grant process differ from other grants you are aware of?

- What is the reputation (good or bad) of the AFI program?
- What made you want to commit funding to an AFI project?
- What made you not want to commit funding to an AFI project?
- Did you visit the AFI Resource Center for more information?

Application Preparation

- Describe how you had to document your funding commitment for the AFI application.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
- Did you assist in writing the application?

Program Implementation

- Beyond providing funding, does your organization play any other roles in the project?
- What unexpected challenges did you encounter when the program was implemented?

Closing (5 mins)

Is there any other part of the funders' experience that we have not discussed that you feel we should?

Thank you again for your time today. Your feedback is extremely valuable in helping to improve the AFI grant program. If you have further feedback at a later time, please feel free to follow up with me via email.

Appendix F - Facilitator's Interview Guide - Executive Directors/CEOs

Welcome/Introduction (3 mins)

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. My name is _____ and I work for ICF International. The Office of Community Services, or OCS, asked us to organize this discussion. OCS is the government agency that administers the Assets for Independence, or AFI, grant program.

Our goal today is to hear about your experiences with the AFI program, especially the AFI grant application process. While I am familiar with the application process, I do not work on the AFI grant program and have never applied for an AFI grant. I appreciate the chance to talk with you to learn about the process from a leadership perspective.

Procedure

- Read Verbal Consent (attached)
- Confirm Informed Consent
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Throughout the discussion, I will refer to "AFI Program Representatives." When I say that, I am referring to AFI Resource Center staff, AFI Help Desk staff, OCS officials and staff, and anyone else that you may have interacted with who is acting on behalf of the AFI program.

Discussion Opener (5 mins)

Experience with AFI Grant

- Tell me a little bit about your organization and your role in the organization.
- Please briefly describe your organization's association with AFI grants.
- How did you support your organization in applying for or considering applying for an AFI grant?

Note to Interviewer: Each executive director has a different role based on his or her organization. Tailor interview questions based on the role described (e.g., if the participants states that they did not participate in drafting the application, do not ask specific questions about drafting the application).

Questions by Phase (35 mins)

Awareness

- How did you become aware of the AFI grant program?
 - o [If appropriate] How did your organization become aware of the AFI grant program?
- Describe how your organization moved from learning about AFI to developing an interest in applying for an AFI grant.
 - Who was involved in this process?
 - How long was this process?
 - Was it championed by a person or group of people?

- Did your organization use any materials internally to increase internal interest in the AFI grant program?
- How does the AFI grant applicant process differ from other grants you are aware of?
- What is the reputation (good or bad) of the AFI program?
- What made you want to apply for an AFI grant?
 - What factors made your organization decide to move forward with an application?
- What made you not want to apply for an AFI grant?
- How did you make the final decision to apply for an AFI grant?

Inquiry/Ongoing communication (if applicable)

- What, if any, AFI resources have you or your staff used? (e.g., online resource center, help desk, Coaching cohorts, technical assistance center, webinars, 1-on-1 help)
 - [For each resource mentioned] How helpful was this resource?
 - [For each resource mentioned] How can this resource be improved?
 - What resources are missing? What other resources would be helpful?
- Tell me about the types and frequency of communication you or your staff have had with AFI
 Program Representatives regarding the grant application.
 - When did you or your staff reach out?
 - What were the reasons for the contact?
 - How did you or your staff reach out?
 - How long did it take to resolve your questions/issues?
- How can AFI Program Representatives improve communications with applicants or potential applicants?
- Besides AFI Program Representatives, what other resources assisted you or your staff in understanding Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), the AFI program, or the application process?

Application Preparation (if applicable)

- Describe how your organization gathered matching funds.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What AFI resources did your organization use to help you receive matching funds? Were they helpful?
 - Were there other resources used?
- Describe how your organization recruited financial institution partners.
 - What was challenging?
 - What was easy?
 - What AFI resources did your organization use to help you recruit financial institution partners? Were they helpful?
 - Were there other resources that used?

Notice of Award (if applicable)

How long did your organization wait to be notified if you were [awarded/not awarded] the grant?

- Was this amount of time how long you expected it to take?
- How was your organization notified?
- What types of communication took place during this process?
- How could AFI Program Representatives have better supported your organization during this process?

Program Implementation (if applicable)

- What unexpected challenges did you encounter while implementing your program?
- How has the process of implementing your grant influenced how you feel about applying again?
- Based on your organization's experience, would you change the way your organization goes about completing the application process?

Closing (10 mins)

- In general, where do you think most applicants need more support during the grant applicant process?
- Is there any other part of the applicants' experience that we have not discussed that you feel we should?
- As we talked, did you think of any others that you recommend we speak to as part of our information gathering process? We are interested in speaking with current and former AFI grantees, those who considered or did apply for the grant, and representatives from partners on AFI grants, such as funders and financial institutions.

Re-contact (if agreed during verbal consent)

• We will be using the information we gathered today and from talking with other organizations to develop recommendations to improve the AFI grant application process. Are you still willing to talk to us again and provide feedback on our proposed recommendations?

Thank you again for your time today. Your feedback is extremely valuable in helping to improve the AFI grant application process. If you have further feedback at a later time, please feel free to follow up with me via e-mail.

