

**Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)
Section 1115 Grants – FY 2009 (Round Two)
Pre-Application Conference Call of July 1, 2009**

“Partnership to Strengthen Families: Child Support Enforcement/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/University Partnership Demonstration Project”

**Announcement Number HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0095
Announcement Number HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0098**

This series of questions and answers addresses major points about the above grant priorities. The questions and answers are sorted into three categories:

Category I-A provides information about the Projects to Address the Sudden and Prolonged Effect of the Economic Downturn

Category I-B provides information about the Health Care/Medical Support in Child Support: Reform Strategy Grants

Category II focuses on general information about eligibility and the application process

Category III offers grant writing tips

Category I A—Specific Section 1115 Priority

The Following Questions and Answers Address the Specific Priority:

HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0095—Projects to Address the Sudden and Prolonged Effect of the Economic Downturn on the IV-D Caseload and Program Operations

1. What is the purpose of this grant priority and what types of projects is OCSE envisioning?

OCSE recognizes that the economic downturn has impacted States differently and that States will recover at a different rate. OCSE is offering 17-month grants so that States can address the immediate challenges of their programs. At the same time, the goal of the grant is for States to also consider projects that will help build or strengthen their infrastructure

2. What kinds of projects is OCSE envisioning?

The announcement, unlike previous grant announcements issued from OCSE, does not have a set priority. The purpose is for the applicant to propose a project that will meet the needs of their program, both for meeting immediate needs and strengthening the infrastructure of the program. OCSE expects there will be a wide range of

projects that will be proposed: collaborations and partnerships; court improvement; program and/or process improvements; and medical support enforcement. The applicant should keep in mind that the examples listed are strictly illustrative and that this grant solicitation is broad for the very reasons stated previously.

OCSE is interested in projects that can be replicated by others or will increase the overall program knowledge in a topic that is new or might need to be reexamined or reassessed.

OCSE is not likely to fund projects that require proprietary software or would dramatically increase program costs.

3. Medical support projects are listed as examples of the kind of projects a State may consider proposing—shouldn't those proposals be submitted under the Health Care/Medical Support Strategy announcement, too?

OCSE recommends that States interested in medical support enforcement review both this announcement and the announcement for the Health Care/Medical Support Strategy grants to determine the best fit.

Category I B—Specific Section 1115 Priority

The Following Questions and Answers Address the Specific Priority:

HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0098 Health Care/Medical Support in Child Support Enforcement: Reform Strategy Grants

4. What is the purpose of this grant priority and what types of projects is OCSE envisioning?

The goal of this strategy grant is for States to develop their own plans for empirically-based innovative approaches to medical child support enforcement that are well supported by state-specific data analyses. To ensure that plans are integrated with overall State efforts to ensure appropriate health care coverage for children, it is envisioned that IV-D agencies will form State Health Care Reform Strategy Teams to share information and analyses and develop an appropriate strategic plan for their State. These teams could include, but are not limited to, representatives of the State Medicaid, SCHIP, and TANF programs; private health insurers; health care providers; and children's health advocates.

5. Do applicants need to establish official relationships between CSE, Medicaid, SCHIP and children's health care stakeholders in the State in order to be considered for funding under this announcement?

No. Formal agreements such as Memorandum of Understanding are not required. However, the applicant is reminded that the goal of the project is to develop plans for integrated, collaborative State strategies.

6. How will grantees learn about national health care reform? Why must grantees attend three colloquia in Washington, D.C.?

It is important that State-level medical child support leaders participate in the national dialogue on health care reform. Therefore, grantees are being provided the opportunity to participate in a series of three colloquia on medical child support and health care reform sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in HHS. The colloquia are designed specifically for OCSE Health Care Reform Strategies grantees and will provide a forum for grantees to learn from and exchange ideas with HHS and external health care reform experts. Health care reform experts will address the group, seminar-style, on different issues and discuss the medical child support interface. There will also be time and support for peer learning among the grantees. Grantees should use their discretion to propose which team members should attend; it is anticipated that at least two grantee representatives will attend each meeting. Travel funds should be included in the proposed budget.

