

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announces that competing applications are being accepted for Federal financial assistance to participate in intensive joint planning and development activities that would reinforce the concept of the temporary nature of welfare, and promote self-sufficiency and employment. An initial financial award for 12 months, for up to 8 sites will be made under this announcement. The Department will fund up to four (4) grantees who will be selected on a competitive basis to receive second year continuation grants for implementation of cultural change models. The recipients will be expected to enter into a cooperative agreement with ACF.

This program announcement consists of four parts. Part I provides background information about the Changing the Culture of Welfare (CCW) demonstration. Part II describes the activities supported by this announcement and application requirements. Part III describes the application review process. Part IV provides information and instructions for the development and submission of applications. The forms to be used for submitting an application follow Part IV.

Part I—Introduction

Current welfare reform proposals emphasize work, responsibility and the temporary nature of welfare. The focus of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program is changing from providing benefits to preventing welfare dependency. There is growing consensus that AFDC benefits should be transitional, time-limited assistance, requiring a goal-oriented partnership between the welfare agency and the AFDC client. Such a partnership should be designed to help the client recognize the value of work and construct a plan to enter the job market and/or training to quickly achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Welfare reform initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s exemplify States' efforts to seek alternative methods of reducing welfare dependency. Reform has primarily been sought through waivers of statutory provisions, seen as barriers to achieving economic independence. In the welfare debate, another emerging issue has been the need for a radical culture change in the welfare system and the methods of assistance provided to the AFDC families.

Part II—Project Design

Purpose

The purpose of the demonstration project is to provide an opportunity for State/local IV-A agencies who: (1) want to design and implement cultural change strategies or (2) are already implementing cultural change strategies successfully but want to further expand their initiatives, to focus more strongly on work, and make the system more supportive of self-sufficiency efforts.

State and local welfare agencies are on the front line of the needed culture change since change must begin where the client meets the worker. In focusing on what the client needs to become self-sufficient, workers, supervisors, and administrators must view their jobs in a broader context. Workers must be empowered to participate in changing the culture of the welfare office and helping clients move from dependence to independence.

This culture change may be achieved by a variety of different approaches, including changes in management style, staff training, performance measurement and changes to the AFDC and JOBS rules which are perceived to impede the transition from welfare dependency to economic self-sufficiency.

Sites will need to create and test cultural change models and look at the impacts, costs, and benefits of their models. They will need to demonstrate how the model can be expanded and provide up-front delivery of services to promote employment opportunities and portray welfare as a transitional program.

They will need to also demonstrate how the job of the AFDC worker has changed, or will change, from one of determining eligibility and payment accuracy to one of financial consultant/customer service agent. This role includes working with the client to explore options and alternatives to public assistance, resources available in the community to meet immediate client needs, demonstrating the financial benefits of employment vs. receipt of welfare, and marketing (employment opportunities to the client, and clients to potential employers) etc.

Eligible Applicants

Financial assistance under this announcement is limited to State and local IV-A agencies. An application from a local IV-A agency must be approved by the State IV-A agency.

ACF is interested in providing financial support to IV-A agencies with experience in, or a demonstrated commitment to changing the culture of

welfare. Examples of cultural change include:

1. Training management and staff, as part of a overall process redesign geared toward employment and self-sufficiency, including customer relations training.
2. Improving and modifying technology to support the line worker's ability to service clients.
3. Implementing performance standards for evaluating staff with an emphasis on job placement standards as an important criteria.
4. Establishing new criteria and incentives to reward staff participating in and promoting cultural change activities.
5. Implementing a competency-based case management system.
6. Reclassifying personnel positions to upgrade eligibility determination staff.
7. Co-locating administrative and client service delivery staff working on AFDC and JOBS. Combining income maintenance and JOBS responsibilities in one worker.
8. Implementing more intensive interventions to accommodate harder-to-serve populations which would include individuals with learning disabilities and/or developmental disabilities.
9. Establishing with educational institutions such as community colleges, training institutions and local employers, short term competency-based training programs linked to actual jobs.

Minimum Requirements for Project Design.

In order to compete successfully in response to this announcement, the applicant should develop a plan which:

- Includes an outline and discussion of current, or planned culture change activities at the proposed demonstration sites. This outline should include a description of the specific features/components and services that are involved with, or impacted by culture change activities, relevant demographics of the demonstration site, and the level of agency commitment and community collaboration.
- Describes how the applicant proposes to expand existing culture change strategies and how these strategies will involve a coordinated, integrated approach among, at minimum, AFDC/JOBS staff.
- Demonstrates how this model will increase the experiential/research information we now have of what AFDC clients need to become self-sufficient.
- Demonstrates how the model (or parts thereof) can be replicated in other localities.