Appendix G - Email to Segment 1-2 Respondent Pool

Dear {First Name},

The Office of Community Services (OCS) has contracted with ICF International to investigate and identify application barriers and challenges for the Assets for Independence (AFI) program. Your opinion is important because it will inform efforts by OCS to improve the applicant experience. We are interested in your responses whether or not you submitted an AFI application and regardless of the result of that application.

We would like to invite you to participate in a 90-minute telephone focus group of approximately three people to share your experience applying for AFI, including barriers you encountered and decisions you had to make as you considered applying for an AFI grant.

The focus groups will be scheduled for April and May 2016. If you are interested in participating, please contact Trevor Hoffberger at Trevor-Hoffberger@icfi.com or 703.713.8806 by {date 10 business days after email is sent}.

AFI is a federal program administered by OCS at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AFI provides grants to eligible entities to implement projects that demonstrate an asset-based approach for addressing poverty. AFI projects provide individual development accounts to low-income individuals to facilitate the purchase of a first home, fund post-secondary education or training, or capitalize a business.

The ideal focus group participant is the person at your organization who worked most closely with AFI Program Representatives during the AFI application/exploration process. Your responses will be kept confidential; responses will be de-identified and aggregated for analysis. Due to the small size of the respondent pool, however, we cannot promise anonymity.

We greatly appreciate your participation in this effort. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact Principal Investigator Deanna Peiffer at Deanna.Peiffer@icfi.com or 646.422.9314.

Sincerely,

Appendix H - Email to Segment 3-5 Respondent Pool

Dear {First Name},

The Office of Community Services (OCS) has contracted with ICF International to investigate and identify application barriers and challenges for the Assets for Independence (AFI) program. Your opinion is important because it will inform efforts by OCS to improve the applicant experience.

We would like to request your participation in a 90-minute telephone focus group of approximately three people to share your experience applying for AFI, including barriers you encountered and decisions you had to make in order to proceed with the application.

The focus groups will be scheduled for April and May 2016. If you are interested in participating, please contact Trevor Hoffberger at Trevor-Hoffberger@icfi.com or 703.713.8806 by {date 10 business days after email is sent}.

AFI is a federal program administered by OCS at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AFI provides grants to eligible entities to implement projects that demonstrate an asset-based approach for addressing poverty. AFI projects provide individual development accounts to low-income individuals to facilitate the purchase of a first home, fund post-secondary education or training, or capitalize a business.

The ideal focus group participant is the person at your organization who worked most intensively on the AFI application the last time your organization applied for funding. Your responses will be kept confidential; responses will be de-identified and aggregated for analysis. Due to the small size of the respondent pool, however, we cannot promise anonymity.

We greatly appreciate your participation in this effort. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact Principal Investigator Deanna Peiffer at Deanna.Peiffer@icfi.com or 646.422.9314.

Sincerely,

Appendix I- Email to Segment 8 Respondent Pool

Dear {Sal} {LastName},

The Office of Community Services (OCS) has contracted with ICF International to investigate and identify application barriers and challenges for the Assets for Independence (AFI) program. As the Executive Director/CEO of an organization that has recently applied for AFI, we would like to request an interview with you to learn about your experience applying for AFI, including barriers you encountered and decisions you had to make in order to proceed with the application.

Your opinion is important because it will inform efforts by OCS in improving the applicant experience. We are interested in your responses whether or not your organization submitted an AFI application and regardless of the result of that application

We would like to schedule the approximately 60-minute interview for April or May 2016. If you are interested in participating, please contact Trevor Hoffberger at Trevor.Hoffberger@icfi.com or 703.713.8806 by date 10 business days after email is sent.

AFI is a federal program administered by OCS at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AFI provides grants to eligible entities to implement projects that demonstrate an asset-based approach for addressing poverty. AFI projects provide individual development accounts to low-income individuals to facilitate the purchase of a first home, fund post-secondary education or training, or capitalize a business.

Your responses will be kept confidential; responses will be de-identified and aggregated for analysis. Due to the small size of the respondent pool, however, we cannot promise anonymity.

We greatly appreciate your participation in this effort. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact Principal Investigator Deanna Peiffer at Deanna.Peiffer@icfi.com or 646.422.9314.

Sincerely,

Appendix J - Email to Segment 9-10 Respondent Pool

Dear {Sal} {LastName},

The Office of Community Services (OCS) has contracted with ICF International to investigate and identify application barriers and challenges for the Assets for Independence (AFI) program. A focus group participant from {Grantee name} recommended we solicit your perspective as a valuable partner to their AFI project.

We would like to request an interview with you to learn about your experience partnering with {Grantee name} in applying for AFI funding. Your opinion is important because it will inform efforts by OCS in improving the applicant experience.

We would like to schedule the approximately 60-minute interview for April or May 2016. If you are interested in participating, please contact Trevor Hoffberger at Trevor.Hoffberger@icfi.com or 703.713.8806 by {date 10 business days after email is sent}.

AFI is a federal program administered by OCS at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AFI provides grants to eligible entities to implement projects that demonstrate an asset-based approach for addressing poverty. AFI projects provide individual development accounts to low-income individuals to facilitate the purchase of a first home, fund post-secondary education or training, or capitalize a business.

Your responses will be kept confidential; responses will be de-identified and aggregated for analysis. Due to the small size of the respondent pool, however, we cannot promise anonymity.

We greatly appreciate your participation in this effort. If you have any questions about this effort, please contact Principal Investigator Deanna Peiffer at Deanna.Peiffer@icfi.com or 646.422.9314.

Sincerely,