7. How should the projects be evaluated?

Because these are strategy grants, it is anticipated that most grantees will use a process or implementation evaluation to determine if the project has met its stated goals. Plans and methodology for rigorous implementation and outcome evaluation of future planned strategies should be included in the strategic plan developed as part of the grant; experimental or quasi-experimental designs are preferred whenever possible. However, the strategy grant itself need not employ these kinds of evaluation methods.

8. To help budget the travel portion of the application, how many days will the meetings last?

Each of the three colloquia is expected to be two days or fewer.

9. Do we need to budget for travel for a grantee meeting in addition to the colloquia?

No, you do not need to budget for travel to a grantee meeting in addition to the colloquia. The colloquia series will take the place of any grantee meeting.

10. Can we use funds to pay for travel of non-agency team members?

Yes. Any plans to pay for travel for non-agency team members such as health care partners should be clearly noted in the application.

Category II

General Information about OCSE Section 1115 FY 2009 Grants

11. Why is there a second round of Section 1115 grant announcements this year?

OCSE shares a Section 1115 grant budget with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This year CMS conducted their grants with other funding sources and they graciously offered their share to us. This enables OCSE to fund additional projects this year.

12. Who is eligible to apply for the Section 1115 grants?

State Title IV-D agencies or their umbrella agencies are eligible to apply for Section 1115 grants. This includes the IV-D agencies in the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Tribal IV-D agencies are not eligible to apply, but they may, and are encouraged to, partner with State IV-D agencies in the development of a project.

13. Why are these priorities funded only for 12 and 17 months?

Funding for this priority is available to OCSE for 1 year; therefore we cannot issue grants for multiple years. The goal was to design priorities for projects that could be created quickly and could have relatively immediate effects. Grant-making rules permit project periods of 12 months and 17 months.

14. What is meant by the terms “Ceiling” and “Floor” on the amount of individual awards?

OCSE recognizes that some project activities may require more resources than others. A “ceiling” is the maximum funding level for which an applicant may apply and a “floor” is the minimum amount.

The Economic Downturn announcement has a ceiling of \$300,000 and a floor of \$60,000. This Medical Support Strategy Grant announcement has a ceiling of \$50,000 and has a floor amount of \$30,000.

15. May urban jurisdictions or County IV-D agencies apply directly for the Section 1115 grants?

No, the applications must be submitted through the State IV-D agency. OCSE recommends that jurisdictions contact the State Office as early as possible if they plan to propose a project.

16. What are the waiver provisions in the Section 1115 grants?

Section 1115(a)(1) of the Social Security Act allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to waive a State plan requirement in Section 454, and Section 1115(a)(2)(A) allows the Secretary to treat certain unallowable expenditures as allowable State expenditures for purposes of the demonstration project. The State must specifically request in the application any waiver of a State plan requirement or matching for an “unallowable” cost and explain how the waiver furthers the purposes of the project.

Because a large part of this grant is funded through Federal Financial Participation (FFP), OCSE will not approve any waivers that will significantly increase program costs, but will consider waivers for “unallowable costs” and State plan requirements, such as state-wideness, which facilitate the conduct of the project or enable the State to accomplish the purposes of the project.

17. Do the Section 1115 grants require a match from the applicant?

Yes, grantees must provide at least 5 percent of the total approved cost of the project. This 5 percent may be provided through cash, including incentives, and in-kind services.

18. Can a partnering agency provide in-kind contributions to the grantee Title IV-D agency?

The grantee Title-IV D agency may accept in-kind contributions from partnering organizations if the contributions meet the requirements of 45 C.F.R. Sec. 92.24.

19. May the grantee Title IV-D agency use contributed in-kind to satisfy the 5 percent matching requirement?

Yes. In-kind contributions may be used by the grantee Title IV-D agency to satisfy the 5 percent matching requirement. If Title IV-D agencies intend to use in-kind contributions to meet the matching requirement, the applicant should request prior approval as part of the application's Budget Justification (see Section III.2. in HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0095 and HHS-2009-ACF-FD-0098).

20. How does the applicant request prior approval for using incentive funds or in-kind services to meet the 5 percent match?

The applicant should describe how they plan to meet the 5 percent match in the required budget justification/narrative. This would fulfill the prior approval requirements.

21. What is the deadline for submitting an application?

Applications, whether they are mailed, hand-delivered or submitted electronically, must be received by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) no later than 4:30 p.m., Eastern Time, on **August 24**. Any applications received after 4:30 p.m. on that date will not be considered for competition.

22. Must the application be submitted electronically through Grants.gov?

Applications do not have to be submitted electronically. However, if you choose to submit electronically, it must be through Grants.gov. Be sure to read the several pages of guidance in the announcement regarding the use of Grants.gov for electronic submission. Do not send your applications by email or fax as these are not allowable methods of submitting applications.

23. If an applicant chooses to send the application in hard copy, what should they be aware of?

Applicants that submit their applications in paper format should submit one original and two copies of the complete application with all the required forms, certifications, assurances and appendices. The original copy must have the original signature of the Authorized Organization Representative/Authorized Official.

OCSE does not recommend sending applications through the U.S. Postal Service because ACF/OCSE mail is irradiated. This adds a few days to the delivery process and the paper becomes brittle, making reading and copying the applications difficult.

[Please note that under grant announcement HHS-2009-ACF-OCSE-FD-0098, applications are to be sent to an off-site location; the address is in the grant announcement material.]

OCSE had learned from recent experience that couriers do not always deliver as promised. Applications hand-carried by applicant couriers, other representatives of the applicant; or by overnight/express mail couriers must be received by the established deadline. If at all possible, have applications submitted well in advance of the due date.

24. What is the page limit for the applications?

The length of the application should be no more than 25 double-spaced pages; they may be shorter. Any pages beyond the 25-page limit will not be reviewed. This page limit excludes the table of contents, application forms, letters of support, certifications and résumés. Use a 12-point font with margins set between 1” and 1.25”. These standards are required for ease of reviewing.

25. Who reviews the applications for OCSE?

OCSE conducts the reviews with Federal staff, and/or external experts who are familiar with the program(s) in the particular announcement.

26. How will the applications be evaluated?

Reviewers will use the evaluation criteria listed in the grant announcement to score the application. The content and components of the application need not be presented under-headings related to the evaluation criteria but rather may be organized such that a reviewer will be able to follow a seamless and logical flow of information (i.e., from a broad overview of the project to more detailed information about how the project will be conducted). However, applicants should be sure that every item listed in the evaluation criteria is addressed.

27. Can grant funds be used to contract out the services needed for the project?

Yes, once awarded, grantees may make sub-grants or sub-contracts for specific services or activities necessary to conduct the project. OCSE recommends that the appropriate State procurement/contract office be notified that the State is submitting a grant application that, if funded, will require a contract or task order. Experienced grantees say that this helps the procurement personnel plan accordingly.

Grantees may, and often do, sub-grant or contract out a lot of the work associated with a project, as long as the IV-D agency will play an active and substantial role in the grant activity. However, OCSE will not approve applications in which the IV-D agency will not be actively involved and which are merely “pass-throughs.”

28. Can grant funds be used to hire people to carry out the project?

Grant funds may be used to hire staff if it is directly related to grant activities. As in the case with contracts, OCSE recommends notifying the appropriate State personnel

office of the applicant's plans for staffing, should the application be approved. Please note that grant funding may not be used for routine child support activities that would normally be reimbursed under the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program, e.g., adding staff positions to perform routine CSE tasks. Grant activity would not be considered routine.

29. Are there projects that OCSE will not fund?

OCSE will not award grant funding for projects that duplicate automated data processing and information retrieval system requirements/enhancements and associated tasks that are specified in the Social Security Act. This means OCSE discretionary grant funds cannot be used to meet mandatory automation requirements such as those outlined in the OCSE Certification Guide. But discretionary grants can be used, and are used, to automate a manual process, or enhance the automation functionality above and beyond what is mandated. We also will not fund projects that require use of proprietary applications.

30. What forms are required and where are they found?

Refer to the checklist in the announcement to ensure the application is complete. The forms are available on the ACF website and on the OCSE website on the discretionary grant pages.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/>

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/resources/application_kit/

31. What does OCSE anticipate as the start date for the Section 1115 grants?

ACF has a goal of awarding grants 45 days after the due date of the applications. The start-date would be no later than September 30, the last day of the Federal Fiscal Year. Grants must begin in the fiscal year in which the award is made.

**Category III
Tips for Grant Writing**

32. Do applications have to be written by professional grant writers to be approved for funding?

No. Many award-winning proposals in the past have been written by existing CSE staff. One successful grantee says they make the application a group assignment, or team effort, involving a variety of staff members. Each person works on a different section of the proposal and then one person serves as the editor to ensure the information flows easily and that all the evaluation criteria are addressed.

33. How is the announcement information organized?

Much of the announcement is comprised of boilerplate language provided by the Administration for Children and Families, the agency that houses the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, including the Project Description Overview section, found in Part IV of the announcement. This is ACF standard language provided for

guidance to applicants so they can “tell their story” in an organized way and include vital information.

Some items appear twice in the announcement, which may seem confusing to an applicant. One example is “Approach.” The guidance found in Project Description Overview, the standard language referenced earlier, gives the applicant *general guidance* about how to plan out and present the project; in other words, how you plan to carry out your work. “Approach” also appears in the Evaluation Criteria section. Keep in mind that the Evaluation Criteria is what the application is scored on. The reviewer will consider how well the applicant has been able to “marry” the general guidance to the more specific evaluation criteria and score the application accordingly.

32. What does a reviewer look for in an application?

Reviewers appreciate well-organized and well-written proposals. Basically, they want to know what the work is, why it is needed, where it will be done, who will be doing it and how it will be completed.

A reviewer looks for current data and references to current research used by the applicant to “build their case” about why the grant funding is needed. They look for simply stated goals, and budgets and timeframes that are reasonable. They want to be sure the staffing level is appropriate to the size of the project. They want to be sure partners you have identified are on board and committed to the project. They appreciate budget narratives that are easy to follow and match the figures found in the budget sheets (the 424-A).

Keep in mind that a reviewer scores the application based on the evaluation criteria, so be sure that you have addressed everything listed in the Evaluation Criteria section.

33. How should the application be organized?

There is no required format for presentation of information. You should consider that reviewers will be reading multiple applications, so presenting information in clear, succinct and logical order will be helpful. OCSE recommends that you use page numbers throughout, including on the attachments. (You may need to hand print some of the pages.) Reviewers need page numbers so they can document their comments. A table of contents is required and helps the reviewer find materials quickly. Applicants are encouraged to use the checklist as a guide when preparing your application package to ensure all required information is included.

34. What if our proposal is not funded?

Reviewers provide comments on the scores they give to the applications and these comments are summarized. If your application is not awarded a grant, be sure to request a summary of comments and ask for feedback. Some States that were unsuccessful in their first attempt at grant writing were awarded grant funding the very next year.

OCSE and grant reviewers are on your side. We want to encourage more States to apply for grants.

35. Who can I call for more information about the Section 1115 grant?

Keep in mind that OCSE cannot provide anything beyond what is in the announcement because no applicant can be given any kind of advantage over another. However, OCSE will be happy to assist you within these parameters.

Questions about the medical support planning grant should be sent to Jennifer.Burnszyski@hhs.gov; phone number: 202-690-8651. Questions about the downturn in the economy should be sent to Karen.Anthony@acf.hhs.gov; phone 202-690-6275.